

**Ethnicity in the Garden:  
Figurations of Ecopastoral in  
Mexican American Literature**

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### **Ehrenwörtliche Erklärung**

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Ich habe bisher weder diese noch eine andere Arbeit als Dissertation vorgelegt.

Berlin, den 10. Juli 2010



Meinen Eltern



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Let Athene dwell in the cities she's founded.  
For me, the woodlands.

—Vergil, *The Eclogues*

The pastoral ideal has been used to define  
the meaning of America ever since the age  
of discovery, and it has not yet lost its hold  
upon the native imagination.

—Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*

[E]nvironmental writing [is] not just white  
dudes on mountain tops producing writings  
about the natural world.

—Chicana author María Meléndez  
in a 2007 interview



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## **General Introductory Remarks**

The purpose of the present dissertation is to analyze the ecopastoral motif and its evolution in Mexican American literature from before the Chicano movement until the present. My focus will be on the work of three writers, specifically Fabiola Cabeza de Baca's memoir *We Fed Them Cactus* (1954) and, in the novelistic genre, *The Ultraviolet Sky* by Alma Luz Villanueva (1988) and Rudolfo Anaya's *Zia Summer* (1995). In these narrative texts, I will investigate different versions of the motif, in their ideas and concepts and their aesthetic strategies, as well as in their internal tensions and contradictions. Throughout, the ethnic environmental pastoral trope will be read both against and within the larger U.S. and Western cultural tradition of pastoral. My study constitutes not only the first ecopastoral inquiry into Mexican American writing, but also the first book-length examination of this ethnic literature from an environmentally oriented perspective in Germany. As such, the project is grounded in American literary and cultural studies, conjoining for the first time the disciplines of ecocriticism, Chicano/a studies and pastoral criticism.

This study is organized into two main parts. In part one I will expound the theoretical framework and successively develop from it my own critical method for literary analysis. Chapter 1 furnishes an overview of the young practice of environmental criticism, from its beginnings in U.S. English and American studies to its increasing internationalization. I will discuss ecocritics' central concerns, controversies and subgroups, and how their ideas pertain to my own critical interests. This encompasses also a closer look at the emerging German ecocriticism. The next chapter (2) turns to the Mexican American community and its culture and literature. A brief survey of Chicano studies in the United States and Europe/Germany will show the field's ruling concern with issues like ethnicity, gender and now transnationality. The environmental-ecological viewpoint has only arisen recently; there is great need for an ecocritical reading of Mexican American writing. In the following (chapter 3), I will center on the environmental reinterpretation of the age-old mode of literary pastoral. Leo Marx's seminal scholarship on American pastoral ideology will be revisited. It serves as foundation for an ecocritical reclamation of American pastoralism also in my work. A review of important U.S. representatives as well as of environmental pastoral research in German American studies will

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highlight the Euro-American, often ecocentric focus of the existing studies. Chapter 4 will present my own ecocritical pastoral approach to the literature authored by Mexican Americans. I will critically explore their use of the ecopastoral topos as an ethnic revisionist variant of pastoral in the U.S. and universal tradition, concentrating on representative nonfictional and fictional texts by Cabeza de Baca, Villanueva and Anaya. Before I devote myself to the literary analyses of part two of this study, it is also suitable to explicate my primary works' purpose and function as pastoral, ethnic and environmental texts. I will offer introductory observations on these and other characteristic features of their aesthetics and their ideological message of "machine" critique vs. the "garden" ideal. An outline of part two follows at the close of part one as well as in the introductions to the individual analytic main chapters.

## **I. Towards a Theory of Mexican American Ecopastoral**



## 1. Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism is broadly and usefully definable, in the words of Cheryll Glotfelty, as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment.”<sup>1</sup> For almost two decades now, the examination of literature and culture from an environmentally inflected angle has been a burgeoning subfield of literary and cultural studies. It has been practiced particularly in English and American studies departments, in the U.S. and increasingly around the world. In the interdisciplinary American studies, scholarly interest in nature and wilderness as central aspects of national identity, culture and literature within the pastoral myth of America as “nature’s nation” (Perry Miller) is of course of long standing. It is an important antecedent of the new discipline of ecocriticism, where Leo Marx’s *The Machine in the Garden* (1964) also ranks as an early classic.<sup>2</sup>

A true flowering of literature/culture and environment studies can be observed in recent times. For one thing, it is firmly rooted in the U.S. environmental movement since the 1960s, which responds to environmental degradation and ecological change. As Lawrence Buell notes, the Wilderness Act of 1964 marked the full-fledged emergence of environmentalism as a topic of public concern in the nation (*Environmental* 10). In 1962 Rachel Carson’s controversial exposure of the dangers of pesticides in *Silent Spring* had first introduced a large American readership to the concept of ecology (cf. Schäfer, “Wild” 429-32).<sup>3</sup> The year 1968 then saw the publication of Edward Abbey’s *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness*. It may

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<sup>1</sup> Glotfelty is the first Professor of Literature and the Environment (University of Nevada, Reno) (Introduction xviii). Another leading exponent, Patrick Murphy, describes ecocriticism as a method applicable to “any literary work insofar as that work reveals or reflects something about nature and humanity’s place in, with, or against it” (*Afield* 1).

<sup>2</sup> On the myth of “nature’s nation,” see for instance the recent monograph by Christa Grewe-Volpp (1-7). Among the huge number of studies of the intersections of nature with U.S. culture and literature, a major intellectual history is Roderick Frazier Nash’s *Wilderness and the American Mind* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1967). In *Visions of Paradise* (1999) John Warfield Simpson delineates American landscape attitudes since the Revolutionary War. Cf. also Hans Huth, *Nature and the American* (1957). *The Culture of Nature*, by Alexander Wilson (1992), explores Euro-American and Native responses to the land since World War II. In environmental criticism David Mazel traces a tradition of U.S. “proto-ecocriticism” from George Perkins Marsh, one of the fathers of American environmentalism, to Marx’s 1964 book (*A Century of Early Ecocriticism* (2001); Introduction 8-10). Excerpts include writings by James Russell Lowell, Norman Foerster, Mary Austin, F. O. Matthiessen, Perry Miller and, finally, Marx.

<sup>3</sup> The term “ecology” was coined by the German zoologist Ernst Haeckel in 1866 (cf. Bergthaller, *Ökologie* 69). Hannes Bergthaller’s recent book *Populäre Ökologie* deals with the history and literature of the modern environmental movement in the U.S.; on the movement’s emergence, cf. esp. ch. 2. Good sources on environmentalism and its development in America as well as globally are also the studies by Philip Shabecoff and Ramachandra Guha. For a concise overview of the evolution from 1960s U.S. environmentalism to ecocriticism in the 90s, see Heike Schäfer’s article “Wild Years.”

be said to have launched the contemporary boom of environmental literature, especially about the American West and Southwest (cf. Slovic, Introduction xv-xvi, xx-xxi). Environmental/nature writing forms part of the new regionalism thriving in the literature, culture and scholarship of the U.S. and elsewhere since the 1980s. It is a renaissance of American regionalism in which the ecocritical movement participates as much as the contemporary bloom of U.S. western ethnic writing—Mexican American and Native—and the study thereof.<sup>4</sup> With the 1960s a variety of academic disciplines began to focus on issues of nature and the environment. In contrast to related humanities and social sciences such as history, philosophy, sociology or religion, literary criticism and theory were rather slow to “green” (cf. Glotfelty, Introduction xvi). Inspired by works like Joseph Meeker’s,<sup>5</sup> the new practice developed during the 1980s and finally emerged as a recognizable critical school in the early 90s. It did so outside the main centers of Euro-American academia, under the auspices of the Western Literature Association, which put the label “ecocriticism” into circulation. This now widely accepted neologism is credited to William Rueckert.<sup>6</sup> The Western Literature Association also gave birth to the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) in 1992 and to its official journal *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* the following year (cf. Glotfelty, Introduction xvii-xviii; Buell, “Insurgency” 700).<sup>7</sup> Ecocriticism has grown rapidly since the early 1990s—the first U.S. anthology, *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, edited by Glotfelty and Harold Fromm in 1996, was a milestone—and after the turn of the millennium. It is still being performed most vigorously, and increasingly institutionalized, in the U.S., particularly in regional centers like the University of Oregon, the University of

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<sup>4</sup> Within the larger field of Regional studies—often also dubbed “Area studies”—, pivotal anthologies of critical essays on the renewed U.S. cultural and literary interest in the regional are those edited by David Jordan, *Regionalism Reconsidered* (1994), and Charles Reagan Wilson, *The New Regionalism* (1998). Important work on this new regionalism has also been done by Lothar Hönnighausen. He views Euro-American environmental writers in the context of the new literary regionalism, which he terms the “new ecological regionalism” (“New” 17-20). Hönnighausen is also the editor of various interdisciplinary collections on regions and the regional in America and other areas of the world, lately, coedited with others, the two-volume *Regionalism in the Age of Globalism* (2005).

<sup>5</sup> *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology* (1972) is often taken to be the first significant statement of ecologically informed literary scholarship in the U.S.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism” (1978). “Ecocriticism” is convenient as an umbrella term and used worldwide, yet it is certainly no unproblematic designation. One problem is, as Buell points out, the narrowness of the “eco,” with its connotation of the natural rather than the built environment, and of the science of ecology (cf. *Future* 11-12; viii).

<sup>7</sup> ASLE’s founding president was Scott Slovic, the first editor of *ISLE* Patrick Murphy. The ASLE home page, a rich source of ecocritical material, is located at <http://www.asle.org>.

California, Davis, and the University of Nevada, Reno (cf. Buell, “Insurgency” 704). In the last years, interest in the exploration of culture and environment has also proliferated at an international level. There are by now active branches of ASLE in the United Kingdom, Asia, Australia and New Zealand. As regards Germany and other central/western European countries as well as Scandinavia, eastern and southern Europe, the ecocritical enterprise has recently gotten under way. The European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture and Environment (EASLCE) was formed in Germany in 2004. Its electronic journal *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment* was launched in the spring of 2010.<sup>8</sup> As yet ecocriticism remains a marginal pursuit in Germany, primarily in Americanist and English scholarship, and with little disciplinary recognition.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Ecozon@*'s Web address is <http://www.ecozona.eu>. EASLCE came into being at a conference titled “Literatur, Kultur, Umwelt: ‘Ecocriticism’—eine Standortbestimmung”/“Literature, Culture, Environment: Positioning ‘Ecocriticism,’” which Sylvia Mayer organized at the Universität Münster in March 2004. Its first president was the British ecocritic Axel Goodbody. It may be found at <http://www.easlce.eu>. A new institution is the Rachel Carson Center for international environmental studies, founded in Munich in 2009. It aims to strengthen the role of the humanities in the political and scientific debate on the environment.

<sup>9</sup> For an introduction to environmental criticism, informed assessments of its development, central positions and present state are the following: Lawrence Buell's 2005 study *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*, as well as a previous essay (“Insurgency”), *Ecocriticism* by Greg Garrard and Michael Cohen's article (both 2004). See also the overview piece by Ursula Heise (2006) and Slovic's reflections on the current phase of ecocriticism (“Third”)—the latter in the inaugural issue of *Ecozon@*, which centers on the future of the discipline, particularly in Europe. A German perspective on the ecocritical movement is provided by Catrin Gersdorf and Sylvia Mayer in the introduction to their 2005 collection, as well as in Hubert Zapf's *Ecozon@* essay (“Ecocriticism”). Bergthaller gives an insightful German commentary on ecocriticism and American studies and the limits of both in an article from 2007 (“Ecocriticism”). With respect to compilations of literary and cultural environmental scholarly writings, *The Ecocriticism Reader* contains seminal U.S. texts and an annotated critical bibliography. Laurence Coupe's *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*, a major British volume (2000), demonstrates the continuity and variety of green thinking in European and U.S. culture and literature. Other important collections of ecocriticism include: Michael Branch et al., eds., *Reading the Earth*; Richard Kerridge and Neil Sammells, eds., *Writing the Environment*; John Tallmadge and Henry Harrington, eds., *Reading under the Sign of Nature*; Karla Armbruster and Kathleen Wallace, eds., *Beyond Nature Writing*; Steven Rosendale, ed., *The Greening of Literary Scholarship*; and, of 2007, *Coming into Contact*, eds. Annie Merrill Ingram et al. The English- and German-language proceedings of the Münster conference and the second biennial EASLCE conference in Klagenfurt, Austria, in 2006 have been published in two volumes each: *Natur—Kultur—Text: Beiträge zu Ökologie und Literaturwissenschaft* (2005) and *Nature in Literary and Cultural Studies: Transatlantic Conversations* (2006), both edited by Gersdorf and Mayer; *Words on Water*, eds. Maureen Devine and Grewe-Volpp (2008), and *Wasser—Kultur—Ökologie*, eds. Goodbody and Berbeli Wanning (2008). As for German literature, many Germanist scholars still seem haunted by the historical appropriation of the land and green ideas by the Nazis; German writing has so far been subjected to environmental scrutiny especially by British ecocritics, such as Goodbody. Important European anthologies of ecocriticism are further *Culture, Creativity and Environment*, edited by Fiona Becket and Terry Gifford (2007), and *Ecocritical Theory*, eds. Goodbody and Kate Rigby (forthcoming). Ecological and ecocritical approaches are also found in two essay collections that grew out of the 2000 European Association for American Studies (EAAS) conference in Graz, Austria, and which focus on nature in

So what exactly is ecocriticism? As a very heterogeneous young discourse, which resembles feminist studies and ethnic revisionism in that it is on the whole more issue-driven than method- or paradigm-driven (cf. Buell, *Future* 11), it has no dominant, unanimously accepted theory and no ultimate, field-defining statement to date. Instead, theoretical and methodological eclecticism prevail in the sizable amount of research ecocritical practitioners have already produced. The rapidly augmenting number of scholarly articles and books show a great variety of subjects and approaches, reflecting affinities to different branches of contemporary environmentalism such as deep ecology, ecofeminism, social ecology or bioregionalism.<sup>10</sup> They also reveal the influence of a range of postmodern critical theories like poststructuralism, feminism or new historicism (cf. Schäfer, “Wild” 436-37). Such diversification not only indicates the potential of the field today. It is also clear that green literary and cultural studies can, as Scott Slovic argues, no longer be dismissed as an environmentalist fad supposedly lacking in conceptual sophistication (cf. “Ecocriticism” 161-62, Letter 1102). Various major single-author monographs which seek to establish a theoretical framework testify to this increasing maturation, for instance works by such leading U.S. figures as Buell and Patrick Murphy.<sup>11</sup> In its pronounced interest in academic transdisciplinarity, ecocriticism has moreover always included an important subset of scholars in favor of a model of literary and cultural inquiry that is directly based on the natural sciences. Ecology

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U.S. society, culture and literature: *From Virgin Land to Disney World*, ed. Bernd Herzogenrath (2001), and, edited by Hans Bak and Walter Hölbling, “*Nature’s Nation*” *Revisited* (2003). Special issues of journals, from both sides of the Atlantic, on the subject of ecocriticism have appeared in *New Literary History* (1999), *Reader* (2005), *Anglia* (2006), *Reconstruction* (2007) and *MELUS* (2009); also see the PMLA “Forum on Literatures of the Environment” (1999). *The ISLE Reader*, edited by Branch and Slovic in 2003, gathers representative articles from the periodical’s first decade. Further important ecocritical texts and monographs will be referenced as I proceed.

<sup>10</sup> It ought to be emphasized that environmentalism—and environmental criticism—do not necessarily represent the leftist viewpoint with which they are commonly associated. As Andrew Dobson rightly observes, the political ideology of “ecologism” also connects with right-wing ideas (30-31). For a helpful survey of different strands of the new environmental movement, see Conway, Keniston and Marx, “New” 7-25. A recommendable *Companion to Environmental Philosophy* around the world has been edited by Dale Jamieson (2001). Garrard describes the various political and philosophical positions within the broad spectrum of environmentalism among ecocritics (*Ecocriticism* ch. 2). Some of these varieties will be dealt with later on.

<sup>11</sup> The Harvard-based Buell’s 2005 volume cited above is the third in an ecocritical trilogy which also consists of *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (1995)—a landmark study of pastoral in Euro-American nature writing—and *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond* (2001). In his 2000 book *Farther Afield in the Study of Nature-Oriented Literature*, Murphy revises and broadens the ecocritical project by suggesting a more inclusivist method in respect of genre, ethnicity and gender. He examines principally contemporary U.S. writing. Murphy and in particular Buell will be discussed at greater length below.

and biology are central here, in an attempt to bridge the old gulf between science and the humanities. Clearly, albeit enriching, such scientifically inclined approaches will often not do justice to works of literature.<sup>12</sup>

For all methodological variety, one fundamental premise is shared by all ecocritics, including myself: There is a world behind the discursive constructions of nature in literary texts and other cultural forms which is the basis of all life. The old hierarchical dualism of culture vs. nature, underlying Western philosophy since antiquity, is a false one. The new ecocritical movement therefore criticizes the “narrowly anthropocentric” stance of and the overwhelming absence of nature from all major schools of cultural and literary theory in the past decades.<sup>13</sup> With the poststructuralist “linguistic turn” in particular, the biophysical environment is perceived to have been reduced to nothing but a sign, a mere linguistic and social construct (cf., e.g., Coupe, Introduction 2-3). Ecocriticism is of course aware that material reality is always reprocessed in human perception and mediation, and that “[l]andscape is first of all an effort of the imagination—a construed way of seeing the world . . . Landscape is never simply something ‘out there’ . . .” (qtd. from Lane, *Sacred* 131; cf. also Scheese 9).<sup>14</sup> However, what is now often called the “environmental turn” in contemporary literary and cultural studies repudiates the “solipsism” of poststructuralist self-referentiality and its “semiotic fallacy,” and instead properly asserts the existence, and primacy, of a prediscursive physical reality (qtd. from Bennett and Teague, Introduction 3; Coupe, Introduction 2). Ecocriticism is thus, to quote Don Scheese, “a way of reading both texts and the land itself, . . . the word and the world that inspired it . . .” (10). By the same token, poststructuralist claims like “there is no nature” (Alan Liu) are regarded as “absurd

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<sup>12</sup> Glen Love (Oregon), one of the founders of U.S. ecocriticism, is an important representative of this science position, advocating an evolutionary biological vantage point. Thus also in his book *Practical Ecocriticism: Literature, Biology, and the Environment* (2003). Concerning ecological concepts, many environmental critics have invoked the terminology of ecological science in a rather undifferentiating fashion. The popular environmentalist and ecocritical notion of the “balance” and “harmony” of nature, e.g., is scientifically problematic. For although ecosystems do maintain a kind of equilibrium, it is defined as much by change as by stasis, as Garrard stresses (*Ecocriticism* 56-58). A similar critique of the uninformed appropriation of ecological scientific concepts by ecocritics can be found in Grewe-Volpp, *Ökokritische* 27-28.

<sup>13</sup> The quotation is from Love’s “Revaluing Nature: Toward an Ecological Criticism” (1990), an influential ecocritical manifesto (229).

<sup>14</sup> On the Western conception of nature as a cultural construct, see further Neil Evernden, *The Social Construction of Nature* (1992).

and dangerous” (Scheese 9).<sup>15</sup> After all, as British environmental philosopher Kate Soper has pointedly formulated it, “it is not language that has a hole in its ozone layer; and the ‘real’ thing continues to be polluted and degraded even as we refine our deconstructive insights at the level of the signifier.”<sup>16</sup> It is, nevertheless, vital that in seeking to counter anthropocentrism by unfolding a nonanthropocentric or ecocentric perspective, ecocritical studies not merely invert the culture-nature dichotomy. An informed environmental critical approach, I would like to emphasize with previous commentators, must always steer a reasonable course between all-embracing social constructionism on the one hand, and naive positivism or realism on the other, two equally extreme viewpoints (cf. Conway, Keniston and Marx, “New” 4; also Coupe, Introduction 2-3). “To avoid the pitfalls of . . . a confusion of human agency with anthropocentrism,” the German ecocritic Heike Schäfer writes, “it seems important to note the difference between envisioning the world from a human perspective and asserting this perspective as the exclusive center of meaning and value” (“Wild” 439-40). Andrew Dobson has suggested the term “weak anthropocentrism” for the inescapability of the human point of view (63-64).<sup>17</sup>

So despite its disagreements with poststructuralism, green studies does draw on certain of its basic principles, such as the social-construction-of-reality paradigm. It is obviously also deeply indebted to the pluralism of poststructuralist thought, with its politically inflected breakdown of traditional hierarchies. As it were, the biophysical environment may be considered the latest neglected minority in cultural and literary theory.<sup>18</sup> It is therefore apposite to dismiss the excessive, wholesale attacks on poststructuralism as voiced especially by early ecocritics—Glen Love is a case in point—as a “parochialism[ ]” (Buell, Letter 1091-92) of the antitheoretical and uncritically positivist early days of the movement. A segregation of ecocriticism from mainstream critical practice is no longer acceptable to its theoretically more sophisticated practitioners today.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Similarly Jonathan Bate in his *Romantic Ecology*, which inaugurated ecocriticism in the U.K. in 1991 (cf. the excerpt in Coupe 171). Liu is cited from *Wordsworth: The Sense of History* (1989).

<sup>16</sup> From *What Is Nature? Culture, Politics, and the Non-Human* (1995) 151.

<sup>17</sup> For an ecocritical position that mediates between a conception of nature as a cultural construction and as a prediscursive entity, see also Grewe-Volpp, “Nature” 72-77.

<sup>18</sup> An early discussion of affinities between the premises, critical stance and basic tactics of ecological philosophy and poststructuralism is by Sueellen Campbell, “The Land and Language of Desire” (1989).

<sup>19</sup> E.g. Murphy, *Afield* 17-18; Rosendale, Introduction xxi; Zapf, “State” 50.

As to the political motivation behind the ecocritical concern with the material world, the old debate between art and politics and about whether scholarship and teaching may be committed to political reform is as crucial an issue in ecocriticism as it has been in feminism or ethnic studies. In the U.S. in particular, many environmental literary and cultural scholars not only have an implicit but a direct and explicit environmentalist ethical and political agenda. A representative articulation of this stance is Laurence Coupe's rather dogmatic definition of green studies as "the most radical of critical activities." "If green studies . . .," he avers, "does not change behaviour, does not encourage resistance to planetary pollution and degradation, it cannot be called fully 'ecocritical'" (Introduction 4-5).<sup>20</sup> In this way, ecocritics further hope, the "beleaguered," increasingly "irrelevant" discipline of literary studies (as well as literature itself) will recover some its lost social relevance in our time (cf. Rosendale, Introduction xxviii). As a literary critic, I cannot subscribe to any restrictive definition of literature that sets up social applicability as a criterion of literary value. Yet I do share the ecocritical notion that, in Buell's words, the environmental crisis involves "a crisis of the imagination" (*Environmental* 2). In this epistemological crisis, the humanities can and should make a contribution towards transforming the problematic values—the hubris—defining the human relationship vis-à-vis the environment in the Western world especially since the industrial revolution. As Leo Marx has put it, instead of declaring our physical environs the exclusive domain of science with its presentist orientation, "the participation of humanists and social scientists is needed to cope with environmental degradation because its origins lie deep in our history" ("Degradation" 323-24).<sup>21</sup> In view of expressly activist critical programs like those cited above, however, a number of ecocritics have voiced reservations about the field being too doctrinaire,<sup>22</sup> and it is with these that I align myself. Let me stress that politics must never be a primary

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<sup>20</sup> Also cf. Glotfelty's programmatically titled introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader*, "Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis," in which she affirms that consciousness raising is the "most important task" of ecocriticism (xxiv). A special emphasis on classroom teaching also recurs in ecocritical thought and writing, for example in *ISLE*. On the new moral concern in postmodern culture and literature since the 1980s, see *Ethics and Aesthetics: The Moral Turn of Postmodernism*, edited by Gerhard Hoffmann and Alfred Hornung in 1996. It also addresses race/ethnicity, gender and ecology.

<sup>21</sup> Marx's piece forms part of *Earth, Air, Fire, Water*, eds. Jill Ker Conway, Kenneth Keniston and Marx (1999). The volume is meant as a humanistic contribution to the study of environmental issues, arguing for the pertinence of the humanities in this regard. A German formulation of the argument for the significance of humanistic, literary scholarship and ecocriticism in times of ecological deterioration appears, e.g., in Mayer's work (*Naturethik* 9, also in her 2006 essay). Cf. also the 2009 environmental humanist collection *Ecology and the Environment*, ed. Donald Swearer.

<sup>22</sup> E.g. Slovic, *Seeking* 171; Kern 260-61.

concern in literary criticism—precisely because literature and artistic portrayals of nature cannot be defined by the worth or desirability of their social and political attitudes at a given historical moment. In short, if environmentally focused criticism wants to be taken seriously as a scholarly pursuit, it must not be reduced to being the latest variety of—to speak with Dana Phillips—“academic agitprop” (584).

With respect to the development of ecocriticism and the environmental literary canon in the U.S., Glotfelty has usefully applied Elaine Showalter’s three-stage model of feminism. She distinguishes between three analogous phases in the new discipline (cf. Introduction xxii-xxiv). In the U.S. and elsewhere, they are now all being practiced alongside one another and intermingling. While a heightened interest in theorizing about ecocritical questions is generally of a more recent date, as mentioned previously (third stage), critics have from the first been concerned with examining “images of nature” (first stage). I.e. the literary representation of the biophysical world and the relation human-nature—e.g. regions and landscapes, animals and pastoralism, including stereotyped and distorted images. The second stage, the literary-tradition stage, has centered on identifying a green tradition of both celebrated and neglected writers, in nature-oriented fiction and, above all, the so-called nature writing. A major—in earlier years almost exclusive—focus of ecocritical inquiry, not only in the U.S., has precisely been on the latter: on Euro-American nonfictional literary prose about nature, first and foremost by Henry David Thoreau, as well as, to a lesser extent, on American and British nature poetry. Those are the works of nineteenth- and twentieth-century white, predominantly male authors—an ethnic tendency which is also reflected in ecocritics themselves. For all internationalization of environmental criticism into a global enterprise today, it is still primarily Anglophone and particularly U.S. literature that constitutes the object of study, in Europe and Germany as much as in other parts of the world (cf. also Bergthaller, “Ecocriticism” 275-76).<sup>23</sup>

Not only the range of cultural forms and genres being inspected through an environmental lens has broadened in the last years, on which more in chapter I.3. It is

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<sup>23</sup> Besides Thoreau, central authors are Euro-American nature writers such as John Burroughs, John Muir, Mary Austin, Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, Edward Abbey and Annie Dillard. Among the poets are Robinson Jeffers, W. S. Merwin, Adrienne Rich and Gary Snyder, as well as the British Romantics. Important book-length ecocritical studies of American nature writing have been written by Peter Fritzell, Slovic, Buell (1995), Scheese, Daniel Payne and Randall Roorda. U.S. nature poetry is subject to environmental critical exploration for instance in books by John Elder and Leonard Scigaj. Influential monographs on the British Romantic poets are those by Bate and Karl Kroeber. German works of ecocriticism will be treated in the final section of this chapter.

essential to note that ecocriticism also owes much of its ever-increasing diversification and expansion at present to such important subfields as ecofeminism and, more recently and often interrelated, multiculturalism. Ecofeminism is a significant branch of contemporary global environmentalism and in fact a key influence behind the first wave of ecocritical activity in the U.S. (cf. Buell, “Insurgency” 708). As a philosophy and a movement, it consists of different strands. A basic assumption is that there are connections between the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature: both are viewed as the vulnerable targets of patriarchal societies (cf. Gaard and Murphy, Introduction 3). In literary and cultural studies, which have seen a virtual eruption of ecofeminist analysis in the U.S. since 1990, the focus has been on the ways in which men have traditionally stereotyped women as “natural” and nature as female, and on how women’s response to the nonhuman world has differed from men’s (cf. Gaard and Murphy, Introduction 5; Buell, “Insurgency” 708).<sup>24</sup>

Multicultural and postcolonial approaches are a major recent development in ecoliterary and cultural criticism. Transculturalism propels the current globalization of the ecocritical project and the rising interest in environmental literature from around the world.<sup>25</sup> In the ecocritical examination of U.S. literary writing, multiculturalism and multicultural revisionism are particularly pertinent and called for. As Murphy expressed it in 2000 (much of which is still in place), “the field of ecological criticism . . . [cannot] afford to remain as thoroughly ethnocentric as it is today” (*Afield* 217), namely above all a reflection of the “Euroamerican bourgeois imaginary” (Buell, “Insurgency” 707). The so-called “ethnic” literatures of the U.S. have indeed been increasingly attracting ecocritical attention in the last decade, as is apparent in a number of publications. It should be emphasized that an interpretation

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<sup>24</sup> A good introductory source on ecofeminism in all its diversity is Karen Warren’s collection of essays by scholars from a variety of disciplines, *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature* (1997). See too Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, *Ecofeminism*. Prominent volumes of literary-critical writings are *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism*, edited in 1998 by Greta Gaard and Patrick Murphy (one of the few male contributors to ecofeminism), and *New Essays in Ecofeminist Literary Criticism*, ed. Glynis Carr (2000). The latter book evinces a growing concern with ethnic perspectives in U.S. ecofeminism. A pioneering work of U.S. ecofeminist literary scholarship is Annette Kolodny’s *The Lay of the Land* from 1975, a feminist critique of male American literature. Another important monographic study, Louise Westling’s *The Green Breast of the New World* (1996), works in the Kolodnian tradition in its own ecofeminist reading of canonical American literary pastoral. Chicana ecofeminist ideas are of great importance in Villanueva’s novel analyzed in part two of this dissertation.

<sup>25</sup> Murphy and Slovic have been especially active in internationalizing ecocriticism. Murphy is also the editor of *Literature of Nature* (1998), a compilation of environmental critical articles on literatures from all parts of the globe.

of ethnic representations of nature and the environment demands an awareness of issues of social justice and class as racial/ethnic minorities<sup>26</sup> are in many cases disproportionately affected by environmental deterioration. Actually, ecocriticism mirrors a significant rift within the contemporary environmental movement, in the U.S. as well as globally, which is a new version of the old ideological divide in environmentalism between the anthropocentric and ecocentric standpoints. At the one pole, there is the traditional, mainstream environmentalism of middle-class whites with an agenda of wilderness preservation and wildlife protection, i.e. the Western-based global environmental establishment. The other pole is formed by the “environmental justice” movement. Since the early 1980s, it has become an influential international grassroots movement, in which ethnic minority groups—African Americans, Hispanics, Natives and Asian Americans in the U.S.—as well as women have assumed a prominent role (cf. Buell, *Writing* 32-33, 227).<sup>27</sup> Environmental justice is broadly based on the ideology of “social ecology.” Social ecology argues for a sociopolitical analysis of ecology and environment, and regards ecological and social domination and oppression as interlinked—hence the notion of “environmental racism.” Environmental justice activists call for environmental protection and ecological sustainability in conjunction with anthropocentric concerns of social equity (cf., e.g., Bennett 298). Evidently, this is a multicultural, “Third World” critical redefinition of the environment and environmentalism which parallels the ecofeminist critique in important respects.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Werner Sollors’s observations on the use of the terms “race” and “ethnicity” in the theoretical discussion in America (Foreword x, xxix-xxxv).

<sup>27</sup> For example the well-known Indian ecofeminist scholar and environmental activist Vandana Shiva.

<sup>28</sup> The environmental activist and theoretician Murray Bookchin is a central representative of social ecology. In-depth discussion of this topic lies beyond the scope of my study, but note that social ecology à la Bookchin has also been criticized from a multicultural, Mexican American environmental justice perspective like Devon Peña’s in his 2005 book (129-32). Peña gives a good overview of the environmental justice movement, its history and interests (139-46). The phrase “environmental racism” seems to have first been used in the U.S. in the late 1980s, though the concept is much older (cf. Bennett 303-04; 314, n. 6; also Peña 139, 141). A pivotal event in the history of environmental justice was the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C., in 1991, with delegates from many different countries. The Principles of Environmental Justice adopted at the summit are reprinted in Peña (142-44). For information on this movement in the U.S. and beyond, see also the important essay collections the sociologist Robert Bullard has edited since the early 1990s, Luke Cole and Sheila Foster’s monograph *From the Ground Up* (2000) as well as the critical volume edited by David Naguib Pellow and Robert Brulle in 2005; further the “Environmental Justice” roundtable discussion in *ISLE*. Environmental justice-inspired literary research is, e.g., included in *The Environmental Justice Reader*, eds. Joni Adamson, Mei-Mei Evans and Rachel Stein (2002)—which also has a piece by T. V. Reed on environmental justice ecocriticism—, and in Stein’s edited *New Perspectives on Environmental Justice* (2004). Cf. also *MELUS*’s 2009 special issue on ethnicity and ecocriticism.

Ever more visible in the environmental movement, environmental justice has also been gaining ground in an increasingly crosscultural ecocriticism. To employ Michael Bennett's terms, one could speak of a rift between "social ecocriticism" and "deep ecocriticism" (297). In point of fact, ecocritical scholarship with its earth-centered outlook has so far frequently been informed by what is labeled "deep ecology"—a radical ecocentric ideology within contemporary environmentalism which insists on nature's intrinsic value.<sup>29</sup> Like white, middle-class environmentalists, ecocritics have more often than not adopted a deep ecological preservationist stance in their work. It is a conception of nature that has "no place for people, even when they are a historical component of the rural landscape and habitat" (Laura Pulido qtd. in Parra 1100; also cf. Bennett 297-99). As a multiculturally minded ecocritic, by contrast, it is imperative for me, throughout this study of Mexican American literature, to devote special attention to human-centered, environmental justice issues such as race/ethnicity and class. In sum, as social ecocritic Bennett affirms, "[i]t is important that the ecocritical movement not replicate the larger environmental movement's marginalization of the ecological plight of communities of color" (304). The latter has been, in Buell's formulation, another "parochialism[ ]" of emergent ecocriticism (Letter 1091).<sup>30</sup>

A further trend within the widening field of environmental literary and cultural studies is urban ecocriticism. A frequently social ecological critique of ecocritical scholars' "distinctly up-country-and-outback orientation" (Buell, Letter 1091), it hinges on an extended definition of environment as comprising also human-built and urban spaces. These are, after all, more and more indistinguishable from natural environments. Ecocriticism, Buell has rightly noted, can only reach full maturity if it succeeds in "put[ting] 'green' and 'brown' landscapes . . . in conversation with one another" (*Writing* 7).<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> The Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess coined the term "deep ecology" in 1973. An influential U.S. text is Bill Devall and George Sessions's *Deep Ecology: Living As If Nature Mattered* (1985). For a critical appraisal of deep ecology, cf. Grewe-Volpp, *Ökokritische* ch. 2.2.

<sup>30</sup> Joni Adamson Clarke makes a similar case in an essay concerned with Native American literature. She holds that "the issues of race and human rights must be brought into any satisfactory ecocritical discussion of 'nature' and/or 'nature writing'" (10).

<sup>31</sup> More than two thirds of the inhabitants of the U.S. live in cities nowadays (cf. Bennett 311). A seminal instance of this current ecocritical development is *The Nature of Cities: Ecocriticism and Urban Environments*, a collection of essays edited by Bennett and David Teague in 1999. See also Bennett's later article. Buell's second ecocritical book (2001) is another major work of urban ecocriticism. The urban environment gains special significance in Anaya's novel in chapter II.3 herein.

The expansion of ecocriticism also includes attempts at a transnational, planetary perspective these days. A number of ecocritics now advocate such a viewpoint in dealing with environmental issues, beyond the local or national scope. A major representative of this revisionary tendency is the German American ecocritic Ursula Heise. Heise seeks to view the local within a global network in environmentalist thinking and ecocriticism in the U.S. and elsewhere. She builds a case for the adoption of a transnational environmental vision “encompass[ing] the planet as a whole” (*Sense* 10) and of what she calls “eco-cosmopolitanism.”<sup>32</sup> Considering the imbrication of the local and the global in ecosystems and human cultures—ecological problems transcend national borders—, the introduction of a wider, globalist vantage point is certainly in place in environmental criticism. Still, it is crucial to stress the fundamental role of localism and regional belonging in Euro-American and ethnic U.S. culture and literature, and therefore for ecocritical commentary. It further seems sensible to keep a primarily U.S. focus in Americanist study rather than start out from post/transnational and global premises. I here agree in significant respects with a scholar like Heinz Ickstadt. In recent essays he has criticized the current, New Americanist preoccupation with post/transnationality and globalism in examining America. In their turn towards “postnationalism” and “transnationalism” in U.S. and European American literary and cultural studies in the past one and a half decades, the “New Americanists” have—similarly to other, previous revisionisms—engaged in criticism of national(ist) discourse and notions of exceptionalism in traditional, old American studies. They instead aim at a “New” American studies that is more inclusive of ethnic and other social minorities whose cultures and literatures were disregarded by traditional practitioners in the field. Scholarly emphasis on the national has thus been replaced with comparative and

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<sup>32</sup> Heise is critical of the, in her opinion, exaggerated concern with local identities and communities and with sense of place in U.S. environmentalism and environmental literature as well as in ecocritical work. Exemplary of this ecologically inflected localism are for her, among others, Native American writers (like Leslie Marmon Silko) and environmental justice activists. See her ecocritical monograph *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet* (2008), particularly the conceptual first chapter. In this book Heise identifies a globalist, eco-cosmopolitan consciousness in American and German literature, film and art since the 1960s. An argument for closer environmental-ecocritical engagement with present theories of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism is already offered in her essay earlier that year. Buell suggests a related approach to the subject of the environment today. In “Ecoglobalist Affects” (publ. in a 2007 collection with a global, transnational interest in American literature, *Shades of the Planet*, eds. Wai Chee Dimock and Buell), he argues for a planetary position overcoming nation-centeredness in environmental thought and criticism. Contrary to Heise, Buell takes Silko’s writing as an illustration of contemporary U.S. literary ecoglobalism and a global sense of place (232-34). Similarly, other critics have regarded Silko’s work as “glocal” (cf. note 534 herein). On transnational ecocriticism, see also the first issue of *Ecozon@*.

interdisciplinary intercultural, post- and transnational approaches in New Americanist practice. Some of its exponents make a rather grandiose claim to a Western hemispheric and, ultimately, global point of view. The principal articulations of post/transnational New American studies scholarship appear in works edited and written by U.S. critics Donald Pease and John Carlos Rowe.<sup>33</sup> Ickstadt sees these activities as the latest expression of the progressive differentiation and fragmentation of the field.<sup>34</sup> Instead, he has made a by now conservative call for “a nationally focused American Studies” (“Americanization” 158). It is an analytic focus on the U.S. and its specificities that is neither nationalist nor exceptionalist, and which has undiminished pertinence for comprehending this global power, Ickstadt correctly observes. He does include “a transnational consciousness” where germane for explaining the U.S. (“Americanization” 158).<sup>35</sup> As for Americanist and all other ecocriticism at present, it needs to resolve the growing tension between the regional, the national and the supranational in its analyses. I would sound a note of caution about the risk of excessive dispersion and overmuch generalizing in its

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. the seminal anthology Amy Kaplan and Pease edited in 1993, *Cultures of United States Imperialism*. Also: *National Identities and Post-Americanist Narratives*, ed. Pease (1994); *The Futures of American Studies*, eds. Pease and Robyn Wiegman (2002); *Post-Nationalist American Studies*, ed. Rowe (2000), as well as, by Rowe, *The New American Studies* (2002). In Germany one should mention the work of Günter Lenz in transnational American studies, e.g. the piece gathered in the Pease and Wiegman volume. In addition, there is a collection on *Transnational American Studies* recently edited by Winfried Fluck, Stefan Brandt and Ingrid Thaler (2007), with important contributions from both Europe and the U.S. See also the 2008 special edition of *Amerikastudien* on this topic.

<sup>34</sup> He pointedly describes this as “a continuing process of self-deconstruction” in American studies (“Americanization” 156). Ickstadt also disapproves of the amount of diversification produced by the various ethnic studies branches over the last decades. This is a position that I, as a critic of Mexican American literature, share insofar as blatant shortcomings of ethnic scholarship, such as ethnic ethnocentrism, are concerned.

<sup>35</sup> Ickstadt’s plea for a nation-based American studies is found in “Americanization, Anti-Americanism, and American Studies” (2005). An antecedent formulation of his critique of the post/transnational and global paradigm in recent American studies and of his defense of a primarily national approach appears in a 2002 essay (“American Studies in an Age of Globalization”). In “Theories of American Culture (and the Transnational Turn in American Studies)” (2007), Winfried Fluck raises similar objections to transnational American studies as Ickstadt does. He too favors a nationally defined inspection of U.S. society and culture, with a transnational, comparative viewpoint where useful (73-74 and *passim*). In a 1998 article (“The Humanities in the Age of Expressive Individualism and Cultural Radicalism”), Fluck attributes the increasing fragmentation within Americanist study and the humanities in general to what he critically terms the “expressive individualism” and “cultural radicalism” of humanities and especially American studies scholars. Cf. further the two-volume collection *Negotiations of America’s National Identity*, edited by Roland Hagenbüchle, Josef Raab and Marietta Messmer (2000). It postulates the existence of an American national identity, however embattled it may be (cf. the editors’ preface xii). The essays take up the subject from a variety of angles, such as regional, ethnic, gender, national and global aspects.

globalizing, planetary aspirations—as New Americanist work has been liable to do.<sup>36</sup> Such a blurring of the ecocritical focus of attention does not enhance the scholarly strength and relevance of literary and cultural studies in tackling environmental questions. In my view, it rather compromises them. In this pastoral ecocritical study of U.S. ethnic culture, I myself make use of a nationally as well as transnationally informed critical framework, as will be seen below.

I will conclude this survey of ecocriticism with a closer examination of the work German ecocritical American studies has produced so far. Prominent is here the scholarship of the Americanist Hubert Zapf, which may be called ecocritical in a wider sense. In a number of writings, most notably his 2002 monograph *Literatur als kulturelle Ökologie*, Zapf has developed a functional model of “literature as cultural ecology.”<sup>37</sup> His thesis is that imaginative literature functions in analogy to an ecological principle within the larger system of cultural discourses. I.e. literature appears both as a “sensorium and imaginative sounding board” for the deficits and imbalances of the general culture, and as the site of a constant “renewal” of cultural creativity.<sup>38</sup> Instead of using the usual ecocritical textual base, Zapf illustrates his argument, in his monograph and elsewhere, with references to canonical nineteenth- and twentieth-century American novels. His primary concern is with fictional literature’s special potency as a distinct, complex form of cultural textuality: the specific structures and cultural functions of the literary text in comparison with other textual genres and types of discourse. Nature and the nature-culture relationship as a thematic issue in literature is therefore not in the foreground for Zapf. His functional concept of literature as cultural ecology constitutes a significant contribution to the discussion of the special role of the literary text in the larger culture. In the context of today’s newly awakened interest in the aesthetic and the literary in American studies,

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<sup>36</sup> Ickstadt has justifiably noted that the cultural and literary exploration of such vast and diversified areas as envisioned by transnational American studies representatives (like Carolyn Porter) “runs the risk of promoting academic dilettantism, however well-intended and progressive it may be” (“Age” 554). Environmental critics clearly ought to beware of this.

<sup>37</sup> He draws on Peter Finke’s concept of cultural ecology, on Wolfgang Iser’s literary anthropology and on the adapted version of the latter by Fluck.

<sup>38</sup> Qtd. from “The State of Ecocriticism and the Function of Literature as Cultural Ecology” (2006) 54-67. Zapf’s 2002 book gives an extended discussion of this thesis in chapter 4. Cf. also his essay from 2005 (a revised version of the 2003 piece). Zapf further differentiates this functional profile of literature in the form of a triadic model consisting of three major, often interrelated subfunctions of literature as “cultural-critical metadiscourse,” “imaginative counterdiscourse” and “reintegrative interdiscourse” (“State” 62-65). In a 2008 essay, he goes on to divide the third function, “reintegrative interdiscourse,” into three more subfunctions (36-38). This piece opens Zapf’s edited *Kulturökologie und Literatur*, whose articles on European and non-European literatures exemplify the cultural ecological approach to literary study.

Zapf's model can add to an ecocriticism undertheorized and underpracticed in this regard: an ecocriticism focused on thematic analyses which, as in many other schools of contemporary literary criticism, often make no distinction between literary and nonliterary texts. Even so, at the same time Zapf invites criticism. For one thing, one might fault him for appropriating the modish metaphor of ecology to recast a functional model of literature which has really long been familiar.<sup>39</sup> Most important, Zapf's cultural ecological approach is not inherently of ecocritical interest in my opinion, for though it *may* be employed for these purposes, it is not necessarily concerned with ecological textual content. This is, however, the *sine qua non* of ecocriticism as I and most critics define it.<sup>40</sup>

One of the principal Americanist ecocritics in Germany is Christa Grewe-Volpp. Her published habilitation thesis "*Natural Spaces Mapped by Human Minds.*" *Ökokritische und ökofeministische Analysen zeitgenössischer amerikanischer Romane*, of 2004, was among the earliest ecocritical monographs in this country. In the book Grewe-Volpp offers ecocritical, ecofeminist explorations of nature conceptions in novels by late-twentieth-century U.S. women writers, Euro-American as well as Native, African and Mexican American. She interprets the texts as retellings of the dominant myth of "nature's nation" and of U.S. settlement history from the perspective of those traditionally excluded (20-21 and *passim*). Grewe-Volpp's merit is giving much space to the categories of ethnicity, race and class in her analyses of American women's literary nature constructions. In linking ecological questions with anthropocentric concerns, she advances the much needed revision of a deep ecological environmental criticism centered on Euro-American nonfiction.<sup>41</sup> In her book and in refined form in subsequent work, Grewe-Volpp has also made further significant ecocritical points.<sup>42</sup> Thus she argues for a mediating position in ecocriticism which understands nature both as a physical-material entity and as a social construction, a position derived from the ideas of Donna Haraway and N. Katherine Hayles ("Nature" 72-77; *Ökokritische* ch. 2.1.4). Grewe-Volpp then proposes four basic consequences for a literary ecocritical analysis based on this

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<sup>39</sup> Moreover, this model is of limited applicability: Not all literary works contain, for instance, cultural critique.

<sup>40</sup> In the recent essay "Literary Ecology and the Ethics of Texts" (2008), Zapf inspects the relationship between ecology and ethics in literature.

<sup>41</sup> On her selective utilization of an ecopastoral approach, see chapter 3 of this first part.

<sup>42</sup> I will quote from the essay "Nature 'Out There' and as 'a Social Player': Some Basic Consequences for a Literary Ecocritical Analysis" (2006). Cf. also the 2004 book, in which she already develops her theses for an ecocritical and ecofeminist literary analysis in chapters 2.4 and 8 (esp. 385-98).

mediating conception of nature (“Nature” 77-84). While focusing on U.S. literature, she wants her model to be understood as “a kind of blueprint” (72) for an ecocritical reading of cultural representations that is applicable in a larger literary and cultural context. She sums up her theses:

Ecocriticism which regards nature as [1] an autonomous, active entity ‘out there’ as well as [2] a ‘social player’ can be an important analytical tool in the interpretation of literary texts that represent the relationship of humans to their natural environment. In the context of contemporary environmental problems, an ecocritical discourse with [3] its emphasis on interdependence demonstrates how closely humans and culture are connected with nature. (83)<sup>43</sup>

This model, in particular its first three theses, represents in my view an important German enunciation of general criteria for environmentally oriented literary as well cultural study, including my own. Grewe-Volpp’s contribution is of special consequence considering that such elaborate theoretical reflections on critical principles are still few and far between in the young discipline of German ecocriticism. In contrast to Zapf, furthermore, she is immediately concerned with environmental, ecological themes as a literary ecocritic.

Leading exponents of German American studies ecocriticism are also Sylvia Mayer and Catrin Gersdorf. The organizer of the 2004 Münster conference, Mayer has authored and (co)edited a number of ecocritical publications. Her study *Naturethik und Neuengland-Regionalliteratur* (2004) is an ecocritical investigation of the writing of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century New England women authors.<sup>44</sup> Mayer’s book not only helps extend the base of fictional texts read ecocritically, it is also valuable for shedding light on the underexplored female tradition of U.S. environmental literature. Catrin Gersdorf’s authored and coedited (with Mayer) work in ecocritical Americanist literary and cultural studies includes her monograph *The Poetics and Politics of the Desert* (2009). Ecocritically inspired, it examines the discursive use of the desert in constructions and reconstructions of America and American identity. It looks at a range of works of narrative literature—

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<sup>43</sup> The fourth thesis is that ecocritical nature conceptions in American literature serve as alternatives to the ruling myth of “nature’s nation.”

<sup>44</sup> She analyzes novels and short stories by Harriet Beecher-Stowe, Rose Terry Cooke, Sarah Orne Jewett and Mary E. Wilkins Freeman with regard to their nature ethics in the context of the contemporaneous environmentalist discourse in America.

in various genres, including a Mexican American novel—as well as visual art from the mid-nineteenth century until the present.<sup>45</sup> Gersdorf’s study enriches the ecocritical discussion through its focus on the specific U.S. regional landscape of the desert in Euro- and ethnic American cultural and literary history.<sup>46</sup> Important ecocritical research in German American studies has also been done by Hannes Bergthaller and various other scholars.<sup>47</sup>

## **2. Mexican Americans**

The issue of an ongoing multiculturalization of the study of literature, culture and environment leads me to the Mexican American community in the U.S. Owing to massive immigration, often undocumented, and high birth rates, it is the fastest growing ethnic group in the nation. Around sixty-four percent of the officially forty-four million U.S. Hispanics are of Mexican descent.<sup>48</sup> Most of them reside in what

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<sup>45</sup> In what was originally her habilitation thesis (2004), Gersdorf specifically explores the western and southwestern deserts’ representation in terms of what she calls the four “eco-spatial” metaphors of the garden, Orient, wilderness and heterotopia (*Poetics* 32).

<sup>46</sup> In a 2006 piece entitled “Imaginary Ecologies,” she makes a case for the significance of “landscape” as a subject and a concept in American studies literary and cultural scholarship. Even in today’s ecocriticism, she observes, landscape is neglected in favor of the concern with wilderness. Through a refocusing on landscape, the author adds, the discipline of American studies might contribute to the general public debates on the reorganization of space and environment in the twenty-first century.

<sup>47</sup> In addition to several environmental critical articles, Bergthaller recently published his doctoral dissertation under the title *Populäre Ökologie: Zu Literatur und Geschichte der modernen Umweltbewegung in den USA* (2007). Dealing with the Euro-American environmental movement, he studies nonfictional writings by Leopold, Carson, Snyder and Abbey. Other German ecocritical Americanists include Heike Schäfer, Christine Gerhardt, Jan Hollm and Thomas Claviez. Schäfer is the author of a book on *Mary Austin’s Regionalism* (2004), which examines Austin’s concept and practice of regionalism in her fiction and nonfiction. Gerhardt’s as yet unpublished ecocritical habilitation thesis is titled “A Place for Humility: Whitman, Dickinson, and the Natural World” (2008). Hollm, who does ecocritical work in English and American studies, has written a literary-historical work, *Die angloamerikanische Ökonomie* (1998). Claviez too has addressed ecocritical subjects, particularly environmental ethics; a recent essay is “Ecology as Moral Stand(s)” (2006).

<sup>48</sup> Hispanics/Latinos make up almost fifteen percent of the total U.S. population; they recently surpassed African Americans as the largest minority (U.S. Census Bureau data as of 2006). Regarding labels, there are a variety of (self-)designations for the ethnic group I am concerned with. Each of these identifiers, Ramón Saldívar notes, “has a different psychological, historical, and political connotation” (*Chicano* 12). I employ the term “Mexican American” as the most neutral term for all persons of Mexican descent in the U.S. The denomination “Chicano/a,” a pejorative term prior to the

has come to be known as the American Southwest since the imperialist Mexican-American War (1846-48). In the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexico lost about half of its territory to the U.S., along with virtually all of the region's eighty thousand inhabitants.<sup>49</sup>

The Chicano movement (*Movimiento Chicano*) is a struggle for social, economic and political rights which had its period of most intense activity between 1965 and 1975. A very heterogeneous movement loosely held together by the ideology of *Chicanismo*, it must be viewed in the context of the other civil rights struggles in the U.S. at that time, such as the African American one.<sup>50</sup> The Mexican American people possess a long and rich artistic and literary tradition of oral and written texts. Its roots lie in Spanish colonial times; more and more pre-movement texts are being discovered in recent years. As with other ethnic minorities, e.g. the different groups of Natives, the Chicano movement gave rise to a new artistic and literary consciousness in the 1960s: a Chicano cultural flowering that is often quite incorrectly termed a "renaissance." Literature began to flourish in the different genres—poetic, dramatic and fictive. Mostly written in English in the contemporary age, this is another of what Berndt Ostendorf has dubbed America's "Bindestrich-Literaturen" (1). Following the first, predominantly male generation of contemporary writers since the 1960s, the mid-1970s saw the emergence of a second wave of authors. Many of those are women writing from a feminist viewpoint. Since the

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Chicano movement, has radical nationalist connotations, which includes a proud emphasis on the Native American heritage. Since the 1960s it has been used above all in political activist and academic circles, but has never met with general acceptance in the community—unlike the term "Mexican." A number of scholars have actually dropped "Chicano" again today, and except where appropriate, it will also be disregarded as a collective term of reference in this study. "Hispanic" as a generic U.S. Census Bureau label is rather unpopular as a self-referent among Spanish-speaking people in America; the preferred term is the even more inclusive "Latino/a." For the non-Latino Caucasian U.S. population, the label "Anglo" is common usage in the Southwest; I will employ the more exact "Euro-American." Useful sources on the variety of identifiers in existence are Saldívar, *Chicano* 12-13; Rebolledo, "Tradition" 254, n. 3; M. Gonzales 7-8 as well as Ikas 2-6. As to the origin of the term "Chicano," the generally accepted theory is that it derives from "mexicano" (the Aztecs called themselves "mexica"), pronounced "meshicano" due to Náhuatl influence (cf. the essay by Tino Villanueva 402-03).

<sup>49</sup> For general information on Mexican American history, consult Manuel Gonzales's *Mexicanos* (1999). It is a balanced survey with a good introduction summarizing the evolution of the study of Mexican American history during the last sixty years—via 1960s/70s Chicano nationalist radicalism on towards greater objectivity at present. Highly regarded to this day is Carey McWilliams's pioneering work on the history of Mexican Americans, *North from Mexico*, first published in 1949. Apropos of the ethnocentric term "Southwest" for this U.S. region, Charles F. Lummis claims to have coined it in the 1880s (cf. Zaragoza 78; 91, n. 2).

<sup>50</sup> On the Chicano movement and its legacy as well as on Mexican American history after 1975, see M. Gonzales chs. 8 and 9. The social, economic and political situation of the community since the late 1970s is also the topic of the essays collected in *Chicanas/Chicanos at the Crossroads* by David Maciel and Isidro Ortiz.

1990s a new, third generation of Mexican American *littérateurs*, male and female, has moved to the fore.<sup>51</sup>

The rise of Mexican American literature as initiated in the 1960s also led to a surge in scholarly criticism. From the end of the decade onward, Chicano literary criticism and literary theory developed within the larger discipline of the newly established Chicano, later also Chicana, studies. Besides literary studies, Chicano/a cultural studies has—parallel to the development in American studies—increasingly emerged as a field of its own in recent years. To this day Chicano/a studies is mainly represented by Mexican Americans themselves.<sup>52</sup> In U.S. and international Americanist scholarship—as well as on the eastern-dominated U.S. book market—, the Mexican American literary and cultural production continues to suffer negligence. Its reception is still largely limited to small, especially academic Chicano studies audiences. An exception to this are a handful of celebrated writers like Sandra Cisneros, Ana Castillo, Denise Chávez and Rudolfo Anaya, who gained

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<sup>51</sup> Critics disagree over when Mexican American literature came into being. While many scholars argue for 1848, others date its birth back to the Spanish colonial period, i.e. before Mexican independence in 1821. Thus Luis Leal—who is often referred to as the founder of Chicano literary criticism—in his seminal 1979 article about the historical development of Mexican American literature from the Hispanic period to the present. On the older Mexican American literary heritage, see especially *Reconstructing a Chicano/a Literary Heritage*, ed. María Herrera-Sobek, and the sequence of essay collections titled *Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage* which have come out of the eponymous project at the University of Houston since 1993. For an overview of Mexican American literary history since the nineteenth century, cf. the 2003 monograph by José Aranda, *When We Arrive: A New Literary History of Mexican America*, and, for a feminist interpretation, Tey Diana Rebolledo's study of Mexican American female literary expression from 1848 until today, *Women Singing in the Snow*. Also cf. Francisco Lomelí's article for a discerning recent appraisal of Mexican American literature and literary history ("Assessment"). The contemporary era is focused on by Heiner Bus in a good survey of the literature of Mexican Americans into the present (1997, 2004), in Dieter Herms's important, wide-ranging German study *Die zeitgenössische Literatur der Chicanos (1959-1988)* (1990) as well as in Walter Piller's book on the male-authored Mexican American novel. For the state of Mexican American letters since the 1980s, see also the sketch by Frederick Luis Aldama (2006) (1-36) and the essay written by Lomelí, Teresa Márquez and Herrera-Sobek. The latter appears in *Chicano Renaissance: Contemporary Cultural Trends*, eds. Maciel, Ortiz and Herrera-Sobek (2000), an anthology of scholarly articles on a variety of cultural forms, such as art, literature, music and film; the emphasis is on the preceding twenty years. A succinct overview of Mexican American achievements in art forms other than literature in recent decades can also be found in M. Gonzales 252-59.

<sup>52</sup> *The Chicano Studies Reader*, edited by Chon Noriega et al., assembles essays from the journal *Aztlán* between 1970 and 2000. In his 1998 book on Mexican American literature, Wilson Neate furnishes a review of the rise of Chicano/a studies and an outline of major literary-critical positions, particularly since the late 1970s. He discusses leading male Chicano critics like Bruce-Novoa, Ramón Saldívar and his brother José David Saldívar (11-48). On the evolution of Chicano/a literary studies, see also Lomelí, "Assessment" 73-78; Heide 35-37 and, with a focus on the current generation of scholars, Aldama. As regards Chicano cultural studies, prominent recent critical collections are *The Chicana/o Cultural Studies Reader* and its complementary volume *The Chicana/o Cultural Studies Forum*, edited by Angie Chabram-Dernersesian in 2006 and 2007, as well as *Decolonial Voices: Chicana and Chicano Cultural Studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, eds. Arturo Aldama and Naomi Quiñonez (2002).

acceptance into U.S. mainstream literature in the 1990s. This is part of a larger trend in the course of which portions of Hispanic and Mexican American culture and literature, particularly in their popular forms, have become increasingly integrated into the U.S. cultural “mainstream” these days—i.e. mainly coopted for their exoticism.<sup>53</sup> European Americanists were actually quicker to show interest in Mexican American and other Hispanic/Latino literatures and cultures in the U.S. than many U.S. American studies practitioners. A small group of German Americanists already began to study Mexican American literature in the early 1980s. Along with countries like France, the Netherlands, Austria and more recently Spain, Germany has been an important center of scholarly activity outside the U.S., now in the second generation—although with diminishing activity of late.<sup>54</sup>

As for the focus of critical attention in the investigation of Mexican American literary and cultural practices in the U.S. and elsewhere, Chicano studies has always centered on issues of ethnic/racial identity, cultural hybridity, class and gender. Postcolonial approaches have also exerted considerable influence on Chicano theory

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<sup>53</sup> A well-researched, comprehensive study of the *Chicana/o Literaturbetrieb: Wege in die Öffentlichkeit seit 1965* is by Ann-Catherine Geuder (2004); on a few authors’ mainstream recognition, cf. 336-37. For commentary on Mexican American literature’s (under)representation in the American literary canon, see Ikas 83-93.

<sup>54</sup> In Europe Chicano studies is practiced mostly within American studies departments. Bruce-Novoa and others first organized a series of biennial conferences on Mexican American and U.S. Latino literature and culture in Europe, starting at the Universität Mainz in 1984. The principal first-generation German Chicano studies representatives are Dieter Herms, Horst Tonn, Heiner Bus, Wolfgang Binder and Wolfgang Karrer. Pioneering is the work of Herms, the author of the above-mentioned 1990 monograph on contemporary Mexican American literature. Tonn’s *Zeitgenössische Chicano-Erzählliteratur in englischer Sprache* (1988) is another early book publication on this ethnic literature in Germany (Ph.D. dissertation, Freie Universität Berlin, 1986). Within the younger generation of German Chicano literary and cultural studies, important monographs are by the following scholars: Aside from Josef Raab’s unpublished habilitation thesis, there is *MexAmerica* by Gabriele Pizarz-Ramírez (2005), an analysis of representations of interculturality and postnationality in contemporary Mexican American literature and art. Karin Ikas, in *Die zeitgenössische Chicana-Literatur* (2000), examines interculturality in the writing of contemporary Mexican American women, while Anja Bandau focuses on strategies of authorization in the construction of identity in literary texts by Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga (*Strategien der Autorisierung* (2004)). In *Grenzüberschreibungen* (2004) Markus Heide studies Mexican American narrative literature in respect of its staging of cultural contact; and Marc Priewe, in *Writing Transit* (2007), is concerned with the representation of “transit” between national, postnational and transnational discourses in Mexican American culture and literature in contemporary urban southern California. There is also Ann-Catherine Geuder’s previously cited book and that by Thorsten Thiel on irony and parody in the Mexican American novel. In Austria significant work in the last years has been contributed by Astrid Fellner (*Articulating Selves* (2002)). For scholarly essays of recent date on Mexican American works of literature and culture, see the German publications edited by Lomelí and Ikas, *U.S. Latino Literatures and Cultures* (2000), and by Bandau and Priewe, *Mobile Crossings* (2006). Prominent European critical volumes have also grown out of the international conferences on Mexican American literature taking place in Spain since 1998, most recently *Perspectivas transatlánticas en la literatura chicana*, eds. Lomelí and Juan Antonio Perles Rochel (2004), and *Critical Essays on Chicano Studies*, eds. Ramón Espejo et al. (2007). Cf. further the essay compilation edited by Michele Bottalico and Salah el Moncef bin Khalifa in Italy in 2006.

and criticism; this application of postcolonial concepts to the Mexican American has justly been questioned as problematic in recent years.<sup>55</sup> Since the late 1980s, the paradigm of the U.S.-Mexico “border” and the “borderlands”—including the metaphorical implications of border—has, in all its vagueness, been put to central, indeed inflationary use in Chicano literary and cultural studies (and beyond). In connection with the discourse of borders and border crossing, concepts of postnationalism and transnationalism have recently gained wide currency in Chicano studies scholarship. This goes for the work of the major Chicano literary and cultural critics like the Saldívar brothers and Héctor Calderón, as well as for their European and German colleagues.<sup>56</sup> It ought to be underlined that there has been a cross-fertilization between Chicano studies and American studies since the late 1980s—in terms of the border concept—and especially with the 1990s. The current conceptualization of Chicano criticism as post- and transnational forms part of a reciprocal conversation between Chicano studies and the aforementioned New Americanists.

The prevailing focus on ethnic identity and the transgression of cultural, national and other boundaries in Chicano literary and cultural studies in America and Europe has provided valuable insights in understanding this ethnic group. Many of them will underlie my own analysis of Mexican American literature as an ethnic American cultural practice. Nonetheless, I also wish to take issue with the striking absence of

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<sup>55</sup> Ikas, for example, criticizes the unhistorical, inappropriate cooptation of postcolonial theory for analyzing Mexican American and other U.S. ethnic culture and literature (ch. 3.3). Heide’s remarks are in a similar vein (41-43).

<sup>56</sup> A preoccupation with questions of ethnicity, hybridity, gender, the border and now post/transnationality in German and European Chicano studies is manifest in the scholarly texts referenced above. With regard to U.S. Chicano criticism, border discourse and a transnational approach are represented by José David Saldívar in his important 1997 book *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies*. Examining Mexican American literature and culture in terms of the U.S.-Mexican border, Saldívar also intends to “put[ ] forth a model for a new kind of U.S. cultural studies” (ix). He makes an argument for a “non-Eurocentric,” “transnational” perspective in the field of American cultural studies (14). An earlier formulation of such a transnational, comparative approach to “pan-American” culture in American studies and Chicano studies appears in Saldívar’s *The Dialectics of Our America*, from 1991 (xi). For Chicano border/borderlands analysis, cf. too the influential collection of articles edited that same year by Calderón and Saldívar, *Criticism in the Borderlands*. A notable contribution to border and transnational perspectives in Chicano cultural studies is also Ramón Saldívar’s 2006 book *The Borderlands of Culture*. It presents the Texan writer and Chicano studies pioneer Américo Paredes as a forerunner of today’s transnational American studies project. Another recent study with a transnational orientation is by Héctor Calderón, *Narratives of Greater Mexico* (2004); it reads Mexican American writers from the second half of the twentieth century in the context of Mexican culture and literary traditions. In connection with the border and post/transnationalism in Chicano studies research, cf. finally the book of the German American critic Monika Kaup on contemporary Mexican American border fiction as well as the essays in *Imagined Transnationalism*, eds. Kevin Concannon, Lomelí and Priewe (2009).

the biophysical environment and in particular an ecological viewpoint which characterizes the U.S. and German/European Chicano studies monographs and essay collections mentioned in the foregoing review of criticism. As a matter of fact, environmental-ecological concerns have long been practically ignored in the study of the Mexican American, his culture and literature. In recent years, however, there have been voices like that of social scientist and Chicano studies scholar Devon Peña. Echoing the ecocritical position described in chapter I.1, he speaks out against the “largely unquestioned and unchallenged anthropocentrism” of Chicano studies. He sees the discipline “limited” by its “currently fashionable flirtation . . . with postmodern deconstruction,” as he phrases it in his introduction to the transdisciplinary collection edited in 1998, *Chicano Culture, Ecology, Politics: Subversive Kin* (14, 7). In this volume Mexican American identity and experience are no longer defined just through ethnicity, class, gender and sexual difference, but also in terms of the natural environment and a human sense of place (Peña, Introduction 7). In my judgment, this is an appropriate, long overdue shift. Not only when viewed from the perspective of environmental concern, but also simply insofar as the neglected categories of nature and environment too play a significant part—in interaction with the other categories—in the situation of cultural contact and conflict that lies at the heart of Mexican American culture in its relation to dominant U.S. society.<sup>57</sup> In Peña’s book, literature is not of great interest, but the dialogue between Chicano studies and (social) ecology has been initiated, in an effort to “reorient Chicano studies through an epistemology of place” and make it “more relevant” (Introduction 7, 11). As Peña himself emphasizes, Chicano scholars’ growing interest in environmental and ecological questions is closely related to the U.S. environmental justice movement, of which Hispanic and Mexican American environmentalism is an important branch. Environmental issues are now being more and more explored as a social, ethnic problem, having long been considered the domain of white middle-class American environmentalism (cf. Peña, Introduction 6, 14). A fundamental factor in Mexican Americans’ longstanding disinterest in

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<sup>57</sup> A lack of scholarly attention to nature and ecological issues is also conspicuous in the emergent field of Chicano cultural studies (in which José David Saldívar is greatly involved). Identity, gender, the border and the post/transnational, on the other hand, are central foci. Cf. the collections of articles edited by Aldama and Quiñonez in 2002 and by Chabram-Dernersesian in 2006 and 2007. In the 2007 volume, Peña’s *Chicano Culture, Ecology, Politics* is referred to in passing in the editor’s “Postscript” survey of “yet other Chicana/o cultural studies possibilities and resources” (219, 221; 249, n. 3; even more briefly in a note to the introduction 7; 245-46, n. 20).

ecology and environmentalism has clearly been the racist Euro-American view of people of color as part of nature throughout U.S. history.<sup>58</sup>

Concerning the Mexican American relationship to the landscape of the Southwest, scholars have pointed out the profundity of place awareness and the strong bonding to the land in much of the culture and thought. To quote ecocritic Carmen Flys-Junquera, “Nature, ‘la tierra’ is central to the Chicano worldview . . .” (“Voice” 120). Generally speaking, this is a syncretic ethnic concept of nature which melds Spanish, Native American and—it should be added here—Anglo/Euro-American components.<sup>59</sup> As Peña notes, the Mexican-origin people’s traditional style of life in

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<sup>58</sup> Cf. also Priscilla Solis Ybarra on the meager appeal mainstream American environmentalism, with its emphasis on wilderness preservation and its omission of the interests of ethnic minorities on the land, has held for the Mexican American (“Walden” 2-3). Peña’s book actually proposes a bioregional angle on Mexican American ecology, in essays centering on the Upper Rio Grande (Río Arriba) bioregion in southern Colorado and northern New Mexico. Bioregionalism, another strand of the contemporary U.S. environmental movement, works towards achieving an ecologically sustainable symbiosis of human and nonhuman communities within a limited territory defined by watersheds and other natural borders (cf. Buell, *Writing* 297, n. 1). Peña has published several books and numerous articles on the topic of Mexican American/Latino people and the environment. In *The Terror of the Machine* (1997) he studies the intersections of technology, work, gender and ecology in the *maquiladora* industry along the U.S.-Mexico border. His recent monograph *Mexican Americans and the Environment* (2005) further expands on the relationship between ecology and cultural, historical and political forces in the Mexican American experience. In an essay from 2003, Peña traces the development of Latino environmental studies over the previous decade.

With reference to the elusive concept of “place,” Peña observes in 1998 that the spatial dimensions of Mexican American social life, and thus sense of place, have remained largely unexamined by Chicano studies social scientists (Introduction 20-21, n. 11). As part of the renaissance of regionalism, theories of place have in fact made a comeback in humanistic and social thought in the last few decades (cf. Buell, *Writing* 56-57), and they have been of great attractivity to practitioners of ecocriticism. Buell, for instance, outlines his own ecocritical conception of place and place attachment in his 2001 book (ch. 2). A recent discussion can be found in his latest monograph, where he succinctly defines “place” as “space that is bounded and marked as humanly meaningful” (ch. 3; 145). Phenomenological interpretations of place have been an important source of inspiration for environmental criticism. Thus ecocritics have taken up the phenomenological place theory of the U.S. humanistic geographer Yi-Fu Tuan in *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values* (1974); cf. also his *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (1977). Ecocritical scholars have also drawn on the philosophies of place developed by phenomenological philosophers like Martin Heidegger (his idea of “dwelling”), Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Edward Casey, an influential American phenomenologist of place. Heidegger’s philosophy with its critical view of industrial modernity has stimulated a number of ecocritics, though not so much in Germany owing to Heidegger’s connection with Nazism; on Heideggerian ecophilosophy and its significance to ecocriticism, see Garrard’s short account (*Ecocriticism* 30-32). Besides phenomenological readings of space as place, another approach to space used by ecocritics are Marxist-inspired ideas on space, as in the work of the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre. A recent German essay collection that investigates space, also as environment, in U.S. as well as Mexican American culture and literature is *Space—Place—Environment*, eds. Hönnighausen, Julia Apitzsch and Wibke Reger (2004). For scholarly explorations of space and place in America, cf. further the volume edited by Klaus Benesch and Kerstin Schmidt (2005) as well as a special 2008 issue of *Anglia* on literature and new cultural geography.

<sup>59</sup> Peña (*Mexican* 69-70) and Norwood (“Women’s” 160) comment on the hybrid cultural makeup of Mexican Americans’ land concept, but underemphasize the Anglo American constituent of their ethnic identity. Peña names regional Native influences on Hispanic nature values in what would

the arid southwestern environment has been marked by good adaptation to the land and ecological sustainability.<sup>60</sup> I would like to stress in this connection that it is crucial for any, including my own, discussion of Mexican American relations with nature and the environment to eschew romanticization or even cultural essentialization (as in the traditional Euro-American association of indigenous peoples with nature). As Peña too emphasizes, not all members of this heterogeneous ethnic group have close ties to the natural world or even find them important (Introduction 7, “Animalitos” 35). In Mexican American culture and works of literature, these ties have, for all their significance, indeed often become romantically idealized and overstated in what has, since the mid-twentieth century, been a predominantly urban ethnic reality. We are thus also faced with a sentimental nature ideal akin to the pastoral myth of “nature’s nation” entertained by the larger U.S. society, of which Mexican Americans form part. From the beginning, it may further be said, the biophysical landscape as well as environmental justice concerns have, in one form or another, been—or represented as being—of great consequence in Mexican American social and cultural history in the Southwest. This encompasses aspects such as the long residence and deep, also spiritual rootedness in the land of certain local cultures; they have been affected by the loss of ancestral land grants and water rights since the U.S. takeover in 1848. Other aspects are connected with the rural heritage of more recent immigrants and the agricultural livelihood and exploitation of migrant farmworkers as well as with environmental degradation and injustice in metropolitan areas. The activities of the new Mexican American environmental movement since the 1980s come in here. A further expression of the salient role of the land for many Mexican Americans is the pivotal Chicano

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become the U.S. Southwest through cultural exchange with peoples like the Pueblo, Navajo and Apache (69-70, 77).

<sup>60</sup> Peña’s 2005 study is an invaluable source on the as yet largely untold environmental history of the Mexican-origin people north and south of the modern-day border, giving special attention to ecological and sociocultural change. While chapter 3 is concerned with Mexico since pre-contact times, chapter 4 relates the environmental history of the U.S. Hispanic Southwest from 1598 to 1950. Peña shows the traditional sustainable adaptation of Hispanics’ land use and mode of production in most places, whereas the rise of Euro-American industrial capitalism after 1848 caused large-scale environmental disturbance and cultural change in the region (77-100). In other words, environmental harm in the Southwest is “principally” due to the Euro-American presence after 1848, Peña underscores (104). He is currently completing a new book titled *Gaia in Aztlán: Endangered Landscapes and Disappearing People in the Politics of Place*, which apparently deals with Mexican Americans in the Upper Rio Grande region.

nationalist symbol of Aztlán, the Aztecs' mythical homeland in the American Southwest.<sup>61</sup>

This communal cultural-historical significance of the physical environs is also reflected in what is my subject in this investigation: Mexican American literature and literary history. There the land and nature and Mexican American characters' relation to them—often one of close rapport—has been a prominent theme. The nonhuman world already plays an important part in Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's *La relación* (*The Account*) (1542).<sup>62</sup> The chronicle of the Spanish explorer's eight-year odyssey from Florida through parts of the present U.S. Southwest and into Mexico is one of the earliest known Hispanic writings about the later U.S. and may be considered the foundational text of Mexican American literature.<sup>63</sup> It is also one of the earliest expressions of the great U.S. tradition of writing about nature.<sup>64</sup> In his text Cabeza de Vaca describes the wild nature of the Caribbean and the North American mainland—their topography, flora, fauna and climate—as a powerful presence. He dwells on the challenges and perils nature poses to the Spaniards as well as to the autochthons. An instance is his vivid account of the destructive impact of a Caribbean hurricane early on his journey (31-32); it is one of a number of first written descriptions of the American lands found in this text (cf. the editors' introduction 11; 124, n. 15; also Philippon 128). In his observations on the terrain, Cabeza de Vaca not only points out its many hardships as well as its fitness for cultivation by future settlers. He also expresses a sense of wonder at the landscape as he travels through present-day

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<sup>61</sup> Peña calls attention to the fact that the economic and political subjection Mexican American people have suffered in the U.S. is at the basis of their environmental problems (*Mexican* xxvii). The recent Mexican American environmental movement is particularly active in the Southwest, in rural communities and urban centers as well as along the border with Mexico. Activists include farmworkers, farmers and ranchers, city residents and factory workers. See Peña on this ethnic environmentalism, its terrains of struggle and its organizational forms (*Mexican* xxi-xxvii and esp. ch. 7). In his book Peña also articulates Chicano/a critiques of mainstream and radical U.S. environmentalism (chs. 5 and 6). In addition, he provides information on antecedents of contemporary Mexican American environmental activism in the shape of resistance to domination, land loss and ecological damage in the Southwest since the late 1800s (100-03). For an overview of forms of Mexican American environmentalism, cf. also Gwyn Kirk's essay 182-87. An important early monograph on this ethnic group's environmental struggles in the latter decades of the twentieth century is by Laura Pulido, *Environmentalism and Economic Justice* (1996). Furthermore, pieces on Mexican American environmental issues appear in the environmental justice collections edited by Bullard and others.

<sup>62</sup> A recent English translation and reedition of the text, which was first published in Spain in 1542, is by Martin Favata and José Fernández. I will use this edition in the following.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Bruce-Novoa's article "Shipwrecked in the Seas of Signification."

<sup>64</sup> Daniel Philippon refers to *La relación* as an example of the "environmental literature" of the early European explorers of America. Beatriz Rivera-Barnes examines Cabeza de Vaca's work in her ecocritical study of Latin American literature coauthored with Jerry Hoeg (ch. 2).

Florida, a “country that was . . . marvelous to see, filled with large forests and amazingly tall trees” (40).

Scholarly inquiry into the importance of nature and environment in the history of Mexican American literature has only just started; hardly anything has been written about it. As to more recent literary history, this issue has lately begun to be addressed in the research of the young Mexican American literary ecocritic Priscilla Solis Ybarra on Mexican American environmental literature’s historical development since 1848. Her principal work is her still unpublished 2006 doctoral dissertation “Walden Pond in Aztlán? A Literary History of Chicana/o Environmental Writing since 1848.” It is the first long-range history of Mexican American environmental literature and the only book-length study of this ethnic literature from an environmental, ecocritical angle. The precontemporary writers examined by Ybarra are the nineteenth-century Californian author María Amparo Ruiz de Burton and the early-twentieth-century Texan Jovita González.<sup>65</sup> My own first focus of analysis is Fabiola Cabeza de Baca’s New Mexico Plains memoir *We Fed Them Cactus* (1954). This precontemporary text is a harbinger of what has been, in the last decades, augmenting literary concern over and growing criticism of the anthropogenic destruction of the natural environment in the rural and urban Southwest and beyond its confines. This goes along with a critical attitude towards the consequences for local cultures and all humans. Important examples of environmental and social inequity as represented in literary form involve contamination by pesticides and other toxins as well as processes of industrialization and citification at the cost of traditional ethnic communities. In reply to such oppression, as I will also show in this study, Mexican American writers have recurrently imagined alternative visions of a more nature-oriented and equitable ethos and lifestyle. These traditional or pseudo-traditional utopian visions may evince considerable influence from forms of U.S. mainstream environmentalism. A concern with the environment and man’s place in it can be observed across generic boundaries in Mexican American literature and its history; it appears in works by both men and women, the latter often from an ecofeminist stance in recent decades. Besides the Natives, Mexican American

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<sup>65</sup> In this ecocritical exploration of Mexican American literary history in different genres from 1848 to the present (Rice University), Ybarra focuses also on the work of Jimmy Santiago Baca and of Moraga. See further her 2008 essay with Jorge Marcone, “Mexican and Chicana/o Environmental Writing.” It offers a literary-historical outline of the understudied Mexican and Mexican American environmental literatures, and comments also on their shared themes.

authors thus have a major share in that multiculturalism (and the abundance of women writers) is, to use Slovic's expression, the "hallmark" of today's environmental literature from the desert—and, I would add, nondesert—Southwest (Introduction xvii). Indubitably, in its preoccupation with the material world, this regional ethnic literature does anything but subscribe to Jacques Derrida's famous statement that "il n'y a rien hors du texte."<sup>66</sup>

Yet, in spite of the prominence and ever-increasing significance of environmental and ecological issues especially in contemporary Mexican American writing, it is still mostly excluded from the green literary canon. An exception are a few anthologies edited by Slovic and others.<sup>67</sup> A lot remains to be done also in environmental literary-critical practice, and not only with regard to the history of Mexican American environmental literature, for all multicultural ideals in ecocriticism today. The one U.S. ethnic minority that has so far been studied to some extent are Native Americans; the only Hispanic whose writing on nature has really been taken up by ecocritics is Barry Lopez (who does not thematize his own ethnicity).<sup>68</sup> An ecocritical reading of Mexican American culture and literature has seldom been done, and Mexican American critics have in general been even slower in recognizing its potential than their non-Mexican American counterparts. This is an unusual situation in ethnic studies, which is itself clearly due to Mexican American hesitancy about entering a Euro-American domain like the question of the

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<sup>66</sup> In comparison with Mexican American culture, the land and the relation human-nature have been of less account in the cultural and literary production of other groups of U.S. Hispanics such as Puerto Ricans or Dominicans. Mexican American culture and literature long tended to retain a rural quality and an emphasis on property ownership, also in terms of a national territory in the Southwest. Puerto Rican mainland culture and literature, by contrast, have always been more interested in the urban and in New York City. This difference was reinforced through the immigration patterns as, unlike Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans traditionally moved to the U.S. Northeast. Cf. Bruce-Novoa's 1982 piece on Hispanic literatures in the U.S. ("Hispanic" 28-29).

<sup>67</sup> E.g. *Being in the World*, eds. Slovic and Terrell Dixon (1992); *Literature and the Environment*, eds. Lorraine Anderson, Slovic and John O'Grady (1999); *Getting Over the Color Green*, ed. Slovic (2001). *At Home on This Earth: Two Centuries of U.S. Women's Nature Writing*, edited by Anderson and Thomas Edwards in 2002, also covers some Mexican American writers. So does another anthology, *The Colors of Nature*, eds. Alison Deming and Lauret Savoy (2002); it contains literary and nonliterary writings about the natural world by U.S. people of color.

<sup>68</sup> Joni Adamson's *American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice and Ecocriticism* (2001) is an example of a monographic ecocritical examination of Native literature. As for African American culture, it has recently come under consideration by environmental critics. *Restoring the Connection to the Natural World*, edited by Mayer (2003), is one of the first ecocritical essay collections devoted exclusively to African American texts. Asian Americans have also begun to attract ecocritical interest here and there.

environment, as explained before.<sup>69</sup> The few existing studies concentrate chiefly on a small number of contemporary women and a few contemporary male writers; many others have been neglected and notably the literary tradition hardly been explored at all to date. Among the contemporary female authors who have received ecocritical and ecofeminist commentary, Pat Mora, Ana Castillo and Helena María Viramontes occupy a central position; others are particularly Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. U.S. ecocritic Patrick Murphy has been an active contributor; important Mexican American representatives are the feminist scholar María Herrera-Sobek and, of late, the environmental literary critic Ybarra.<sup>70</sup> Regarding Europe and Germany, where ecocriticism is not much developed yet, it is virtually nonexistent in the study of Mexican American literature. In German Americanist scholarship, the only exception is the work of ecocritics Christa Grewe-Volpp and Catrin Gersdorf. Besides a few essays, they have each dedicated a chapter to Mexican American writing through an ecocritical lens in their recent monographs. Grewe-Volpp (2004) explores environmental justice and ecofeminism in Viramontes, while Gersdorf (2009) gives an ecocritical reading of the representation of the desert landscape in Alfredo Véa.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> In their 2008 article, Marcone and Ybarra also remark on the ongoing disregard of Mexican American environmental literature by all but a very few scholars, whether Mexican American or ecocritical (104). Similarly, Gersdorf criticizes the neglect of the natural landscape in Chicano studies and its border discourse with their “urban biases” (*Poetics* 309-16). My own research confirms this lack of representation of Mexican American (and Hispanic) writers even in the majority of recent multiculturally oriented ecocritical publications.

<sup>70</sup> Aside from a number of essays, Murphy examines Mexican American women writers in his 1995 and especially 2000 books. Cf. also the work of Benay Blend for environmentally bent interpretations of Mexican American women’s literature. Herrera-Sobek has written several articles on Mexican American literature and environmental concerns since the mid-1990s. Ybarra’s ecocritical writings on the Mexican American environmental literary tradition, most notably her groundbreaking 2006 thesis, have already been cited. She has also published a few other essays on the Mexican American and the environment, such as literary-critical pieces in 2004 and 2009 (“Borderlands”). See further *Xerophilia* by Tom Lynch (2008). This ecocritical analysis of mostly contemporary southwestern literature also takes in some Mexican American authors. Both Lynch (ch. 2) and Ybarra (“Borderlands”) have in fact introduced an environmental viewpoint on the border literature. The research of the Chicana feminist critic Tey Diana Rebolledo on landscape in Mexican American women’s writing will be dealt with in my chapter on Cabeza de Baca.

<sup>71</sup> Within her ecocritical, ecofeminist study of nature conceptions in contemporary U.S. women’s novels, Grewe-Volpp here concentrates on Viramontes’s *Under the Feet of Jesus* (1995) (ch. 7). Cf. also her 2005 essay on Viramontes entitled “The Oil Was Made from Their Bones.” Gersdorf, in her book on America’s desert discourse, looks at Véa’s 1993 novel *La maravilla* (ch. IV.4). She interprets the Arizona desert as a borderland heterotopia in an ecological and sociocultural sense, i.e. as a site offering resistance against and a reconstructive vision of dominant urban America. “Ecocritical Uses of the Erotic” (2000) is an earlier, ecocritical-ecofeminist reading of *La maravilla* as well as of Mora’s poetry and other contemporary works of U.S. literature and film; Gersdorf discusses the concept of the erotic in the textualization of the relations between humans and U.S. deserts. Elsewhere in Europe, Chicano studies ecocriticism is practiced in Spain, where the ecocritical method is, as in Italy, increasingly spreading and where the third EASLCE conference was held in 2008 (Alcalá de Henares,

In view of the highly unsatisfactory ecocritical consideration of Mexican American literature and culture at the present moment, such an interpretation of this ethnic literature in my study promises to be an interesting and illuminating undertaking. It is a project that, within Chicano literary and cultural studies, advances the incipient, much needed departure from the prevalent critical focus with its near absence of environmental, ecological perspectives. In responding to this lack, this thesis is also intended to help pave the way for the exploration of Mexican Americans and their literature in the young field of ecocriticism, narrowly centered on Euro-American culture. This is also especially fitting in Germany, where ecocritical practice is still marginalized, while scholarly interest in the Mexican American has even started to decline these days. My study is, to my knowledge, the first book to investigate Mexican American writing in ecocritical terms in German American and Chicano studies scholarship. In short, it is a combination of two topical “minority” discourses that are of growing significance for Americanist and humanistic inquiry—Chicano studies for demographic reasons in the U.S., environmental criticism for obvious global reasons. One might label this approach “green” Chicano studies or “ethnoecocriticism.” More specifically, I will employ an ecocritical method founded on Mexican American literature as pastoral: environmental or ecological pastoral.

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Madrid). Mexican American literature has been ecocritically explored by the U.S.-Spanish scholar Carmen Flys-Junquera in various essays, above all on the novels of Rudolfo Anaya. Along with Jimmy Santiago Baca in particular, Anaya is one of the few male Mexican American authors ecocritics have begun to examine so far. There is finally a Finnish Ph.D. dissertation on Mexican American writing which makes some use of ecocriticism, Mirka Pohjanrinne’s *The Borderlands Trope and Chicana Otherness in the Poetry of Pat Mora and Lorna Dee Cervantes* (2002). I wish to thank Prof. Astrid Fellner for bringing this work to my attention.

### **3. Pastoral and Ecocriticism**

What, then, is environmental pastoral? Leo Marx's American pastoral theory must form the basis of any discussion of U.S. literature in this respect, but let me begin with a brief historical overview of the over-two-thousand-year-old Western literary tradition of pastoral. As a specific literary form, pastoral (Latin *pastor* signifies "shepherd") goes back to classical antiquity: To the poetry of Theocritus (ca. 316-260 B.C.), the Greek author of the *Idylls*, and to the work of the Roman poet Vergil (70-19 B.C.), whose *Eclogues* (or *Bucolics*) may be regarded as "the greatest pre-text of western pastoral" (qtd. from Buell, *Environmental* 443, n. 14).<sup>72</sup> From the start classical pastoralism was an urban phenomenon, with city poets celebrating and idealizing the life of herdsmen, typically shepherds. In his *Idylls* Theocritus sets a nostalgic vision of rural living against life in Alexandria; in Vergil, too, herdsmen sing of the benefits of rustic over urban existence. The rural scene was associated with physical health and moral superiority over the city, and Vergil's Arcadia in particular, established in the *Eclogues*, became the epitome of bucolic simplicity and contentment (cf. Scheese 13-14; Gifford, *Pastoral* 15, 18-20). It is important to underscore with Greg Garrard that, commencing with Theocritan poetry, two key contrasts have characterized the pastoral tradition through the ages. These are the spatial distinction of country (associated with peace and abundance) vs. town (frenzy and corruption), and the temporal distinction of past (idyllic) vs. present ("fallen") (cf. *Ecocriticism* 35). Evolving over the centuries, pastoral could later also be found outside poetry, in drama and the novel; an instance of its enormous vogue in Renaissance Europe is Sir Philip Sidney's pastoral romance *Arcadia* (1590). Generally, pastoral was used in each historical period as a specific formal type, with a set of conventions derived from the pastoral poets of antiquity (cf. Gifford, *Pastoral* 1). Eventually, this age-old form of literary pastoral with its classical

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<sup>72</sup> Concerning the original emergence of pastoralism, Marx and others have taken up David Halperin's hypothesis from *Before Pastoral* (1983) (esp. ch. 6). According to Halperin, the herdsman of the ancient Near East already began to acquire special religious, metaphysical and political meaning in writing almost three millennia prior to the pastoral poems of Theocritus and Vergil. The origins of pastoralism may thus be traced to the earliest known uses of writing in Mesopotamia around 3000 B.C. (cf. Marx, "Future" 212, "Pastoralism" 42-43). As for general studies of literary pastoral, Terry Gifford delineates its history from its classical forms up to contemporary Western culture, including U.S. pastoral literature, in his 1999 monograph *Pastoral*. Greg Garrard does the same in the chapter on pastoral in his ecocritical book (ch. 3). See also the older works by Andrew Ettin, *Literature and the Pastoral*, and Harold Toliver, *Pastoral Forms and Attitudes*.

conventions practically succumbed to modernity and the industrial revolution during the eighteenth century.

It may, however, be argued that there has been a revitalization of pastoral after the demise of the classical shepherd convention, and that it has indeed flourished in the culture and literature of the urban industrial age since the days of Romanticism. In his influential 1935 book *Some Versions of Pastoral*, the British critic William Empson initiates a new, modern view of literary pastoral. He extends its definition to embrace texts like *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* or the new proletarian novel as “covert” versions of pastoral. Apparently simple and unsophisticated characters of low social status are read as a vehicle for the writer’s exploration of complex ideas about society—hence Empson’s famous description of pastoral as the “process of putting the complex into the simple” (6; 23; cf. Marx, “Future” 209; Gifford, *Pastoral* 9-10). The first scholar to concern himself with the social and political implications of literary pastoral, Empson freed it from its rigid, outdated formal properties. He established the seminal notion that pastoral is not just a literary genre but also a literary mode for expressing a view of life equal in scope to that conveyed in tragedy, comedy and other primary modes (cf. Marx, “Future” 209; Halperin 55). In point of fact, as Harold Toliver notes, most critics of pastoral since Empson have treated it precisely as such a mode, applying the term to works of literature that illustrate its themes and attitudes while freely abandoning its classical formal devices (vii). Accordingly, the word “pastoral” has, beyond the specific literary form, also a broader, content-oriented use now. In the words of Terry Gifford, it may refer to “any literature that describes the country with an implicit or explicit contrast to the urban,” usually with a celebratory attitude towards nature (*Pastoral* 2). This modern reading of pastoral allows of many different varieties, and so “pastoral” has come to be a “contested term,” a veritable bone of contention among its numerous commentators.<sup>73</sup> To my mind, a modern, content-focused approach to pastoral as a

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<sup>73</sup> The quotation is from Bryan Loughrey, editor of *The Pastoral Mode* (8; cf. Gifford, *Pastoral* 4). The modern interpretation of pastoral is for example rejected by a formalist critic like Paul Alpers. He sees neither idyllic landscapes nor the antithesis nature-culture (he cites, e.g., Marx) nor a hostility to the city as defining characteristics of pastoral, but avers that the central fiction of pastoral into our time has been the lives of herdsmen or their equivalents (cf. *What Is Pastoral?* (1996) x, 10-11). Others, such as the important pastoral scholar Renato Poggioli, opine that literary pastoral did not survive the inception of modernity. Poggioli dates the death of pastoral in the eighteenth century in his collection *The Oaten Flute* (1975). The lasting vitality of pastoral, by contrast, is also argued for in the essays on pastoralism in European and U.S. cultural and literary expression into the present in *Survivals of Pastoral*, ed. Richard Hardin (1979). Especially the pieces by Hardin and Edward Ruhe show the influence of Empson’s ideas. Cf. further *Pastoral and the Humanities*, edited by Mathilde

literary mode is an intriguing enterprise for the great potential and multiple manifestations pastoral can offer.

Leo Marx is unquestionably the most important American critic of pastoral. He furnishes the underpinnings on which I will construct my own approach. Marx describes pastoral as “one of Western culture’s oldest, most enduring modes of thought and expression”—a mode that expresses “a special perspective on human experience,” namely the long-lived “mentality” of “pastoralism” (Afterword 376; “Future” 210-11). He is thus in the tradition of Empson in his own ideological interpretation of American pastoral and pastoralism. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (1964) is one of the foundational texts of American studies and the one enduring classic on American pastoralism. Starting with Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, Marx explores the cultural and literary history of the pastoral ideal in America and its high literary critique of modernity and technology.<sup>74</sup> He inspects Euro-American writings and literature from Thomas Jefferson and the Transcendentalists through F. Scott Fitzgerald. Literary pastoralism is read as a response to the threat of the nation’s increasing industrialization, which is symbolized by a machine—as central image of American industrial progress—that keeps interrupting the pastoral idyll in the “garden.” It is what Marx calls a “distinctive industrial age variant of pastoralism” as in preindustrial versions the “counterforce” was represented by the royal court or the city (“Pastoralism” 58; “Future” 214). Marx observes that “the psychic root of pastoralism” has always been “the seemingly universal impulse,” “in the face of the growing complexity and power of organized society, to disengage from the dominant culture and to seek the basis for a simpler, more harmonious way of life ‘closer’ . . . to ‘nature,’” i.e. a “conflict of world views” (Introduction to *Pilot* xii-xiii; “Sontag” 291). In his modal, ideological definition of American pastoral, in 1964 and since, Marx also identifies tension and “conflict” between nature and society as central aspects *within* the worldview of pastoralism in its “dialectical mode of perception” (“Pastoralism” 44). In his monograph he accentuates the inherent ambivalence and contradictory character of

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Skoie and Sonia Bjørnstad-Velázquez (2006), which advocates the reinscription of pastoral in the humanities. Another recent volume is *New Versions of Pastoral*, eds. David James and Philip Tew (2009). Its contributions study the bucolic tradition in Anglophone, above all British literature from the end of the eighteenth century until today.

<sup>74</sup> He discusses the concept of technology at length in a 1997 essay. It was actually not until the early decades of the twentieth century that “technology,” in the broad, indeterminate sense of the mechanic arts generally, first gained currency (“Technology” 465).

the American pastoral ideal: his countrymen's celebration of nature and rurality while upholding the very forces of technology and urban industrialism that ultimately destroy nature (cf. also "Pastoralism" 49). With respect to the emergence and recasting of classic features of the pastoral in America, the scholar highlights a variety of traditional elements in American pastoralism and in the narratives of the classic American writers. Such "relatively constant features of pastoralism" since its ancient origins some five thousand years ago, Marx notes, resurge particularly in these authors' protagonists and settings, and in the complex interplay between both ("Pastoralism" 54, 52 and passim).<sup>75</sup> I might add yet that the quest for a natural pastoral paradise in American culture and literature stands also in the cultural-historical context of the Puritan-based American tradition of a pursuit of utopian ideals.<sup>76</sup>

In 1986 Marx presents a reappraisal of *The Machine in the Garden* and an important update on his pastoral theory in "Pastoralism in America." This update is foreshadowed in earlier essays gathered in *The Pilot and the Passenger* (1988), and further developed in more recent pieces, above all "Does Pastoralism Have a Future?" (1992)<sup>77</sup> and the illuminating new afterword to the 2000 anniversary edition of *Machine*. Marx has come to be aware of the limitations attributable to the "blinker time" in which he wrote his seminal monograph—the lack of inclusion of female and ethnic practitioners of the pastoral mode (cf. Afterword 382-83). He also affirms, plausibly so, that pastoralism has not become obsolete in present-day industrial-metropolitan America, an anachronism that has supposedly lost its grip on the imagination of disaffected Americans, as he suggested in the epilogue to *Machine*. On the contrary, he now sees a "need for a serious reconsideration of pastoralism" ("Pastoralism" 40). Marx proceeds to identify a deep "ideological continuity" between the pastoralism of a critical minority of major nineteenth-century American writers and twentieth-century dissident movements like 1960s

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<sup>75</sup> Cf. also *Machine*, where he elaborates on the adaptation of classical Vergilian pastoral elements to American conditions in J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782) (113-14).

<sup>76</sup> Explorations of the prominent discourse of utopia—often as a pastoral paradise—as well as dystopia throughout American cultural history appear in *Dreams of Paradise, Visions of Apocalypse*, edited by Jaap Verheul in 2004. Cf. also a recent German publication on this, *Millennial Perspectives: Life Worlds and Utopias*, eds. Brigitte Georgi-Findlay and Hans-Ulrich Mohr (2003). It includes an environmental literary perspective.

<sup>77</sup> Published in John Dixon Hunt's compilation of essays on *The Pastoral Landscape* (1992), which focuses on visual art.

counterculture and, more recently, “environmentalism, the antinuclear movements . . . , the voluntary simplicity movement, as well as ‘green’ tendencies within the feminist, gay rights, Native American, African-American and Hispanic movements.”<sup>78</sup> There is consequently, he argues, a “fundamental divide” in American society and culture, the depth and durability of which he self-admittedly underestimated in 1964. It is a “split” between a dominant culture associated with the attributes of industrial progress and machine technology, and an adversary minority culture associated with a life “closer to nature.” The latter represents what he terms the “new pastoralism,” an “adaptation of pastoralism to the novel conditions of life in a progressive, urban industrial society” (“Pastoralism” 59). Marx also points out the proximate rather than literal character of much of this new pastoralism: its adherents usually have no wish to renounce the amenities of modern life, nor do they necessarily have an attachment to the natural environment as such. As opposed to the “progressive” worldview with its belief in the primacy of material concerns and the resultant exploitative attitude towards nature, the “new pastoral” worldview rather emphasizes less tangible, nonmaterial values. These may be of an aesthetic, moral, political, environmental or spiritual kind (58-59, Afterword 383-84). In his 1986 piece, Marx actually expresses cautious hope that this new American pastoralism might develop into an effective political ideology on the left. He is justly rather skeptical, though, about its political power due to its appeal being confined to parts of the white middle class at that time (36, 60-66). Within a much more multicultural context since the closing years of the twentieth century, it might be said that Marx’s pastoral political hope is now also embodied in the antiglobalization movement, the international environmental justice movement and other alternative movements critical of the negative impact of techno-urban civilization in the Western world and on a global scale. Clearly, all of these groupings could be added to his list of “new pastoral” dissident forces above.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> The reference to ethnic and other minority groups such as Hispanics is a 2000 addition (Afterword 384-85, “Pastoralism” 38-39). As regards the counterculture, Marx already deals with it in a 1972 article on “Susan Sontag’s ‘New Left Pastoral.’” Sontag’s Vietnam essay *Trip to Hanoi* (1968), Marx writes, exemplifies the curious, seemingly paradoxical blend of pastoralism and left-wing radicalism in 1960s countercultural ideology (as does the slogan “Make love not war!”) (296-97, 292). In later years Marx’s favorite countercultural example has been the Berkeley student leader Mario Savio (e.g. in “Pastoralism” 63-64).

<sup>79</sup> In an essay from 1994, Marx identifies the traditional American rift between progressivism and a pastoral vision in today’s rapidly developing U.S. Southwest as well as globally (“Open Spaces, City Places” 36-37). In a 2001 assessment of *Machine* and Marx’s later work on American pastoralism, Peter Cannavò argues for the continuing relevance of Marx’s ideas. He envisions a new pastoralism as

Whatever its political import as a left-wing ideology, Marx is certainly right in stating that pastoralism and the pastoral ideal continue to play a prominent role in contemporary American society, culture and—as we will see in a moment—literature. The “machine-in-the-garden” tension, prefigured in the “interrupted idyll” episode of nineteenth-century writing, is, with Marx, “one of the great central figurative conceptions” in American literature, as well as in painting, photography, film and music.<sup>80</sup> As such, he notes, this tension is also of special significance in our age of environmental decline. Marx, whose concern over environmental issues pervades more recent essays of his,<sup>81</sup> actually predicts the emergence of “new versions of pastoral” (“Future” 221-222). “What the new [ecological] consciousness has added to traditional pastoralism,” he writes, “is a sense of the biophysical environment as a locus of meaning and value in the literal sense, at least, of setting limits within which social systems must operate” (“Pastoralism” 66). It therefore “seems probable . . . that a twenty-first century version of pastoral will lend expression to a yearning for an altered relation to the natural” (“Future” 223). This is evidently already true in the second half of the twentieth century: Marx has described Rachel Carson’s American fable of the blighted Eden at the outset of *Silent Spring* (1962), one of the founding texts of today’s environmental movement in the U.S., as a “variant of the machine-in-the-garden trope” (Afterword 380). As for the previously cited “ideological continuity” of American pastoralism, he traces contemporary ecological concerns explicitly back to the classic nineteenth-century American writers and even before.<sup>82</sup>

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an ecopolitical force in the contemporary U.S. Note furthermore that, like environmentalism (and ecocriticism), pastoralism is by no means always leftist in outlook. It has been part of nature’s and pastoralism’s ideological ambivalence in American history that, as a national myth, they can also have conservative, even nationalist and nativist implications, as will be discussed below.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. “Pastoralism” 58. Marx here cites twentieth-century authors like Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Eliot, Frost and Faulkner. Apropos of the trope of the “interrupted idyll,” the paradigmatic instance for Marx is the Sleepy Hollow episode of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s experience in the Concord woods in 1844. In Marx’s reading of the writer’s account in his notebook, the startling whistle of a train suddenly disrupted his musings and forced him to acknowledge a reality outside the pastoral dream (*Machine* 11-16). This episode of the sudden appearance of the machine in the landscape, with its effect of disillusionment, has recurred in many variations in the works of American writers since the 1840s (15-16). Marx considers it one of the three defining episodes in industrial-age American literary pastoral (Afterword 378). I will later also identify this episode in Mexican American environmental literature.

<sup>81</sup> Especially “The Domination of Nature and the Redefinition of Progress” (1998)—where he advocates precisely the latter—and “Environmental Degradation and the Ambiguous Role of Science and Technology” (1999).

<sup>82</sup> In a 1970 article that addresses the close relationship between literary pastoralism and the ecological viewpoint, “American Institutions and Ecological Issues,” Marx perceives a “deep intuition of the gathering environmental crisis and its causes” already in the works of Cooper, Emerson,

By 1970 Marx is one of the first American scholars—if not the first—to rethink American pastoral and pastoralism from an environmental and ecological angle, which prepared the ground for his reflections, in 1986 and after, on “new pastoralism” and its special meaning in times of environmental crisis. As a whole, Marx’s sociohistorical theory of pastoral constitutes the single most important foundation for the current ecocritical recuperation of American pastoralism, which he anticipated by decades. It is therefore proper to acknowledge Marx as a germinal figure in Americanist pastoral ecocriticism as well as in the ecocritical movement at large, as a number of its exponents have already done.<sup>83</sup>

My own environmentally focused analytic approach to Mexican American literary pastoral will be founded on Marx’s ideas in much of its essential framework. As it were, I am taking my cue from his reference to the “new pastoralism” of the Hispanic movement. Before I go on to explain my theses in detail in the fourth chapter of part one, it is necessary to survey and discuss the green interpretation of American pastoralism in recent ecocritical discourse. It is itself grounded in Marx and has provided me with important insights and inspiration in formulating my own critical position. What needs emphasizing is that the ecocritical restoration of pastoral, both U.S. and British and particularly since the 1990s, represents yet another turn in the long tradition of pastoral scholarship. It is a new rereading of

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Thoreau, Melville, Whitman or Twain. They project an “ecological ideal” of harmony with nature as an alternative to the established social order (155, 139). Marx has also repeatedly referred to Jefferson as a precursor of late-twentieth-century environmentalism through the “ecological” pastoral principles he conceives in his initial opposition to industrialization in America in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1784) (Afterword 379, also “Degradation” 332). On classical pastoral as an “ecological literary mode,” cf. further Marx’s 1968 piece “Pastoral Ideals and City Troubles” (97).

<sup>83</sup> Buell has called *Machine* the most seminal precontemporary critical work for ecocriticism in the U.S. (e.g. in *Future* 13-14). Mazel has also recognized Marx as an “early ecocritic[ ]” in his anthology of American proto-ecocriticism (Introduction 13). As Buell accurately notes (*Environmental* 441, n. 7), Marx’s scholarly perspective has been remarkably consistent over the course of several decades, during which he has met with a lot of criticism by revisionist repudiators of the “myth and symbol” school (Bruce Kuklick) of 1950s/60s American studies. Marx’s position has actually needed less revising than that of Henry Nash Smith, author of the other groundbreaking book on American pastoralism, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (1950). (A retrospect essay by Smith appeared alongside Marx’s piece in the important revisionary American studies volume *Ideology and Classic American Literature*, edited by Sacvan Bercovitch and Myra Jehlen in 1986.) For Marx’s commentary on the reception history of *Machine* and the frequently overstated and inaccurate charges raised by younger critics, see his 2000 afterword (381-83). Despite the limitations of their work, he justly stresses that the founding American studies scholars were generally of a left-liberal persuasion and highly critical of capitalist U.S. society (367-68). In a recent article, published in *Theories of American Culture, Theories of American Studies*, eds. Fluck and Claviez (2003), Marx uses the term “the Great Divide” for what is often perceived as a watershed in American studies at the time of the Vietnam War. He distinguishes between American studies “BD” (Before the Divide) and American studies “AD” (After the Divide), i.e. between the older disciplinary practice and the different waves of revisionism since the 1970s (6-10).

pastoral as a literary and cultural mode in terms of critics' ideological outlook. Whereas American pastoralism was in general seen as a positive cultural value and even as an expression of social criticism in pre-1970 new critical and "myth and symbol" scholarship, it came to be indicted as conservative, hegemonic and exceptionalist since the 1970s by revisionisms such as feminism, new historicism and the "New" American studies.<sup>84</sup> Today's ecocriticism, in turn, goes back to stressing the positive potentiality of the ambiguous concept of pastoralism and once again interprets it as an oppositional force. In spite of its idealization, sentimental nostalgia and escapist inclinations, a number of ecocritics concur that pastoral can, at the same time, advance a serious critique of present environmental actualities. This ecocritical reevaluation of a more traditional scholarly perspective on American pastoral like Marx's also underscores what Winfried Fluck has recently perspicaciously described as a "striking continuity" between traditional and revisionist American studies in their shared focus on the possibility of resistance in American culture ("Theories" 63; 65).<sup>85</sup> In the context of contemporary

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<sup>84</sup> Buell has a short but useful review of American pastoral criticism in his 1995 book (33-35), which I am drawing on here. According to Buell, the first major critical work on nature and wilderness in American literature is D. H. Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature*, of 1923. It first interprets the white male protagonists of texts like *The Leatherstocking Tales* and *Moby-Dick* as escapees from civilization. This is a psychohistorical line of analysis enlarged on by Leslie Fiedler in *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960). Meanwhile, American studies has been working from a sociohistorical point of view: the landmark books are Smith's *Virgin Land* and especially Marx's *The Machine in the Garden*. As Buell observes, the result of these and other studies of the 1950s and 60s was to reaffirm American pastoralism as an important and positive cultural force, with pastoral writers assuming even the function of a social conscience (34). In the 1970s this reading of pastoralism is challenged by feminists. Scholars like Annette Kolodny, in *The Lay of the Land* (1975), and Nina Baym showed that the canonicalist androcentric focus marginalized women's literature and history. Other revisionists in new historicist scholarship of the 1980s censured American pastoral as an instrument of expansionism and imperial conquest, such as Myra Jehlen in *American Incarnation* (1986) (cf. Buell 34-35). On the whole, Euro-American pastoralism has been legitimately criticized in the last decades for its subjugation and exclusion of women, ethnic groups as well as the land/nature itself (with which women and ethnic people were identified). As Buell concludes, the various revisionisms add up to a diagnosis that classic American pastoralism ought to be viewed as conservatively hegemonic rather than oppositional (35). He speaks of "a shift from the hermeneutics of empathy that by and large marks pre-1970 new critical and myth-symbol American scholarship to a hermeneutics of skepticism that appraises texts more in terms of what they exclude or suppress" (35). Another such revision of American pastoral has long been engaged in by the New Americanists in their sometimes exaggerated critique of "exceptionalist" tendencies in the national mythography of old American studies, as in the work of Marx (cf. my ch. I.1 on this). In this connection, see Donald Pease's 2006 essay in which he vehemently attacks Marx (in reply to the "BD/AD" piece). Alan Wolfe, on the other hand, in a polemical review article from 2003, castigates Pease and other New American studies scholars for their supposed "hatred for America" while defending traditional practitioners like Marx. Moreover, criticism of American pastoralism is in place with respect to the suppression of a queer perspective in the nation's pastoral myth as well as in its scholarly examination in American studies into the recent past—cf. Gersdorf's essay ("Gender" (2001)).

<sup>85</sup> Fluck emphasizes this continuity despite all distance and mutual accusations between the different generations of scholars in the past decades. As he points out, the goal of American studies has, from

environmental concern, American pastoral has thus become reconceptualized in accordance with writers' and critics' environmental(ist) values, and pastoral ideology now functions in behalf of a threatened pastoral locus in a particular biophysical environment. It is a truly "green" pastoralism which is the latest expression of the persistent appeal of pastoral and pastoral ideology in the history of American society, culture and literature. It thereby reenacts the situation in classical antiquity, when pastoral developed and grew in reputation in correlation with large-scale urbanization menacing the rural landscape (on the latter, cf. Garrard, *Ecocriticism* 35; Scheese 14).

A reevaluation of the pastoral mode has actually been a major area of ecocritical interest so far, especially but not exclusively with reference to Euro-American nature writing, the most popular form of pastoralism among American writers. In illustrating individual ecocritical thought on American pastoral, I will start out with Joan Weatherley. She is a representative of the first wave of environmental criticism and strongly indebted to Leo Marx.<sup>86</sup> Weatherley detects "innumerable manifestations" of the pastoral motif in post-industrial revolution culture. She describes pastoral writing, from its classical beginnings, as an "ageless form of environmental literature," which places ecological problems in historical perspective and "permits diachronic and synchronic analysis of the humanities-technology dilemma" (73, 74-75).<sup>87</sup> For studying and teaching these versions of pastoral, Weatherley sees "no better model" than Marx's "middle landscape pastoralism" as presented in *The Machine in the Garden*.<sup>88</sup> She adapts this concept along with what she dubs the "dispossession archetype" (based on Vergil's first eclogue) (73; 74).

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its founding period to this day, always been the investigation of the resistive potential of American culture (63, 65). "All [the revisionism] did," Fluck adds, "was to assess the prospects for resistance differently" (63). This certainly includes ecocriticism as a current revisionary practice. For a recent formulation of American studies as a politically inclined academic discipline, see the book by Paul Lauter, one of the principal representatives of earlier revisionism, *From Walden Pond to Jurassic Park: Activism, Culture, and American Studies* (2001). Regarding the ecocritical appraisal of American pastoral, there are also many critics who reject pastoralism wholesale for its utopianism, escapism and perceived anthropocentrism (e.g. Murphy, *Afield* 19).

<sup>86</sup> She does not use the label "ecocriticism" in 1985 yet. Her essay "Pastoral: An Ageless Form of Environmental Literature" is centered on the description of an interdisciplinary course on pastoral literature, painting and music she cotaught at Memphis State's University College. The article forms part of an important publication from the early days of ecoliterary studies, *Teaching Environmental Literature*, edited by Frederick Waage as an MLA guide in 1985.

<sup>87</sup> As Garrard notes, Vergil already alludes to environmental degradation connected with Roman civilization at several points in the *Eclogues*. Thus there is an oblique reference by the shepherd Menalcas to deforestation of Mediterranean hillsides in his time (eclogue five) (cf. Garrard, *Ecocriticism* 36).

<sup>88</sup> On the Marxian "middle landscape" and its use for ecocriticism, see my remarks in the next chapter.

The key elements of this archetype are a “shepherd figure,” threatened or displaced in a middle landscape setting, and some materialistic, technological “counterforce” causing the dispossession (74). One has no difficulty in sharing this critic’s conclusion: such an approach to pastoral “dispel[s] the notion that pastoral is a mere sentimental, escapist, hopelessly idealistic genre synonymous with primitivism” (74).<sup>89</sup> All in all, Weatherley’s Marxian model, which transcends the negative revisionist view of American pastoral in her day, is an important early articulation of an ecological pastoral vantage point in the nascent ecocritical movement of the mid-1980s U.S., and needs to be recognized as such. I will draw on Weatherley’s ideas in my own approach below.

The following section looks at two major ecocritical commentators on pastoral who employ a more elaborate, ecocentric method, thereby moving further away from Marx than Weatherley did (and than I generally will): Lawrence Buell and Glen Love. Buell is the author of the groundbreaking *The Environmental Imagination* (1995), a monumental study of American pastoral.<sup>90</sup> He refers to pastoralism as “a species of cultural equipment that western thought has for more than two millennia been unable to do without” (*Environmental* 32), and finds it in “all literature that celebrates an ethos of rurality or nature or wilderness over against an ethos of metropolitanism.”<sup>91</sup> Buell offers plausible readings of pastoralism as a complex, “ideologically multivalent” and potentially oppositional, and thus continuingly relevant cultural and literary force in the U.S. and elsewhere.<sup>92</sup> This, he argues, is also and particularly true in our environmentally problematic present, when—he agrees with Marx’s prediction—new versions of pastoral are coming forth (49-52). Buell persuasively emphasizes the constructive green potency of American pastoral

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<sup>89</sup> Unfortunately, Weatherley does not amplify her ideas any further in this brief essay, and it does not contain any literary analysis.

<sup>90</sup> It is preceded by a 1989 essay, “American Pastoral Ideology Reappraised.”

<sup>91</sup> Buell actually suggests the term “naturism” for this mode, e.g. for being less loaded ideologically and aesthetically (439, n. 4).

<sup>92</sup> In his above-cited retrospect of American pastoral scholarship, he appropriately criticizes the revisionists for not having made sufficient allowance for pastoralism’s “ideological multivalence” (36). In the early chapters of his book, he demonstrates that pastoral representation, American and around the world, cannot be pinned to a single ideological position. It may be oppositional and expressive of a set of alternate values, always depending on the respective social, political, gender and environmental context (49-50 and passim). Oppositional pastoral, he shows, is also deployed by indigenes as a weapon against cultural dominance—just as European settler cultures in many parts of the world have made pastoral serve their own hegemonic ends. Buell refers to the Négritude movement among Francophone African and Caribbean writers as an example of indigene pastoral nationalism in modern times (64-68).

ideology, while conceding that, due to its ambivalence, it may also be counterproductive for environmentalist purposes.<sup>93</sup>

Buell is highly (eco)critical of the anthropocentric disregard of literature's referential dimensions in contemporary cultural and literary theory, and especially in revisionist pastoral studies in the last decades (85-87; 35-36). An avowed ecocentrist, he presents the reader with an alternative.<sup>94</sup> He devotes the central portion of his book (part two) to ecocentric interpretations of literary "naturism" in Western and above all American literature, focusing mainly on Euro-American environmental nonfiction in the Thoreauvian tradition.<sup>95</sup>

Buell's comprehensive ideological reassessment of pastoral—also in non-Euro-American, indigenous literature—and his elucidation of its environmental possibilities and germaneness constitute an invaluable and greatly stimulating theoretical and practical basis for any ecocritical rapprochement with American pastoral. This includes my own analysis of Mexican American literature. (He also deserves recognition for considering a wide range of traditionally neglected, noncanonical American nature writers.) Still and all, I should like to take issue with Buell about two major aspects of his ecocentric reading of pastoral. For one thing, he centers on "biota rather than homo sapiens" in his exploration of Euro-American environmental nonfiction (22). As I have already argued at length above, ecocentrism is in my opinion an epistemologically far too limited tool for examining in particular—as I do—ethnic literary nature representations, whether or not in a pastoral framework. One might cite Marx, who has been engaged in years of debate with Buell on the interpretation of Thoreau's *Walden* as well as on the concept of nature and the relationship between man and nature in general. In this controversy Marx invokes *The Environmental Imagination* as an instance of the ecocentric

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<sup>93</sup> To quote him: "Historically, pastoral has sometimes activated green consciousness, sometimes euphemized land appropriation. It may direct us toward the realm of physical nature, or it may abstract us from it" (31). With regard to the contemporary emergence of new environmental forms of pastoral, he mentions environmental apocalypse literature as a prominent practice (51).

<sup>94</sup> His activist environmental critical agenda already manifests itself in his definition of ecocriticism as the "study of the relation between literature and environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis" (430, n. 2).

<sup>95</sup> He examines aspects like place, the seasons or environmental apocalypticism. He also proposes his notion of the "dual accountability" of nonfictional environmental writing: i.e. the texts' accountability to both mind and matter, to inner and outer landscapes, for the sake of a "post-poststructuralist account of environmental mimesis" (91-103; qtd. from "Insurgency" 705). Cf. also chapter 2 in Buell's 2005 monograph for recent reflections on the ecocritical issue of the relation of the world of words in literary environmental representation to the actual world.

persuasion while he delivers pointed criticism of ecocentrism.<sup>96</sup> As he notes, “[a] disregard of humanity’s unique place in nature is the central flaw of much environmental, and especially ecocentric, writing” (“Full” 48).<sup>97</sup> Buell realized the reductionist character of his first ecocritical study and corrected its ecocentric bias in *Writing for an Endangered World* (2001).<sup>98</sup>

Second and related—and also subject to revision in his 2001 book—, there is the question of which literary and cultural texts and genres should be given ecocritical scrutiny as to their representations of nature and environment. As touched upon before, a major recent development in ecocriticism has been to widen the field’s focus in this respect. Critics’ longstanding preoccupation, inside and outside the U.S., with American nature writing—within pastoral (like Buell in 1995) or other parameters—has been a one-sided activity; it does not do justice to the variety and richness of literature on nature in America. Patrick Murphy has treated this issue in detail in his discussion of the more inclusivist theoretical principles developed in his important monograph *Farther Afield in the Study of Nature-Oriented Literature* (2000). Like many commentators today, he jettisons the restrictive view, still prevalent around the turn of the millennium, that (U.S.) literature about the nonhuman world comprises above all first-person nonfictional prose accounts by mainly male Euro-Americans with a strong leaning towards natural history and

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<sup>96</sup> Much of this discussion took place in a series of articles in the *New York Review of Books*. “The Struggle over Thoreau” (June 1999) is the first part of a review essay in which Marx critically comments on the recent ecocritical reevaluation of Thoreau as a kind of patron saint to the ecocentrists. Polemically but not without some justice, he describes the latter as “the Puritans of today’s environmental movement” (“Struggle” 60, “Full” 44). Part two, “The Full Thoreau” (July), focuses on a critique of Buell’s 1995 study—for Marx an “evangelizing” work like the Puritans’ writings (45). Buell’s reply and a rejoinder by Marx followed in December (“An Exchange on Thoreau”). Buell also remarks on the subject in his 2001 book (7; 271, n. 25). The debate continued at the 2000 EAAS conference in Graz; see “The Pandering Landscape” (Marx) and “Green Disputes” (Buell) (publ. in 2003). Cf. also Claviez’s reply to the controversy, in which he points out a certain lack of conceptual clarity in both Marx’s and Buell’s arguments (“Reply” 51).

<sup>97</sup> In connection with this, Marx dismisses Buell’s idea that ecocentrism might be a feasible solution to the environmental crisis: “Most people in our world,” he writes, “are unlikely to see things that way while they are deprived of adequate food, water, housing, and health care. Environmental problems cannot be separated from our dominant political problems” (“Exchange” 64). Marx and his coeditors of *Earth, Air, Fire, Water* therefore rightly consider the ecocentric doctrine “untenable,” compared with a more human-oriented view (Conway, Keniston and Marx, “New” 25). As early as 1970, Marx observed that white, middle-class environmentalism with its wilderness agenda had failed to seem pertinent to the welfare of the poor, nonwhite and the urban population (“Institutions” 140-41). In 1986 he added that the “new” American pastoralism could only provide the basis for an effectual political ideology if it moved beyond white middle-class dissident movements (“Pastoralism” 66)—as it has done with the environmental justice movement since the 1980s.

<sup>98</sup> It takes into account anthropocentric, environmental justice concerns in a U.S. as well as transnational context, although no longer from a pastoral point of view. See esp. ch. 7, which discusses nonanthropocentric ethics vs. environmental justice.

science. “Nature writing” is really just one genre within what Murphy has more aptly labeled “nature-oriented literature” (Introduction; 20-21; cf. also ch. I.4 herein). Besides, it is a genre that is not limited to literary natural-history writing of Euro-American extraction, as I will also show in this dissertation. To counter the “nonfictional prejudice” (26), Murphy justifiably calls on ecocritics to no longer turn their backs on environmental fiction, both in novelistic and short story form (19-28, 41-42 and *passim*). For, he asks, “why should we consider the best literature about nature to be that which casts the author as an ‘observer,’ rather than a full participant, physically or imaginatively?” (22-23)<sup>99</sup> As Dominic Head points out, it is not only problematic if ecocriticism is perceived as “the study of ‘lesser’ genres and authors;” a heightened ecocritical regard for the novel is also commensurate with its dominant role in Western literary expression (“(Im)possibility” 34; 32). The novel may seem intrinsically anthropocentric, Head goes on, yet it may be fruitfully dealt with from an ecocritical viewpoint (37-38, “Problems” 238-40). Critics in this field certainly cannot afford to fail to extend its purview to a genre like the novel or short fiction in the investigation of literature and environment. In a U.S. context, this must also encompass the consideration of non-Euro-American fictive writing, as in my study.<sup>100</sup>

Glen Love has been a practitioner of environmental literary scholarship since the early 1970s (University of Oregon), and instrumental in the launching of U.S. ecocriticism out of the Western Literature Association some two decades later. He is a second major exponent of an ecocentric way of reading American pastoral in his

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<sup>99</sup> Buell, in his focus on nonfiction in his first ecocritical book, affirms that “environmental nonfiction” most clearly fulfills his ecocentric criteria for an “environmental” text (cf. the section “What Is an Environmental Text?” (6-14)). Unlike lyric poetry or fiction, he says, it does, for example, not rely on “the most basic aesthetic pleasures of homocentrism: plot, characterization, lyric pathos, dialogue, intersocial events, and so on” (168). The British ecocritic Dominic Head also criticizes Buell’s ecocentric definition of environmental literature and the narrow scope of such ecocriticism in general (cf. “The (Im)possibility of Ecocriticism,” “Problems in Ecocriticism and the Novel” (excerpted in Coupe)). Head is one of a number of environmental literary scholars who have properly taken Buell to task over this.

<sup>100</sup> In her 2004 monograph, Grewe-Volpp also makes a case for genre expansion in ecocriticism (88-90), being herself concerned with the contemporary American women’s novel. Buell, who began to enlarge his generic focus in 2001, also comments on his revised conception of an “environmental text” in his latest book (25, 51). The current expansion of ecocritical inquiry further involves literary and cultural genres and forms such as drama, film and even virtual reality. Representative is here the essay collection *Beyond Nature Writing*, eds. Armbruster and Wallace (2001). Murphy resumes his cogitations on ecocriticism and matters like genre in *Ecocritical Explorations in Literary and Cultural Studies* (2009). For a book-length environmental critical study of film, see David Ingram’s *Green Screen: Environmentalism and Hollywood Cinema* (2000).

critical work.<sup>101</sup> Love shares Marx's and Buell's belief in pastoral's ongoing topicality as a literary and cultural conception, and affirms its growing, indeed "heretofore unprecedented, significance at a time when the comfortably mythopoeic green world of pastoral is beset by profound threats of pollution, despoliation, and diminishment" ("Arcadia" 195-96). Pastoral, he too holds, can be "a serious and complex criticism of life, concerned not merely with country scenes and incidents, but with the explicit or implicit contrast between such settings and the lives of an urban and sophisticated audience" (195). In an age of environmental degradation, he adds, it is therefore "time for pastoral theory and ecocriticism to meet" (198). Love proceeds to state, however, that this requires "a more radical reevaluation than any achieved thus far by pastoral's interpreters"—he names Marx and Buell ("Revaluing" 234). He suggests Aldo Leopold's influential deep ecological concept of an ecocentric "land ethic" as "the litmus test for the new pastoralism."<sup>102</sup> An ideology framed in such terms would, in Love's view, be "an appropriate pastoral construct for the future" ("Revaluing" 234). He sees such a redefined, "new pastoral" exemplified in some contemporary American writing about nature, principally western American literature with its ecological outlook ("Arcadia" 204, "Revaluing" 231).<sup>103</sup> The rather dogmatic political-environmentalist motivation of a number of notably U.S. ecocritics, among them Love, has already been commented on and dismissed earlier in my discussion. So I will just emphasize with Robert Kern (who makes no mention of Love in this connection) that "to read literature in the light of such a principle [he cites Leopold's land ethic] . . . is precisely *not* to read it as literature, but as policy or doctrine, to be accepted or rejected out of hand"—a highly "reductive" practice (260-61). In fairness to Love, it should be noted that his 2003 book bespeaks a certain disassociation from some of his most radical political and antianthropocentric notions about literature and ecological literary criticism from previous work.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Especially in his programmatic ecocritical statement "Revaluing Nature" (1990) and in "Et in Arcadia Ego: Pastoral Theory Meets Ecocriticism" (1992), as well as in his 2003 book *Practical Ecocriticism* (ch. 3, "Et in Arcadia Ego: Pastoral Meets Ecocriticism"). Cf. further his piece on ecocriticism and science (1999).

<sup>102</sup> As proposed by Leopold in his environmental nonfictional literary classic *A Sand County Almanac* (1949), "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" (262).

<sup>103</sup> Such literature ought to be "revalued," Love opines, in order to help "redirect" the reader from "ego-consciousness" to "eco-consciousness" ("Revaluing" 237; 229-30).

<sup>104</sup> He admits that "memorable literature is not necessarily possessed of environmental correctness or rectitude, or even of any obvious environmental content" (34). "[E]co-pol[ic]ing" in literary

Overall, Love's radical ecocentric ideas about "new pastoral," as presented primarily in his 1990s essays, are another important expression of the recent ecocritical recovery of American pastoralism. Of particular suggestiveness to my own thinking has been his special emphasis on the ecological orientation characteristic of much western American literature. Being even more radical than Buell's ideas, however, Love's principles are in their entirety clearly too narrowly ecocentric to be directly applied to my ecocritical interpretation of Mexican American pastoral writing. Today's nature-sensitive literary and cultural criticism at large has, we have seen, often been bent towards ecocentrism, and so too has the ecocritical reclamation of American pastoral. As represented by ecocentric critics like Buell and Love, this recuperative effort has indeed been mainly undertaken by whom Bennett calls "deep ecocritics" (303).<sup>105</sup> In chapter I.1 I have argued, with Bennett and others, that Americanist ecocriticism must become more sensitive to human-centered, social justice matters. In contrast to Bennett, who does not endorse a pastoral approach (e.g. also 306), I would, however, like to claim that American and ethnic American literary and cultural pastoralism *can* be of interest to ecocritical inquiry also and especially from a nonecocentric perspective. Mexican American literary pastoral too may be read as "new," principally western pastoral with a pronounced ecological outlook, though not in Love's, nor in Buell's, limited ecocentric sense of American pastoral. It instead takes in the humans that are part of the landscape—in my judgment, Love's extension of pastoral theory to western American environmental literature should not be so exclusive. As we will see in the following chapter, I will therefore interpret Mexican American pastoral as "new" pastoral rather in terms of Marx's nonecocentric conception of contemporary U.S. environmental pastoral ideology. An ecological pastoral framework inclusive of

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scholarship is therefore to be avoided, he observes (11); the "land ethic" criterion for "new pastoral" is also gone in 2003. For Love's revision of his formerly pronounced antianthropocentrism as an ecocritic, cf. further p. 6. As for his theory of pastoral, the main addition in the book is the author's attempt to read it through evolutionary biology. As a champion of a science-oriented ecocriticism, Love foregrounds evolutionary biological concepts in his principles of "practical ecocriticism" of U.S. literature, which he applies to pastoral as well. Unlike previous critics, he examines also literary pastoral's evolutionary biological rather than just its cultural history and sources. He suggests that its age-old appeal may be related to Edward Wilson's "biophilia" hypothesis (*Biophilia* (1984)): i.e. a universal human propensity to respond positively to natural life (*Practical* 70-83). Scientifically informed research on pastoral such as Love's furnishes interesting additions to literary pastoral scholarship, even as it does not pay much attention to pastoral's aesthetic dimension as a literary practice.

<sup>105</sup> Bennett's previously cited "social ecocriticism" is meant to challenge the ecocentric critical concepts of scholars such as Love and Buell (in *The Environmental Imagination*) (cf. his *ISLE* article 303-06, 307-11).

America's communities of color is definitely also called for if—to take up Marx's point—American pastoralism has any intention of heightening its ideological as well as ecopolitical strength today.

I will end this chapter with a short survey of other environmental revaluations of pastoral in U.S. (though not Mexican American) literature and culture. These ecocritical scholars themselves draw, with varying theoretical profundity, on Buell and Marx, and sometimes Love. They work within U.S. ecocriticism<sup>106</sup> and, in a few cases, German American studies. So does, most importantly, Christa Grewe-Volpp in her 2004 book. In chapter 4 she gives an ecocritical and particularly ecofeminist reading of Jane Smiley's Iowa farm novel *A Thousand Acres* (1991). Basing herself on Marx's and Buell's ideas about the ecological implications of American pastoralism, Grewe-Volpp analyzes the novel's landscape and nature construction as an ecological revision of the U.S. pastoral tradition of Jeffersonian agrarianism and as an ecocentric female redefinition of that myth of "nature's nation."<sup>107</sup> In my view, this ecocritical/ecofeminist interpretation of Smiley's text, which also considers social concerns, is the most significant German contribution to the environmental pastoral discussion so far. Grewe-Volpp has not, however, adapted the principal U.S. theorists' concepts to a reading of ethnic ecological pastoralism, as I will.<sup>108</sup> There

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<sup>106</sup> Don Scheese reclaims pastoral ecocritically in his 1996 book on the tradition of Euro-American *Nature Writing*. Recently, William Barillas published an ecocritical study of pastoral literature of the American heartland, titled *The Midwestern Pastoral* (2006). See also Scott Hess's essay from 2004. It proposes an ecological restoration of pastoral in postmodern culture and literature in the shape of a "sustainable pastoral" (95); such pastoral does not mask social and environmental realities the way the contemporary consumer version of pastoral in American advertising does.

<sup>107</sup> Similarly to U.S. ecopastoral critics, for Grewe-Volpp "kann die Pastorale als Modus gerade im Zeitalter eines ökologischen Bewußtseins erneut eine wichtige Rolle spielen." This is because it thematizes the "Spannungsbogen zwischen den apokalyptischen Gefahren einer technokratischen Ideologie und der Utopie einer heilen grünen Welt" (163). This new ecological American pastoralism, she adds, ought to be aware of the interdependence of natural and social processes, as she finds to be the case in Smiley's ecocentric pastoral vision. Only then, Grewe-Volpp argues, can pastoralism remain pertinent as a green critique in contemporary society (169-70).

<sup>108</sup> Neither is Mexican American/Hispanic culture dealt with anywhere else in German ecopastoral discourse on American culture, as far as I am aware. Regarding other ecocritical work on Euro-American pastoral, there is also Georg Guillemin's monograph *The Pastoral Vision of Cormac McCarthy* (2004; originally his doctoral dissertation, Freie Universität Berlin, 2001). Guillemin explores the evolution of McCarthy's pastoral vision towards ecopastoralism throughout his novels, addressing also the theme of melancholia and the allegorical narrative structure. His study makes some use of U.S. environmental pastoral scholarship, but is (in both versions) on the whole rather lean on the theoretical side with respect to an ecological/ecocritical interpretation of pastoralism. I also wish to acknowledge an essay by which I have been inspired in the early stages of my project, Heike Schäfer's 2001 piece. It reads Abbey's *Desert Solitaire* ecocritically and ecopastorally (440-48). In the context of pastoral and ecology, cf. further the book by the Austrian Heinz Tschachler, *Ökologie und Arkadien* (1990). He uses the critical theory of the Frankfurt School (and not early ecocritical ideas) to examine counterprogressive nature discourses in 1970s U.S. and Canadian culture and literature.

has, finally, also been a major recuperation of the pastoral in British ecocritical literary studies since the 1990s. This reevaluation builds on what is generally considered an important precursor of British ecocriticism, Raymond Williams's *The Country and the City* (1973), as well as on his later work. A main focus of British environmental pastoral criticism has been on the native Romantic poetry.<sup>109</sup>

#### **4. Mexican American Ecopastoral: Three Case Studies**

An environmentally inclined angle on pastoralism and the pastoral mode of writing in recent Americanist pastoral scholarship and in the field of environmental literary and cultural studies is thus a trend that deserves further exploration. I will now elaborate on my own critical parameters and theses for the ensuing analyses of works of Mexican American environmental pastoral—or what might be dubbed “ecopastoral”—literature. This critical method has been developed in engagement with existing theoretical concepts of ecocriticism, Chicano studies and pastoral criticism, as discussed in the preceding chapters. In my ecopastoral approach, I ultimately follow the modern, Empsonian tradition of a modal interpretation of literary pastoral. In conjunction with ecocritical and Chicano studies ideas, this procedure rests on the foundations provided by Leo Marx's theory of American pastoral ideology as adjusted to my own uses. My work stands within the context of the current, Marx-based ecocritical project of reclaiming American pastoral, an early formulation of which are Joan Weatherley's still rather sketchy notions and which is represented first and foremost by Lawrence Buell's and Glen Love's ecocentric models. In shaping my own nonecocentric view of Mexican American pastoral as

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<sup>109</sup> Jonathan Bate is a central representative: his seminal British ecocritical work *Romantic Ecology* (1991) traces an environmental tradition running from Wordsworth. Another prominent pastoral ecocritic is Terry Gifford, who describes environmentally sensitive literary pastoral as “post-pastoral.” Thus in his 1995 study of contemporary British nature poetry, *Green Voices*, and in chapter 6 of *Pastoral*, which includes some discussion of “post-pastoral” U.S. environmental literature. Gifford also applies his concept of the “post-pastoral” to American writing in his recent book on John Muir, *Reconnecting with John Muir* (2006). For a British viewpoint, cf. further Greg Garrard's observations on the not unproblematic ecological/ecocritical use of pastoral, British and American, in his monograph on ecocriticism (ch. 3) as well as in an article from 1996.

ethnic pastoral, I have received great stimulation from these three environmental pastoral scholars. My critical principles are both in accord with and in opposition to theirs, as will also become evident throughout this study.

In what follows the objective is to investigate the environmental-ecological pastoral motif in Mexican American literature. My main thesis is to assert the presence and significance of the ancient trope of the pastoral in the environmental literary writings of contemporary as well as precontemporary Mexican American authors. To this end, I will analyze how the ecopastoral manifests itself conceptually and aesthetically in the different texts. These critical analyses and evaluations will also allow me to see whether this ethnic literary pastoralism and its pastoral ideals, in their contemporary constructions, might be of environmental “relevancy” for the ecocritical recovery of pastoral’s critical potential. In nuce, then, the guiding question throughout my study is: How and in what different versions does the ecopastoral topos appear in the works of Mexican American writers? To the best of my knowledge, the examination of Mexican American environmental pastoral is new in both ecocriticism and Chicano studies. Intent upon beginning to fill in this critical lacuna, my inquiry is thus situated at the interstices of the disciplines of environmental, Chicano and pastoral criticism within the larger frame of American literary and cultural studies. The only monographic study of Mexican American literature and the environment besides U.S. critic Ybarra’s thesis, this dissertation can also lay claim to being the first treatise on Mexican American writing from an ecological pastoral standpoint.<sup>110</sup>

In the Mexican American community’s profound relationship to nature and the environment, a pastoral sensibility may be said to constitute a prominent element. The urban mentality of pastoralism and its literary form, with its binarism of idyllic country past and city present, seems to have flourished throughout human cultural history in times of social, political and technological change, from antiquity on to contemporary America (cf. Marx, “Pastoralism” 62). As a universal human propensity apparently deeply ingrained in the psyche, pastoralism appeals not only to today’s ecocritics. By the same token, it also has an appeal for the Mexican American. To my mind, the underprivileged situation in which this ethnic group has

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<sup>110</sup> Ethnic U.S. pastoralism has been subjected to ecocritical scrutiny with reference to Native American literature. Cf. especially Buell’s ecopastoral reading of Leslie Marmon Silko’s 1977 novel *Ceremony* as another instance of counterhegemonic indigene pastoral (*Environmental* 285-90; 63-64).

found itself since the mid-1800s—subject to manifold abuses of people and lands on the part of imperialistic, modernizing Euro-America—has been a particularly propitious breeding ground for a pastoral outlook. There is little sustained research on Mexican American literary pastoral as a genre and a mode, but a pastoral theme may actually already be found in Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's foundational Hispanic-Mexican chronicle *La relación* (cf. also ch. I.2). The pastoral ideal that often appears in the reports of the early explorers and travelers in North America is also invoked by Cabeza de Vaca in describing the land's agricultural utility to future settlers.<sup>111</sup> In contemporary and precontemporary Mexican American literature by both men and women, Vernon Lattin and others have pointed out writers' recurring recourse to a pastoral mode and the motif of nature vs. society.<sup>112</sup> An important variant of the pastoral trope in Mexican American cultural and literary expression has been to this day the idealizing construction of Mexico as lost homeland and place of cultural roots, as contrasted with an oppressive, negative U.S. reality. Such a creation of Mexico—whose emigrants' closeness to their country of origin is unique among ethnic minorities in the U.S.—is exemplified in José Antonio Villarreal's pre-movement novel *Pocho* (1959); it is generally agreed to be the first modern Mexican American novel.<sup>113</sup> In contemporary times the romantic pastoral myth of the Mexican homeland has figured especially greatly in the Chicano nationalist discourse of movement culture and literature, specifically in its idealization of the Mesoamerican heritage and of Aztlán as paradisaic site of origin.<sup>114</sup> Since the mid-twentieth century and above all in the works of today's male and female Mexican

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<sup>111</sup> E.g. in present-day Texas: the author praises the "very large and beautiful pasturelands, with good grazing for cattle, . . . I think it would be a very fruitful land if it were cultivated and inhabited by civilized people" (75; similarly 110). Cf. also Roy Gridley's essay on travel literature about the Great Plains; it studies, among other aspects, the creation of images of the Golden Age in an early Spanish account like Cabeza de Vaca's (69-71).

<sup>112</sup> In two articles from the late 1970s, U.S. scholar Lattin reads contemporary Mexican American fiction and its attitude towards the city and nature within the larger context of the Anglo American literary tradition of pastoral. He refers to Mexican American writers as "the new romantics" ("City" 93, "Quest" 637). Rebolledo also briefly notes a pastoral stance in Mexican American literature from the contemporary period and before ("Tradition" 98; 255, n. 6; 255-56, n. 16). See further Herms's remarks on the importance of the theme country-city in contemporary Mexican American fictional writings (*Chicanos* 119).

<sup>113</sup> In the book the bucolic ideal of the lost Mexican homeland is embodied primarily by the young protagonist's unhappy immigrant father: he feels intense "nostalgia" for the traditional rural way of life back in Mexico (121).

<sup>114</sup> On the imaging of Mexico in terms of a pastoral ideal in Mexican American literature—which sometimes includes the disillusionment of a return to the actual country—, see Bruce-Novoa's 1975 essay (also on *Pocho*) and the one by Pisarz-Ramírez ("Mexico"). Further cf. on this issue Daniel Cooper Alarcón's book *The Aztec Palimpsest* (1997). It examines the modern production of Mexicanness, also in Mexican American culture and literature.

American authors, the pastoral imagination and mode of writing have gained a salient ecological dimension. Theocritus's Alexandria, Vergil's Rome or Wordsworth's London—they have their present-day counterpart in a U.S. southwestern metropolis like Albuquerque, New Mexico, as depicted in Mexican American literature.<sup>115</sup>

The special Hispanic/Mexican and Native context of Mexican American writing as an ethnic U.S. literature will be given due consideration in my analyses. At the same time, it is important to explore modern Mexican American environmental pastoral within the larger U.S. cultural system, which in turn partakes of the Western tradition of pastoral. Euro-American pastoral practice and the insights of a founding American studies scholar like Marx have been seriously neglected in the study of Mexican American literature. This is certainly due to their undeniable Eurocentric, hegemonic element—much as with U.S. mainstream environmentalism and ecocriticism. In comparison with non-Mexican American critics in the U.S. and Europe, Chicano/a scholars have displayed particularly little interest in this regard. As I intend to show throughout, Mexican American ecopastoralism is closely tied to the Euro-American cultural and literary tradition on which it is an ethnic variation. Mexican American literature is, after all, an American literature, usually written by authors educated in and acculturated to the U.S. It would be parochial, indeed provincial to ignore this as a critic—a form of ignorance that occurs among Chicano studies practitioners as much as among other ethnic studies scholars. I here concur with a critic like William Boelhower. He notes in his important 1984 book that “ethnic literature should not be ghettoized by separating it either from so-called American mainstream literature or from national cultural issues in general” (9; also 34-36).<sup>116</sup> Such severance is not only inapposite and myopic, as becomes clear from Boelhower's study. He also criticizes, with good reason, that it is often no less “essentialist” than the monocultural Euro-American paradigm formerly operative in American studies.<sup>117</sup> With this in mind, I will read Mexican American ecopastoral literature in a U.S. mainstream frame of reference.

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<sup>115</sup> U.S. environmental sociologist Barbara Lynch briefly identifies ideal pastoral landscapes in Mexican American and other Hispanic literature in a 1993 essay (111-14). In place of literary criticism, she is, however, interested in uncovering ethnic environmental discourses inaudible in American environmentalism.

<sup>116</sup> In *Through a Glass Darkly* Boelhower takes up semiotics to explore ethnicity in U.S. literature.

<sup>117</sup> As he puts it: “In fact, advocates of the multi-ethnic paradigm now often repeat the essentialist errors of their monocultural predecessors in attempting to trace out a blueprint of clear and distinct

I will demonstrate that, as a prominent topos and mode in Mexican American writing, this environmental pastoralism appears as a distinctive ethnic appropriation and adaptation of a time-honored U.S. and age-old universal literary and cultural practice. This intertextuality between Mexican American literature and the larger pastoral traditions may be self-conscious or unaware on the part of the authors. Throughout my readings I will highlight both the difference and otherness of Mexican American ecopastoral, and its dynamic interrelation and crosscultural exchange with the greater context. Evidently, the basic irony of this relationship of tension lies in that the *raison d'être* and the target of ethnic pastoral criticism and resistance, and of the emphasis on difference, is the predominant U.S. culture on whose convention they draw. In other words, Mexican American ecopastoralism and the pastoral ideal must be viewed *against* and *within* the U.S./Western circumstances. Mexican American writers inscribe themselves in this tradition while subverting and rewriting it in their own syncretic ethnic rearticulation. This applies to the Mexican American translation of pastoral content—pastoral ideas and values—as well as, independently of the pastoral convention, to the assimilation of U.S. literary forms and genres in their own texts. Certain universal pastoral formal devices resurge in Mexican American ecopastoral writing in modified shape. At the same time, the authors make use of Euro-American genres to convey a pastoral theme no longer tied to any fixed formal conventions, as will also be discussed below. A hybridization of “mainstream” concepts and forms is of course a central characteristic of Mexican American and other ethnic cultures and literatures at large. On the whole, my ecocritical approach to Mexican American pastoral as a revisionary ethnic ecological negotiation of the national U.S. pastoral narrative certainly has a distinct comparatist, postnationalist and intercultural/transnational dimension, though not so much in the currently fashionable sense of the New Americanist, Chicano studies and ecocritical scholars mentioned earlier.<sup>118</sup> With all its blind spots, traditional Americanist pastoral scholarship has, by nature, itself already been concerned with comparative

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and ultimately reified ethnic categories” (20). Boelhower actually refers to pastoral as a mainstream mode that is also found in the U.S. ethnic novel (35-36). Werner Sollors argues along similar lines as Boelhower. In a 1986 essay, he speaks of the need to go beyond what he critically terms “pure pluralism” in studying ethnic American literature (“Critique” esp. 273-79). Cf. also Sollors’s monograph from the same year, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture*.

<sup>118</sup> My critical focus on the U.S./Euro-American context of Mexican American literature rather than its Latin American connection (as examined in the work of a Chicano critic like José David Saldívar in the past two decades) ought not to be confused with the justly condemned practice of “Eurocentrism” in the inspection of U.S. ethnic culture.

and transnational questions. I wish to add to this in my thesis in the interest of greater inclusiveness in Americanist and Americanist pastoral criticism, Chicano studies as well as environmental literary and cultural criticism.

Specifically, the analytic chapters will concentrate on literary prose, fictional as well as nonfictional. I will offer ecopastoral readings of the work of Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, Alma Luz Villanueva and Rudolfo Anaya. The focus will be on Cabeza de Baca's 1954 memoir *We Fed Them Cactus*, a portrait of traditional New Mexico Plains ranch culture; on Villanueva's Chicana ecofeminist bildungsroman of the Californian Sierra Nevada wilderness, *The Ultraviolet Sky* (1988); and on Anaya's Albuquerque mystery novel *Zia Summer*, of 1995, with a Chicano New Age rural environmentalist vision. My primary concern is with fiction because fictive genres such as the novel and the short story loom large in the literary output of Mexican Americans. Along with genres like poetry or drama, they have been much more significant forms for transmitting the ethnic group's environmental concerns than a genre like nonfictional nature/environmental writing. The latter is only recently assuming importance among Mexican American writers; Cabeza de Baca's text is an early representative of it. A pastoral perspective is a productive tool for reading not just Euro-American nonfiction about nature, as frequent in pastoral ecocriticism so far, but also the forms and genres employed by Mexican Americans. An ecocritical failure to expand the established scholarly viewpoint would mean the exclusion of most Mexican American writing from ecoliterary consideration. Applying Murphy, the texts I will be examining may be labeled "environmental literature."<sup>119</sup> As has already become obvious from the foregoing, my ecocritical pastoral method of analysis in this study will use a textual focus with close readings of the texts' content and their narrative form and strategies. This will be conjoined with an exploration of

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<sup>119</sup> See Murphy's taxonomy of American "nature-oriented literature" in his 2000 book (taxonomy table, p. 11). In connection with his above-mentioned dismissal of the narrow-minded ecocritical preoccupation with Euro-American nonfiction, he divides "nature-oriented literature" into "nature literature" and "environmental literature," i.e. two different modes of writing about nature and human-nonhuman relationships in any genre (4, 44-50). "Environmental literature" links attitudes of the former, such as nature description and appreciation, with an "environmental consciousness" (55)—e.g. representing the human impact on the environment or alternative lifestyles. As Murphy observes, such an environmental awareness arose principally during the twentieth century, and particularly after World War II, with the development of a deeper scientific understanding of ecology and the recognition of damage to the environment (5, 11, 47). This has also been the case in Mexican American literature. Murphy further points out that an environmental consciousness can certainly occur in writings of any time period and culture (55). The scope of ecocriticism may thus be extended to the study of the Aboriginal epic songs of Australia as "environmental literature" (55).

the works' specific contexts: the extraliterary environmental- and cultural-historical conditions of their creation as well as their literary-historical background.

What needs to be discussed first is the fundamental issue of the textual functions my ecopastoral primary literature serves. The pastoral mode is characterized by the central ideological tension between nostalgia and critique. Idealization, nostalgia and sentimentalism as well as escapist tendencies inhere in pastoral discourse, and will often become pronounced in Mexican American environmental pastoral writing. We will there find pastoral nostalgia and sentiment to be enhanced by a double concept of ethnic ecopastoral victimhood: in respect of the natural environment and as an ethnic minority. Nevertheless, wistful pastoral longings also indicate what is simultaneously present in much pastoral, including Mexican American ecopastoral: the purpose and function of cultural critique and resistance against the surrounding world. As Marx observes, "[i]n most American pastorals the movement toward nature also may be understood as a serious criticism, explicit or implied, of the established social order" ("Institutions" 152). The pastoral vision thus offers an idealized alternative to dominant society and is, as such, in Marx's words, "a vehicle of quasi-utopian aspirations without which no critique of existing culture can be effective or complete" ("Future" 223). This is precisely the oppositional potentiality of pastoral that an ecocritical perspective like my own is interested in.<sup>120</sup> The fusion of nostalgia/escapism and critical commentary in American pastoral and Mexican American ecopastoral thought brings about its ambivalence as a means of social criticism. Buell speaks of the ideological "crosscurrents" of American pastoral, its "troublesome dichotomy" and "double-edged character" (*Environmental* 50, 51). It can be at once counterinstitutional and the very opposite in the shape of a nostalgically idealizing, escapist fantasy, as we will also see in my analyses.<sup>121</sup> This friction between the two central forces in American and Mexican American pastoral ideology forms part of the ideal-real tension that has been at the heart of much

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<sup>120</sup> While he has no ecological orientation, Frederick Garber is another pastoral critic who emphasizes the oppositional function of pastoral nostalgia in his essay "Pastoral Spaces." He translates "nostalgia" from the Greek as a state of sharp discomfort caused by a desire for a homecoming, and notes that pastoral "always points to something that is elsewhere, that is not now at or in hand" (444; 445). The pastoral mode is thus "defined by its lacunae and . . . characterized by a subtext of absence and a radical act of return which seeks to counter that absence" (458). Rejecting Poggioli's "unacceptably reductive" view of pastoral as mere escapism, Garber reads it as an "extraordinarily rich and profoundly complicated mode" from its classical beginnings (435; 445).

<sup>121</sup> In Mexican American environmental pastoral, too, the latter may include the romanticizing depiction of a system of hegemony over the land and its inhabitants, as in European and Euro-American pastoral. I will show this in Cabeza de Baca's narrative.

pastoral since classical times.<sup>122</sup> In sum, Buell has correctly remarked that “[w]hich dimension gets stressed depends not only on who’s writing but also on who’s reading” (*Environmental* 52)—pastoral’s problematic conservative-regressive side or its oppositional, counterhegemonic, progressive possibilities.<sup>123</sup>

Among the potential functions of a literary text, pastoral’s critical discourse is subsumable under its practical function. In his monograph *Der amerikanische Roman im 20. Jahrhundert* (1998) (11-14) and in a 2002 essay (“Pluralist,” esp. 266-72), Heinz Ickstadt has expounded a functional model of literary texts which helps distinguish between the various competing functions of Mexican American environmental pastoral writing. These are, with Ickstadt, the referential, the pragmatic and the aesthetic functions of a literary text. The aesthetic function should not be conflated with aesthetic value, although both are interrelated.<sup>124</sup> As Ickstadt notes, an emphasis on the pragmatic (or practical) functions of American literature is prominent in contemporary texts that address themselves to specific groups defined

<sup>122</sup> As many commentators, e.g. Raymond Williams (18), have noted, this ideal-real tension was already present in Vergil’s *Eclogues*. More on this below and in part two.

<sup>123</sup> Marx actually distinguishes between the “complex” pastoralism—a “pastoralism of mind”—he ascribes to America’s high literary culture, and the “sentimental” pastoralism of the general, popular culture. According to Marx, the works of the former represent and attempt to cope with the power of the hostile forces that would impede the realization of the pastoral ideal, whereas the latter denies or masks those antagonistic or destructive forces (cf. “Future” 218, *Machine* 5-11, 32). In my opinion, such a neat distinction between two kinds of pastoralism is forced and difficult to apply in critical practice, indeed simplistic, precisely because of pastoralism’s ideological ambiguity. While an unreflective, purely escapist type of pastoralism of course also exists today, e.g. in advertising, it seems to me more fruitful to read pastoral and its engagement with reality and its complexities in terms of variation in degree rather than kind. Besides other critics, Buell too has faulted Marx for his sharp, canonicalist distinction between two kinds of pastoral, produced by a few major writers and the mass of others respectively (*Environmental* 440-41, n. 7).

<sup>124</sup> In particular Ickstadt’s essay “Toward a Pluralist Aesthetics,” which argues for “the reinstatement of the aesthetic” in American studies (265), stands in the context of the scholarly recovery of the category of the aesthetic and the literary in recent years. During the last decades, it has been considered an elitist concept and marginalized in literary and cultural studies, especially among revisionist Americanist scholars in their often rather reductionist focus on a political, ideological interpretation of literature and art—as in ethnic and gender studies as well as in the new field of ecocriticism. Like Ickstadt, Winfried Fluck is critical of the neglect of the issue of aesthetics in the revisionary study of American literature and culture in our time—cf. particularly his 2002 article on aesthetics and cultural studies (“Aesthetics”). Fluck instead stresses the “Interdependenzverhältnis” of the social and the aesthetic functions in a literary text (*Imaginäre* 10), within the framework of his approach of *Funktionsgeschichte*. Derived from Wolfgang Iser’s reception aesthetics and his concept of literary anthropology, this approach is presented in Fluck’s functional history of the American novel from 1790 to 1900, *Das kulturelle Imaginäre* (1997) (cf. esp. the introduction), and in essays such as those published in 2005 (“Funktionsgeschichte”) and 2002 (“Role”). The 2005 one appears in a recommendable collection on the concept of the function of literature, U.S. and other, entitled *Funktionen von Literatur*, eds. Marion Gymnich and Ansgar Nünning (2005). As to the social function of a literary text, Fluck emphasizes that it may be traced to literature’s special potential as a tentative, playful mode of symbolic action vis-à-vis reality. He justly points out, though, that the social use of literature is ultimately a claim rather than empirically provable (cf. “Symbolic,” esp. 365-66, and *Imaginäre* 12). Many of Fluck’s essays are now assembled in *Romance with America*, edited by Laura Bieger and Johannes Voelz (2009).

by ethnicity or gender (*Roman* esp. 179-80, “Pluralist” 270-72). In his book he writes with reference to ethnic fiction: “Mit dem Appell an ein verhältnismäßig abgegrenztes Publikum, das sich durch gemeinsame geschichtliche Erfahrungen und durch gemeinsame kulturelle Traditionen verbunden weiß (oder verbunden wissen will), betont der ethnische Roman die referentiellen, vor allem aber die appellativen Aspekte des Erzählens” (180).<sup>125</sup> These texts, that is, are above all interested in “Selbstverständigung der jeweiligen Gruppe wie auch [in die] kulturelle[ ] Vermittlung ihrer gemeinsamen Erfahrung und Geschichte” (180). Such a dominance of the referential and, notably and rather overtly, the pragmatic-appellative functions of literary writing will also be observed in Mexican American ecopastoral. In its symbolic response to the problems of ethnic environmental reality, it is directed to an implied audience of Mexican Americans and, to a lesser extent, non-Mexican American readers. The authors under discussion emphasize shared historical experience and common cultural values and engage in their literary communication for the sake of ethnic identity creation. Ickstadt has described these practical purposes of a text as “the communal (and communicative) function of art” (“Pluralist” 270).

A pragmatic, appellative use of the literary text has not only been in the foreground in ethnic writing but also in much American environmental literature, being another politically motivated “minority” cultural practice. In literature about ethnicity *and* environment, like mine, the didactic, moral intent can become especially marked, which in turn heightens the degree of ethnic ecopastoral sentiment. In his reflections on the functions of U.S. ethnic literature in the last decades, Ickstadt further points out that in their concern with the referential and above all the pragmatic aspects of narration, such texts take less interest in aesthetic innovation: they relegate the aesthetic or self-referential function to the background (*Roman* 180). Such an emphasis on discursive rather than aesthetic innovation certainly also characterizes environmental literary writing. As we will note in my literary analyses below, this backstage position of the aesthetic may also lead to neglect of the same. On a higher plane, both American ethnic and environmental literature belong in the context of a return to traditional functions and forms of literature and the novel in the past decades. It is a return to the conventional purpose

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<sup>125</sup> Besides Native, Asian and African American fiction, Ickstadt mentions also Anaya’s novel *Bless Me, Ultima* (*Roman* 180).

of the novel, often with a message of moral edification, as well as to mimetic—realistic—forms of narration. This reevaluation of tradition constitutes a reaction against American postmodern fiction and its preoccupation with the aesthetic function and amimetic narration.<sup>126</sup>

As with other U.S. ethnic/minority literatures and cultures, there is in fact an important scholarly tradition of stressing oppositionality and resistance in Mexican American literary and cultural representation. This happens with reference to the South Texas border *corrido*—as read by Américo Paredes—as a paradigmatic example of an oppositional Chicano literature.<sup>127</sup> A major representative of this critical position is Ramón Saldívar. In *Chicano Narrative: The Dialectics of Difference* (1990), he underlines the oppositional function of contemporary Mexican American narrative literature, as based on the *corrido* tradition in Paredes's interpretation. For Saldívar Mexican American narrative by contemporary male and female authors serves “both a unifying communal function as well as an oppositional and differentiating end,” i.e. “resistance” to Euro-American domination (*Chicano* 4-6; also 18-19, 42).<sup>128</sup> Saldívar sees such ethnic literary resistance both in theme and form (24).<sup>129</sup> While it ought not to be inferred that *all* Mexican American writing functions as an act of resistance to society, there is definitely a distinct oppositional purpose, as described by Saldívar and others, in many works. It is also prominent in the texts singled out for further examination here, in their specific ecopastoral critical stance. As I have argued before, theirs is a kind of resistance which takes place in interaction with the ruling U.S. culture and literary forms. The primary function of

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<sup>126</sup> In his book on the history of narrative functions and forms in the American novel, Ickstadt reads this history metaphorically in terms of a pendulum swinging back and forth between the poles of mimesis and self-reference. With each return to mimesis, realistic forms of representation have become transformed (176). Ickstadt delineates the evolution from late-nineteenth-century classic realism up to the latest versions of the mimetic in the ethnic realistic novel since the 1970s as well as, since the 1980s, in Euro-American neorealistic fiction (ch. 6). On the new realism in post-postmodern American literature, including ethnic writing, today, see also the special issue of *Amerikastudien* (2004), with an introduction by Claviez, and the essays in *Neo-Realism in Contemporary American Fiction*, edited by Kristiaan Versluys (1992).

<sup>127</sup> Further detail on the *corrido* can be found in the introduction to chapter II.1.

<sup>128</sup> Citing Barbara Harlow's 1987 book, Saldívar calls Mexican American narrative a “resistance literature” (24).

<sup>129</sup> Other important arguments for the resistive function as a distinguishing feature of Mexican American literature and culture in the tradition of the *corrido* are by José David Saldívar, in *The Dialectics of Our America* (xi, xiv and passim), and José Limón, in his 1992 book on Mexican American poetry. For an extended discussion of Chicano critics' great concern with resistance in their community's cultural production, see Neate 41-48. Cf. Jesse Alemán's piece for a critique of what he terms the “*corrido* critical paradigm” in Chicano studies discourse—a critique of it being monologic. On the function of Mexican American literature, cf. further Heide 39-40.

Mexican American environmental pastoral literature thus consists in representing a reality of oppressed biophysical environments and human cultures, and particularly in communicating an environmental ideological message in response to this situation. In this message we perceive a dual ecopastoral political purpose of critique and negation as well as of ethnic cultural self-affirmation. Aside from this semantic level, negation and Mexican American affirmation will also occur in respect of literary genre in these texts.<sup>130</sup>

I will continue with some general observations on the form the Mexican American ecopastoral motif takes in the literary works selected, which is influenced by their function. What interests me here is the aesthetic-narrative organization of pastoral content and how the texts stage their message of social criticism and a nature-oriented ethnic counterstatement. Since all three books have a similar purpose and ethnic ecopastoral theme, in different genres, there are also analogies in their formal and stylistic structure. In their rendition of pastoral ideologies characterized by binary contrasts, we will observe a dichotomic, often rather melodramatic pattern as the texts' primary structural principle. The authors rely on rhetorical strategies of simplification and exaggeration on the different formal levels, such as setting and character, in representing the two pastoral poles. Emotive and sentimental devices add to the dualistic design. As said before, emotional emphasis is also innate to the pastoral mode, and more so in these ethnic versions. Likewise, the melodramatic structure of oppositions, which is latent in pastoral, is enhanced through the Mexican American point of view. Through their use of reductive and typifying textual techniques, the narratives are invested with symbolic implications within a literary

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<sup>130</sup> Regarding contemporary American studies' intense interest in ethnic culture and literature, Fluck relates this "ongoing romance" with "the tacit hope that [these ethnic subcultures] can take the place of the lost revolutionary subject, the working-class"—where Americanists formerly located the potential for resistance to dominant U.S. culture ("Theories" 67-68; cf. also "American Literary History and the Romance with America" (2009) on this). On the issue of the rehabilitation of aesthetics and literariness, including functional approaches, in American literary and cultural studies these days, important sources are further: *The Power and Politics of the Aesthetic in American Culture*, eds. Klaus Benesch and Ulla Haselstein (2007), and, edited by Claviez, Haselstein and Sieglinde Lemke in 2006, *Aesthetic Transgressions*. For a focus on the complex relationship between ethical/moral concerns and literature, especially in the U.S., see Jutta Zimmermann and Britta Salheiser's edited collection *Ethik und Moral als Problem der Literatur und Literaturwissenschaft* (2006). The aesthetic and American multiculturalism is explored in *Aesthetics in a Multicultural Age*, eds. Emory Elliott, Louis Freitas Caton and Jeffrey Rhyne (2002). Older volumes reclaiming aesthetics in literary and cultural studies, Americanist and other, are *Why Literature Matters*, eds. Rüdiger Ahrens and Laurenz Volkmann, and *Aesthetics and Ideology*, ed. George Levine. Cf. finally Iser's 2003 essay ("Von der Gegenwärtigkeit des Ästhetischen"). It traces the historical development of conceptions of the aesthetic from the eighteenth century to the present, noting the continuing significance of the category today.

world depicted in the realistic mode of representation that is habitual in contemporary American ethnic literature. Ultimately, at a larger allegorical level, all three texts are also cast as pastoral parables of ecoethnic modernity in the U.S. Hispanic Southwest. In the shape of an introductory abstract, these have been the fundamental structural and stylistic features that recur in the books' ethnic ecopastoral aesthetics, to be examined more closely in part two. It is, in brief, an aesthetic of the mimetic and in particular the pragmatic, derived from the predominantly appellative-didactic function in its narrative form and tactics: a rhetoric of social/political appeal and the persuasion of the reader are at the center.<sup>131</sup> It is evident that we will also detect similar conceptual and aesthetic problems and weaknesses in the three works' pastoral ideologies and their narrative execution. Aesthetic shortcomings are likely to result from limitations in the various ideological systems offered by the writers. In principle, formal deficiencies are due to structural tensions between the texts' aesthetic function and their dominant nonaesthetic functions.<sup>132</sup>

Along general lines I will now further expand on the ideological vision as enacted in the books, in my ecocritical pastoral readings. With Marx's ideas as undergirdings, I will analyze the texts as an expression of "new pastoralism" in the sense of his environmental reappraisal of the "machine-in-the-landscape" image in present U.S. society, culture and literature. It is a Mexican American variety of American pastoral in an era of metropolitan industrialism and environmental deterioration. Basic to this ethnic ecological pastoral are, on one side of its pronounced structural binarism, different forms of a socially and environmentally oppressive "machine." This perceived "machine"—to use Marx's metaphor—is the Euro-American, today increasingly globalizing society and culture. An important addition to the forces of domination in Villanueva's ecofeminist scheme is gender. Set against this we will find various alternate models of a Mexican American "garden" as mythical pastoral

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<sup>131</sup> I have formulated these ideas with Ickstadt's remarks on the aesthetics of the didactic novel in mind, in which appellative strategies of narrative persuasion have salience (cf. "Pluralist" 267). In this essay Ickstadt makes the constructive suggestion to study the aesthetic in terms of "a fundamental plurality of aesthetic production and reception," i.e. aesthetics that differ in purpose and function at different moments in history or with different social groups (266). In a 2006 piece ("Aesthetic"), he takes John Dewey's pragmatist aesthetic theory as a starting point for tracing the democratic aesthetic tradition in American literary history through modernism and up to the present.

<sup>132</sup> As Ickstadt stresses, "the value of a literary text can never be determined by its politics alone, or by the cultural work it does, since all the values it projects are aesthetically mediated or staged" ("Pluralist" 269). Hence the necessity to examine the aesthetic properties of a literary or cultural text also in a thematically focused inquiry, as I will do in this ecopastoral study of ethnic literature.

ideal.<sup>133</sup> I will inspect in detail how the authors engage in a literary pastoral indictment, by means of direct, explicit criticism, of the socioecological actualities of the landscapes of the Southwest and beyond, and of the human communities and cultures inhabiting them. A critical attitude is also articulated more indirectly through the ecopastoral ideals. In the chapters that follow, I will also closely study these elaborations of the Mexican American “garden.” The idyll may be embodied by a nostalgic retrospect portrait of a traditional regional rural culture, as in Cabeza de Baca’s New Mexican folk autobiography. By contrast, the ethnic cultural heritage becomes amalgamated with Chicano/a cultural nationalist and U.S. mainstream environmentalist ideas—especially ecofeminist and New Age—in the novels by the contemporary authors Villanueva and Anaya. In these ways the writers imaginatively construct Mexican American pastoral utopias of lifestyles of social and ecological harmony in nature.<sup>134</sup> By tradition, pastoral has sought to symbolically resolve the conflict between society and nature by re-creating harmony in the bucolic vision. In the new ecological variants of pastoral today, as Marx notes, the classical ideal of harmony has thus been ecologically updated (cf. “Future” 223).

Adapting Marx’s terms, I will identify a clash of two worldviews in the narratives: a “progressive” worldview oriented towards material values and exploitative of nature vs. a “(new) pastoral” worldview that centers on less tangible, nonmaterial values “closer to nature.” The latter comprise emotional, spiritual, aesthetic and ethical aspects in the Mexican American environmental and ecopolitical messages. In reading the texts, it is further helpful to apply the early ecocritical pastoral scholar Joan Weatherley’s aforementioned concept of the classical “dispossession archetype.” The ethnic pastoral characters in all three books are incarnations of the “shepherd figure” menaced or displaced by some materialistic, technological antipastoral force. Overall, it is important to emphasize, the authors’ projections of a Mexican American ecopastoral mythology in opposition

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<sup>133</sup> I would like to underscore that a primarily binary pastoral reading suggests itself as a productive way of analyzing these texts in view of their dichotomic and quite melodramatic enactment of the ecoethnic theme of Mexican American vs. U.S. culture. Fluctuations between the ideological pastoral poles will be addressed a little further down.

<sup>134</sup> I have already commented on the significance of the land and the environment to the Mexican American in chapter I.2.

to Euro-America and its pastoral master myths and symbols of the West and its people will provide different rewritings of the U.S./Western pastoral tradition.<sup>135</sup>

In the rather sharp dualisms of the texts' pastoral ideologemes, we will also perceive interior oscillations between both sides; they are mirrored in form. Within the ideal-real friction characteristic of pastoral through the ages since the Vergilian *Eclogues*, the creation of a city pole as well as antibucolic elements inside the idyll have traditionally served to introduce reality as a disturbant force. They have thereby pointed to the fragility of the pastoral dream. Similar qualifications of the idyll and a representation of the same as an unrealizable ideal will also be found in the three Mexican American works as they enact and explore reality's interconnections with and incursions into the "garden." Besides the "machine's" criticized counteridyllic impact, this narrative depiction of reality's presence and influence also takes the following shapes: It may consist in ironic distance to or a critical portrayal of certain aspects of the generally eulogized ethnic pastoral ideal. Inversely, the pastoral characters may also embrace and positively enjoy many properties of the overall little favorable "machine." Marx already showed the contradictory character of the American pastoral ideal in 1964 with regard to the appreciation of the very forces that threatened the cherished ideal; later he pointed out the not necessarily literal quality of the "new" pastoralism. Such ambivalences will also appear in the pastoral attitude towards the "counterforce" in the Mexican American environmental reworkings of Euro-American pastoral ideology that I am dealing with. In short, we will observe a variety of semantic-structural fluctuations between the "garden" and the opposite pole, which produce tension in the texts and occasionally break and complicate their dichotomic conceptual and aesthetic structure. Inner strains and contradictions such as these make ideologically oriented literary texts more interesting to the critic than mere smoothness in meaning. Note, however, that in the narratives in hand these tensions may also be downplayed or remain unreflected by the writers.

Setting or space is a crucial formal aspect in examining the pastoral mode, in which nature has always been constructed as a repository of specific cultural values. In Mexican American literary ecopastoral, we will see landscapes both rural and wild—the California mountains in Villanueva—as "garden" settings. A basic

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<sup>135</sup> As to the word "myth," I will employ it in this study both in the sense of an imaginary, fictitious or false idea or belief, as here, and to refer to a legendary, ancient, often sacred story.

concept in Marx's pastoral theory and Weatherley's adoption of it is the "middle landscape" as American pastoral location. The phrase describes the idealized pastoral space situated between urban civilization and wild nature, a place which is neither wild nor overcivilized in the symbolic tripartite topography of classic American pastoral narrative Marx has argued for in most of his writings (cf. "Pastoralism" 54). This place is an American manifestation of the *locus amoenus* that has figured prominently in pastoral since Vergil—a pleasant, peaceful shaded natural site (56). Buell, however, contends—and I share his view—that Marx's sharp distinction between middle landscape and wilderness "does not do full justice to the flexibility of American literary thought" (*Environmental* 440, n. 7). Buell makes special mention of western American literature here. I would add Mexican American writing, where a wild pastoral setting has increasingly gained significance up to recent literary nonfiction on nature. As Gifford observes, one reason why American literary pastoral is ecocritically reclaimed as an oppositional cultural mode today is precisely because there continue to be expanses of wilderness in the U.S. for authors to write about (*Pastoral* 33). Accordingly, wilderness needs to be recognized as an important location in defining particularly contemporary American literary pastoral setting. I here take up Buell's definition, which allows of a continuum of different forms of pastoralism. It embraces "all degrees of rustication, temporary or longer term, from the greening of cities through metropolitan park projects to models of agrarianism and wilderness homesteading" (*Environmental* 439, n. 4).<sup>136</sup> In the texts by Cabeza de Baca, Villanueva and Anaya, narrative settings/spaces will be broadly polarized—though with close linkages—into pastoral spaces formed by rural/suburban—"middle"—and wilder natural environments on the one hand, and urban spaces on the other. Furthermore, it has become obvious that the recycling of a body of distinctive features and topoi of the ancient pastoral paradigm for Mexican

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<sup>136</sup> Scheese is right in saying that the traditional term "wilderness" for land supposedly unaffected by humans is a social construction by the dominant culture, and fraught with ethnocentrism. This is especially true in light of evidence that parts of North America were subject to manipulation by Paleo-Indians at least ten thousand years prior to European discovery (cf. Scheese 6-7). Still, I find it useful to employ the word "wilderness" to distinguish it from rural, suburban and urban spaces, as Scheese himself does (7). On the in various respects problematic American conception of wilderness, cf. further environmental historian William Cronon's influential essay "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," published in *Uncommon Ground*, ed. Cronon (1995). The ecocentric pastoral critic Love has also contributed an important point in the discussion of contemporary U.S. literary pastoral space. Revising the Marxian pastoral locus of the middle state of the garden and the rural landscape, he notes that wild nature has come to take this place in much environmentally concerned "new" pastoral these days ("*Arcadia*" 203). I will devote closer attention to wilderness as pastoral setting in my chapter on Villanueva.

American environmental uses occurs not only in terms of pastoral values. It also extends to some fundamental formal conventions. The representation of literary setting is important in this connection, as is the utilization of pastoral character types mentioned above. Certain conventions of diction will be pointed out later on.

To summarize, the preceding general reflections and theses on the primary literary works' function, form and content have been meant to elucidate my central concern in the present investigation: an analysis and assessment of Mexican American environmental pastoral from a literary-historical and literary-critical perspective. I will study its variations and its ideological characteristics and aesthetics, including the different types of tensions and gaps it reveals in these regards. Throughout my readings I will pursue the argument of the motif's hybrid character in its critical engagement with and revisionist transformation of the American and universal tradition of pastoral, as well as of American literary forms. All in all, in the four sections of this first part I have offered a rather elaborate discussion of my theoretical foundations and the specific analytic procedure I have conceived for interpreting Mexican American environment-oriented literature in an ecocritical, pastoral framework. Beyond the ensuing analyses of selected literary texts, my critical model might provide a starting point and source of inspiration for further scholarly discussion and theoretical elaboration on the new critical subject of Mexican American ecopastoral, as well as on Mexican American and ethnic U.S. environmental literature in general. As a whole, this thesis aims to break some critical ground, interweaving—as detailed earlier—ecocriticism, Chicano scholarship and pastoral studies for the first time, and hopefully contributing to all three.

Let me conclude with some remarks on my choice of primary literature and with an outline of how I will proceed in the analytic chapters of part two and in the remainder of this study. The authors—Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, Alma Luz Villanueva and Rudolfo Anaya—and the literary texts on which I concentrate will be examined chronologically, in the order of publication. I will dedicate one main chapter to each writer, which will comprehensively discuss their respective kinds of ecopastoralism in their narrative representation of the Mexican American “garden” and the “machine.” This selection of case studies will furnish a paradigmatic, representative cross section of the great diversity with which environmental and ecological themes have been treated within a pastoral mode in Mexican American writing. Cabeza de Baca's 1954 memoir *We Fed Them Cactus* (chapter II.1),

Villanueva's formation novel *The Ultraviolet Sky* (1988), in chapter II.2, and Anaya's detective novel *Zia Summer* (1995, chapter II.3) represent different literary (sub)genres of importance in Mexican American letters. These generic forms are modified into narrative vehicles for ecoethnic pastoral interests. The three books reflect different time periods and generations of writers in Mexican American cultural and literary history, and are an expression of diverse ecopastoral ideals and ideologies. These are envisioned from within different social milieus and classes, and set in a variety of southwestern regional environments—rural, urban and wild. Jointly they cover a wide historical span of narrated time from the Spanish colonial period to the present. As a significant early Hispanic New Mexican author, Cabeza de Baca's literary activities predate the Chicano movement, while Villanueva and Anaya form part of the contemporary flowering of Mexican American literature. Villanueva has been an important exponent of Chicana feminism and ecofeminism in the past decades. Anaya, since the early 1970s one of the leading and most acclaimed of Mexican American writers, comes out of the founding male generation of contemporary Chicano literature. Cabeza de Baca—an author who has not only been ignored by ecocritics but given no scholarly attention in Germany to date<sup>137</sup>—will be read as a precursor of today's writers in her use of the ecopastoral trope in her folkloric New Mexican autobiography. The insights to be gained from my individual analyses will allow me to identify numerous parallels and recurrences between the texts, as begun above. We will also see how this ethnic environmental pastoralism has evolved and changed in the course of more than four decades, in its notions and values and in its aesthetic means. In an inquiry supplemented throughout with the larger historical and literary context, Mexican American ecopastoral can be viewed within an environmental and pastoral literary tradition that, in U.S. Hispanic writing, reaches as far back as Cabeza de Vaca's sixteenth-century chronicle (see chs. I.2 and 3).

This study's general conclusion will give a summary comparison of the three writers' works regarding the development of the pastoral motif. It will also point out some further contemporary, emergent voices in the various genres of Mexican American environmental literature. This includes nature writing as a recent trend in

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<sup>137</sup> The lack of ecocritical consideration for all but a few Mexican American writers has already been mentioned in chapter I.2. More on the individual authors in the introductions to the respective chapters in part two.

the ethnic ecological figuration of American pastoral, represented primarily by Arturo Longoria and Luis Alberto Urrea. My conclusion will also offer an outlook for the future of ecocriticism. I will start out with Fabiola Cabeza de Baca.



## **II. Literary Analyses**



## **1. Fabiola Cabeza de Baca: *We Fed Them Cactus* (1954)**

### **1.1. Introduction**

New Mexico has a centuries-old, variegated Hispanic literary tradition, in written as well as oral form. By the 1930s a group of women writers are rising to prominence in the flourishing northern New Mexican writing scene. Other Hispanic women are also writing in the Southwest at the time; the Nuevomexicanas, however, appear to be the most productive.<sup>138</sup> Nina Otero-Warren, Cleofas Jaramillo and Fabiola Cabeza de Baca (hereafter C. de Baca) are all from old landed upper-class Hispano families. They begin to write, in English, about their lives and their cultural inheritance, which they generally extol in terms of a utopian Spanish pastoral past (cf. Rebolledo, *Women* 33).<sup>139</sup> As Chicana feminist critic Tey Diana Rebolledo has stated, these women's narratives are valuable for preserving accounts of Hispano folk life and for providing a female perspective ("Tradition" 99). In those days most Mexican American women had little education and/or leisure to write, suffering from a "double burden" because they had to resist patriarchal norms as well as Euro-American cultural domination. "It is a wonder that they wrote at all," Rebolledo adds ("Narrative" 134; 135). As she properly notes, pre-Chicano movement Hispana authors like C. de Baca should not be disregarded by critics, which was long the case. They do need serious consideration for their role in Mexican American literary history and in the evolution of contemporary Chicana literature (cf. *Women* 30).

Fabiola C. de Baca stands out among these Hispanas. She was born in 1894 in La Liendre, southeast of Las Vegas, New Mexico Territory, on the edge of the Staked

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<sup>138</sup> New Mexicans who trace their ancestry in the region to Spanish colonial times often choose to be called "Hispanos" or "Nuevo Mexicanos"/"Nuevomexicanos" (rather than "Chicanos") (cf. Rebolledo, "Tradition" 254, n. 3). See also my observations on labels in ch. I.2. Fabiola Cabeza de Baca referred to herself as "Hispana" (cf. Ponce 14, n. 1). For an overview of the literary tradition of Hispanic New Mexico, cf. *Pasó por aquí: Critical Essays on the New Mexican Literary Tradition, 1542-1988*, edited and with a good introduction by Erlinda Gonzales-Berry (1989). In her 1995 study, Rebolledo discusses early Mexican American and New Mexican women's literature in chapters 1 and 2. See also Ponce's remarks on the Hispana authors (148-52). A second group of Hispanic women writers to emerge in the 1930s Southwest were educated Texas Mexicans (Tejanas) such as Jovita González and María Cristina Mena. Besides Rebolledo's book, cf. the essay by Gloria Velásquez Treviño as well as Ponce 147-48, 152-54.

<sup>139</sup> The New Mexico Federal Writers Project may have impacted C. de Baca's writing. Part of the New Deal in the 1930s, this project had as one of its major goals the preservation of Hispano culture and traditions within the context of the period's regionalism (cf. Ponce 133-37, 184).

Plains (Llano Estacado).<sup>140</sup> The C. de Bacas/Bacas were a wealthy ranching family and members of the New Mexican elite rooted in the Spanish colonial past; one of C. de Baca's uncles was elected governor in the early 1900s. After the mother's early death, Fabiola and her siblings were raised by their father Graciano C. de Baca and his parents. She spent her young childhood on the ranch in La Liendre, then moved to busy, urban Las Vegas with her grandparents in 1901. As a Hispana and a woman of her time, her education and professional life were exceptional. She had two teaching degrees (1913 and, from New Mexico Normal (later Highlands) University, Las Vegas, in 1921) and taught school for more than a decade.<sup>141</sup> Besides, she earned a bachelor's degree in home economics from New Mexico State University in Las Cruces. Upon graduation in 1929, she became the first female Mexican American extension agent in the New Mexico Agricultural Extension Service (NMAES). C. de Baca was highly successful as a home demonstration agent for the next thirty years, working in northern New Mexico and, during the early 1950s, as a UNESCO representative in Mexico. Throughout her life she was active in a number of community organizations, such as LULAC (the League of United Latin American Citizens) in the late 1930s and 40s and as president of the New Mexico Folklore Society in the 1950s. She died in 1991.<sup>142</sup>

C. de Baca's writing career began with NMAES pamphlets on food preparation and canning issued in her native Spanish during the 1930s.<sup>143</sup> Another NMAES publication, the cookbook *Historic Cookery* (1939), a compilation of Hispanic New

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<sup>140</sup> Extending across eastern New Mexico and western Texas, this plateau forms part of the High or Great Plains (cf. Opie, *History* 355-56).

<sup>141</sup> C. de Baca also took two year-long educational trips to Madrid, Spain: in 1906, at age twelve, and again in 1921.

<sup>142</sup> Information on C. de Baca's life and writings may be obtained from Maureen Reed's book *A Woman's Place* (2005). One well-researched chapter (3) of this collective biography of six twentieth-century New Mexican women authors deals with her ("Making Homes in a Changing Land: Fabiola Cabeza de Baca and the Double-Edged Present"). Merrihelen Ponce's 1995 Ph.D. thesis "The Life and Works of Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, New Mexican Hispanic Woman Writer: A Contextual Biography" (University of New Mexico) seems to be the only monographic work on the woman. See also historian Virginia Scharff on movement in her life, "'So Many Miles to a Person': Fabiola Cabeza de Baca Makes New Mexico;" the piece appears in Scharff's book *Twenty Thousand Roads: Women, Movement, and the West* (2003) (115-35). Helpful sources for quick bio-bibliographical reference are dictionary entries by Kate Davis (2000) and Enrique Lamadrid (1992). A portrait of C. de Baca's paternal grandmother, titled "Estéfana Delgado Cabeza de Baca," with additional detail about the family and Fabiola's childhood, can further be consulted on the Web. On her NMAES work with Hispanic and Native New Mexico farm women, see the articles by Joan Jensen, "Crossing Ethnic Barriers in the Southwest" (esp. 177-81) as well as those in Jensen's coedited 1986 history of New Mexican women ("Canning Comes to New Mexico," "'I've Worked, I'm Not Afraid of Work'"). Further cf. Sarah Leavitt 87-90. C. de Baca's personal papers are stored in the University of New Mexico archives in Albuquerque.

<sup>143</sup> *Los alimentos y su preparación* (1934) and *Boletín de conservar*, of 1935.

Mexican recipes, was a national success. In 1949 she published *The Good Life: New Mexico Traditions and Food*. It offers a romantic fictional portrait of northern New Mexican Hispano culture and describes its contact with modernity, as illustrated in a farming family. The text also incorporates a recipe section.<sup>144</sup> C. de Baca's best-known work of literature is her memoir *We Fed Them Cactus* from 1954. She also wrote newspaper and magazine articles.

Blending the genres of autobiography, history and folklore, *We Fed Them Cactus* intends to represent Hispano history and a cultural tradition that is gradually disappearing from New Mexico. It aims to counter the dominant Euro-American culture's ignorance and misinterpretations of the Hispano as well as to preserve his ethnic heritage in writing. In addition to her own community, C. de Baca hereby addresses the sizable English-speaking audience that already existed for such writing in contemporaneous New Mexico. Her awareness of the uninformed and biased character of previous Euro-American writing on the region and its past is expressed in her book. She deplores New Mexican schoolbooks' limitations in their focus on official U.S. history, with only "[o]ne sentence or perhaps a paragraph . . . about the Indians and the Spaniards in the Southwest" (*Cactus* 159).<sup>145</sup> In her 1950 preface, she displays a critical attitude towards Euro-American historians' and writers' misrepresentation of former Hispano life and wealth: they were "not understood" by these "outsiders," she contends (xii). "Until writers with Indian or Hispanic backgrounds contribute towards a history of their peoples," she observes elsewhere, "there will not be a true impartial picture of their cultures, traditions, religion, and folkways" (qtd. in Reed from an undated manuscript (169)). In her unpublished "Notes on *We Fed Them Cactus*," she makes clear that her goal in the book was to present the unwritten history of the Hispano from her own insider perspective (cf. Reed 160). She means to tell the "real," "authentic" "Spanish American history of the Llano," its people and their lives (*Cactus* x, ix; 5). In brief, as Merrihelen Ponce has suggested, C. de Baca "wrote *We Fed Them Cactus* to document and affirm the New Mexican Hispano experience at a time when EuroAmerican writers were

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<sup>144</sup> The author's first literary piece came out in 1945. "Noche Buena for Doña Antonia" is a prose depiction of Christmas in a Hispano village. It reappears in a revised form as a chapter in *The Good Life* (cf. Reed 154, 156).

<sup>145</sup> This and all subsequent references to the text derive from the 1994 reedition by the University of New Mexico Press.

defining who Hispanics were” (8).<sup>146</sup> The narrative reflects the author’s longstanding nostalgic fascination with Nuevomexicano and family history, genealogy and folklore (also cf. Ponce 33-34). Her cultural tradition and its transformation and erosion in modern times is indeed the focus of attention in the majority of her writings, literary and nonliterary. In its desire to inscribe Hispano history, her memoir emphasizes the referential and especially the appellative, pedagogic functions of a text, as explained in part one herein (Ickstadt). C. de Baca also wants to convey her version of regional history to her own ethnic group. This communally oriented message anticipates the narrative strategy of universalization that is prominent in the contemporary Mexican American fiction studied below.

A pivotal aspect of the rural Hispano culture portrayed in *We Fed Them Cactus* and other writings is the Plains landscape. Since her childhood C. de Baca would always alternate between the city—Las Vegas and, since 1929, Santa Fe—and ranch life on the family estates in the Plains near Newkirk, New Mexico. There she is also buried. In her book she stresses her “love[ ]” for her native Llano, to which she first went out at age three (134; 11).<sup>147</sup> This connectedness with one’s physical environs—she also speaks of the ““call of the land”” persisting in the Hispano’s life in her day (“The People and the Community,” C. de Baca Papers, qtd. in Scharff 134)—has frequently been described as characteristic of the old Hispano culture of New Mexico, which was first settled by the Spanish in 1598. Geographer Richard Nostrand has commented on the Nuevomexicano sense of place and called it a “level of territorial consciousness or place identity . . . uncommon in mainstream American society” (223-26; similarly Gonzales-Berry and Maciel, Introduction 2, 4). Northern New Mexican writer Sabine R. Ulibarrí details the “all-embracing” connotation of the concept land/*tierra* for the Hispano: “from the spiritual and sentimental to the vital and practical” (qtd. in Gerdes 242). Yi-Fu Tuan, whose phenomenologic-geographical ideas on the concept of place tie in well with ecocritical practice, has coined the term “topophilia” for such a culturally mediated relationship.<sup>148</sup> In the

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<sup>146</sup> C. de Baca regarded Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca’s 1542 account as the beginning of written New Mexico history (cf. Scharff 123). With respect to her family’s claim to kinship with the illustrious Spanish explorer, it is unfounded in fact according to the standard source on Hispano genealogy, Fray Angélico Chávez’s *Origins of New Mexico Families: A Genealogy of the Spanish Colonial Period* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1954) (cf. Reed 124-25; 307, n. 7).

<sup>147</sup> Cf. also Ponce 42, 154-55. As she notes, the significance of the land to C. de Baca is also manifest in her articles, letters and interviews.

<sup>148</sup> He defines it as “the affective bond between people and place or setting,” “the feeling one has toward a place because it is home, the locus of memories, and the means of gaining a livelihood.” See

narrative literature of Hispanic New Mexico, José Armas points out, the historical, cultural and geographical landscape has constituted a central theme (32).<sup>149</sup>

C. de Baca's historical-folkloric autobiography is narrated in the first person and consists of a main body of five parts, usually with several chapters each.<sup>150</sup> In a tone of nostalgia, they chronicle in loose episodic form the history of Hispano ranching on the New Mexico Plains from the late 1700s through the U.S. takeover in the mid-nineteenth century up to the 1930s Depression. The narrative opens with a description of the physical landscape as setting of the Hispano's story. Section two is largely made up of the stories El Cuate, the old cook at Graciano C. de Baca's Spear Bar Ranch in the early 1900s, tells about Hispano traditions such as rodeo, *fiestas* and the buffalo hunt. The author's family history comes in here. All through the book, two thematic lines are intertwined, merging cultural history with the story of the C. de Bacas over several generations, which includes some information about her own life. As a collage of ethnic and familial/personal history, these memoirs incorporate not only the cook's tales and material from other oral "informants," but draw also on a variety of written sources like local histories, archival documents and

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*Topophilia* (4; 93), an important work of space-and-place theory. The term "topophilia" expresses well both the material and the nonmaterial dimensions of the Hispano relation to the land. On space and place in ecocriticism, cf. also chapter I.2 (note 58) herein.

<sup>149</sup> In "Chicano Writing: The New Mexico Narrative" (1986), Armas names authors affected by the land like Ulibarrí, Orlando Romero and Anaya, but no women. In the last decades, feminist and other revisionist western/frontier scholarship has produced a great deal of work on women's relationship to the (western) landscape in U.S. culture and literature. Most of this research has concentrated on Euro-American women. A seminal study is Kolodny's analysis of female frontier experiences as reflected in writing in *The Land before Her* (1984). In her 1992 essay "Letting Go Our Grand Obsessions," she calls for a new literary history of the American frontiers, which should also comprehend Hispanic texts. Brigitte Georgi-Findlay, in *The Frontiers of Women's Writing* (1996), centers on Euro-American women's narratives about the West between 1830 and 1930. *Made from This Earth: American Women and Nature* by Vera Norwood (1993) is a groundbreaking inquiry into American women's relations with the natural environment. Wide in historical scope, it, however, leaves out Hispanic women altogether. This is also true of Rachel Stein's discussion of American women writers' revisions of nature in her 1997 book, which draws on ecofeminist theory. Cf. further the study by Stacy Alaimo (2000). Mexican American women's experiences on the land, including that of C. de Baca in some cases, are considered in the following works: *Western Women*, eds. Lillian Schlissel, Vicki Ruiz and Janice Monk (1988), is a multicultural feminist history that also takes in the literary viewpoint; it contains a piece in which Norwood does examine Mexican American women. In 1987 already Norwood and Monk edited *The Desert Is No Lady: Southwestern Landscapes in Women's Writing and Art*, an important collection of critical essays with a crosscultural approach. Female-authored Mexican American writing is also treated by Krista Comer in her exploration of a new, multiethnic regionalism in contemporary women's literature on the American West, *Landscapes of the New West* (1999), as well as in Grewe-Volpp's ecocritical/ecofeminist monograph on nature as represented by American women novelists today. I have already dealt with Mexican American women's writing and its incipient investigation by environmental criticism in chapter I.2.

<sup>150</sup> It also has the authorial preface, followed by Rebolledo's intrusively placed introduction (in the 1994 edition) and, at the end, a glossary of Spanish terms as well as an index.

family papers (cf. *Cactus* ix).<sup>151</sup> The third part of the text continues the portrayal of the traditional way of life and elaborates on the history and modern-day decline of Hispano settlements in the region. The narrator subsequently concentrates on old-time banditry, Hispano as well as Euro-American. In part five she devotes a chapter to her first year as a rural teacher. The last section's principal focus lies on the arrival of the Euro-American homesteaders and the disastrous consequences it has for the land and Hispano livestock culture. Central are here the drought of 1918, when ranchers are forced to feed their cattle cactus and Spear Bar Ranch is lost, and finally the Dust Bowl years. At the end of the book, C. de Baca's father dies.

In its generic mixture, the text is no autobiography in the conventional sense of U.S. life writing, a major literary genre traditionally represented by Euro-American male authors. Rather, *We Fed Them Cactus* is a Hispana woman's "ethnoautobiography," to take up Rebolledo's term (*Women* 134).<sup>152</sup> It belongs to the tradition of ethnic and Mexican American self-representational writing that has blossomed in recent decades. By means of intertextual borrowing of a narrative form from the Euro-American mainstream to address her own ideological concerns, the memoirist creates a heterogeneous ethnic form.<sup>153</sup> As such, the text is obviously also

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<sup>151</sup> C. de Baca spent some fifteen years gathering material for her work (cf. Ponce 138), together with her older brother Luis, himself a Plains rancher. His scrapbook is also cited as a source (*Cactus* x). *We Fed Them Cactus* was finally written when the author was in her forties (cf. Ponce 119).

<sup>152</sup> One might also introduce the label "autoethnography" for the book. By "autoethnographic expression" Mary Louise Pratt refers to texts in which colonized subjects represent themselves in ways that engage with the colonizer's own terms. She views this as a common phenomenon of the "contact zones" of disparate cultures across the globe. See *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992) (4-9), which examines mainly European travel and exploration writing about Africa and South America.

<sup>153</sup> Within the lively field of Americanist autobiography criticism, prominent essay collections that discuss also ethnic life writings are *American Autobiography*, edited by Paul John Eakin (1991), and *Multicultural Autobiography*, ed. James Robert Payne (1992). In his introduction Payne notes that the Euro-American male tradition of self-expression—in the form of the religious conversion narrative modeled on *The Confessions of St. Augustine* and of the secular success story, as embodied by *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*—does not prove particularly helpful in reading works like ethnic autobiographies (xii). He sees the need for "pluralist approaches" to American life writing (xiii). Cf. also Alfred Hornung's new edited compilation *Auto/Biography and Mediation* (2010), with numerous contributions on life narratives from the U.S. and other areas of the world. The increased autobiographical production not only by contemporary U.S. ethnic writers but also by women as another long-excluded social group has also received critical attention. Cf., e.g., *De/Colonizing the Subject*, eds. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (1992), and Anne Goldman, *Take My Word* (1996), both of which include Goldman's work on C. de Baca and Cleofas Jaramillo. A major study of the autobiographical writings of Mexican Americans from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is Genaro Padilla's *My History, Not Yours* (1993). Also see Tonn's 1988 book about contemporary Mexican American literature. On Mexican American autobiography in our time, cf. further Ramón Saldívar's chapter in *Chicano Narrative*, "Ideologies of the Self" (154-70). Cabeza de Vaca's *La relación* may actually be considered the first Hispanic American work of autobiographical self-representation. Other precontemporary Mexican American accounts are: the three-volume memoirs of Miguel Antonio Otero, cousin to C. de Baca and one-time territorial governor of New Mexico, *My*

far from being a conventional book of history. C. de Baca's reliance on personal remembrance—she concedes it is “impossible” to recall all the names from her childhood stories (*Cactus* ix)—and her treatment of her oral and written research material—selective and without proper documentation—make for anything but historiographic accuracy and objectivity. What she presents as “authentic” history (ix), rather than being a factual account, is really her own imaginative and strongly biased rendition of her people's past. Like the official historical record she sets out to correct, her story is just one version of how things happened—a quality shared by all history writing.<sup>154</sup>

Formal and stylistic mingling in the narrative is also due to the influence of the oral tradition of Hispano folklore. Formed by the storytelling (*cuento*) tradition and other oral forms of Spanish-Mexican origin, the oral inheritance has always been of great significance in New Mexico and the Spanish-speaking Southwest. Its influence extends to the form and content of the written literary tradition—as is true of other ethnic literatures in America.<sup>155</sup> C. de Baca grew up with the oral tradition and the

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*Life on the Frontier, 1864-1882* (1935), *My Life on the Frontier, 1892-1897* (1939) and *My Nine Years as Governor of the Territory of New Mexico, 1897-1906* (1940); the folkloric Hispana autobiography authored by another of C. de Baca's cousins, Cleofas Jaramillo, *Romance of a Little Village Girl* (1955); or *The Rebel* by Leonor Villegas de Magnón (1994; written in the 1940s). These are the recollections of an upper-class Texas-Mexico border woman who participated in the Mexican Revolution and founded La Cruz Blanca (The White Cross).

<sup>154</sup> In his theoretical considerations on history and historiography, Hayden White has emphasized the proximity of historiography to fiction, i.e. the impossibility of objectivity in recording history. Cf. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Europe*.

<sup>155</sup> An important analysis of the fundamental role of oral folklore in Mexican American literature is by Raymund Paredes, “The Evolution of Chicano Literature” (1982). According to it, the largely orally transmitted folklore of what is now the U.S. Southwest was predominantly Spanish in the early colonial period (late 1500s) before it mixed with Mexican—Native American and mestizo—elements (33; 75, n. 8). Several genres may be distinguished, such as the tradition of Spanish folk drama, particularly in New Mexico. Literary folklore in the Hispanic Southwest also comprises legends (one of the oldest and most popular is the story of La Llorona, the weeping woman), tales and proverbs as well as folk songs, like the *corrido* (33-35). Primarily in Spanish, Paredes observes, this body of folklore has served as the core of Mexican American literary sensibility in New Mexico and the Southwest (35). In her memoir C. de Baca mentions the *corridos* traditionally composed by New Mexican shepherders and other ranch workers (7; 24). The *corrido* is a fast-paced narrative ballad (*correr* means “to run”) whose roots lie in medieval Spain; it typically deals with struggle or adventure. It thrived especially in the southern Texas borderlands, where the animosity between Euro-Americans and Mexicans was very intense, from the mid-1800s into the twentieth century. Though *corridos* are still composed and sung today, the practice has waned in the U.S. and in Mexico since the 1930s (cf. Paredes 35, 37-45). Paredes also points out differences between the Texan and the New Mexican *corrido*. Since New Mexico was relatively undisturbed by U.S. influences until the advent of the railroad in the 1880s, its literature contains little cultural conflict prior to this time, and the native brand of the *corrido* is less concerned with Euro-American oppression than its Texan counterpart. Instead, it addresses topics such as romance and family tragedy (47). C. de Baca's own remarks on the Hispano *corrido* confirm this (7). On the *corrido* and the genesis and development of Mexican American folklore, see too Américo Paredes's essay “The Folk Base of Chicano Literature.” Paredes is also the author of an early landmark study of the *corrido*, *With His Pistol in His Hand* (1958).

stories told by her family, above all her grandparents and father, and by the ranch hands (cf. Ponce 52, 138; Rebolledo, Introduction xiii, xiv). While a thematic oral influence on her autobiography and other writing manifests itself in her interest in folkloric subject matter, including tales and legends, an important formal impact shows in the episodic structure of her 1954 text. It may be related to the *cuento* tradition.<sup>156</sup> She also attempts to re-create the communal storytelling atmosphere of her early life on the ranch in part two: El Cuate's stories are rendered in direct speech. As she "quotes" his tales from memory decades after his death, however, the author-narrator filters everything through her own highly subjective lens, that of an upper-class Hispana ethnographer. To speak with Becky Jo McShane, "one must wonder what details she forgot, what details she reconstructed, what changes she made. . . . de Baca reconstructs his words and uses them for her own purposes" ("Pursuit" 195)—as she does with all of her oral sources.<sup>157</sup> As we will again see with Anaya, C. de Baca has adjusted her culture's oral heritage to the written literary form.

Precontemporary Mexican American writing attracted little critical interest until Chicano literary historians started looking for antecedents of today's flourishing literature. Scholarly studies of *We Fed Them Cactus* have been presented almost exclusively by U.S. critics, Mexican American and non-Mexican American.<sup>158</sup> An

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Further cf. Heide's commentary on the *corrido* and the work of A. Paredes (esp. 134-44). A feminist critique is by Herrera-Sobek, *The Mexican Corrido* (1990). As to the traditional southwestern *cuento*, cf. also Padilla's article ("Tales").

<sup>156</sup> Walter Ong has remarked on the episodic plot structure of oral narrative. See *Orality and Literacy* (1982) (145), an influential examination of the differences between oral and literate cultures. For a study of orality in U.S. Hispanic literature, cf. Nicolás Kanellos's piece; it discusses, among others, the Mexican American writer Rolando Hinojosa.

<sup>157</sup> I therefore agree with this scholar when she contests (194) Rebolledo's claim that "[n]o voice has more discursive authority than any other . . ." in the book (Introduction xxvi). In her argument for the presence of a collective, communal voice telling the stories in the text (xxv-xxvi), Rebolledo clearly overshoots the mark in a desire to defend its elite author against Chicano critics like Raymund Paredes. He castigated early Hispanic New Mexican writers for not being "representative of the collective spirit" (52). See my next note for detail about critical responses to the Hispana's narrative.

<sup>158</sup> In his 1982 article on the evolution of Mexican American literature, Raymund Paredes attacks Otero-Warren and other early New Mexican Hispano upper-class authors of both sexes for what he sees as a lack of social concern. He criticizes their writings for their "fear and intimidation" and their "retreat[ ] . . . into nostalgia" as they depict a Hispanic culture "seemingly locked in time and barricaded against outside forces" from U.S. reality (51-52). C. de Baca is not mentioned here, but can undoubtedly be included. A similar opinion is held by Francisco Lomelí in an essay (1985) that acknowledges Mexican American women writers and cursorily deals with "Fabiola Cabeza de Vaca" (33-34). Lamadrid, on the other hand, in his dictionary piece on C. de Baca (1992), stresses her Hispano folk history's contribution to Mexican American literature in view of the paucity of such works. Rebolledo, interested in recuperating Hispana authors, has studied the symbolic function of landscape in Mexican American women's writing in "Tradition and Mythology" (1987; publ. the same year in an earlier version as "Hispanic Women Writers of the Southwest"). In a *Nuevomexicana*

early Chicano critic like Francisco Lomelí censured the Hispana author for neglecting to engage in critical social commentary and for glossing over history in her nostalgic memoir (33-34). Later commentators like Rebolledo and Genaro Padilla, by contrast, have identified and discussed the existence of a curious tension between C. de Baca's sentimental nostalgia for an idealized Hispano past on the Plains and underlying criticism and oppositionalism vis-à-vis the realities of the

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text like *We Fed Them Cactus*, Rebolledo convincingly argues, the landscape is used as a symbol of cultural change and loss. Contrary to previous critical opinion, C. de Baca may thus definitely be credited with a deep concern with the social impact of the Euro-American presence in New Mexico (99-102). A few years later, the critic refocuses her interpretation of the narrative and other Hispana works. In her introduction to the 1994 reedition of C. de Baca's out-of-print book, she proves that, besides nostalgia and accommodation, the text shows a marked discourse of "resistance." She identifies a whole range of "narrative strategies of resistance" (xx; as seen in the preceding note, this may also go too far); the representation of landscape remains an important aspect here. More or less identical "resistance" readings of *We Fed Them Cactus* appear in a 1990 essay ("Narrative Strategies of Resistance in Hispana Writing") and, most recently, in her 1995 monograph (29-34, 42-47); a preliminary version is "Las escritoras" (1989). Rebolledo also briefly explores C. de Baca's and other Hispanas' resistive literary procedures in a 1993 introduction (with Eliana Rivero). Padilla, in his book on the formation of Mexican American autobiography (1993), criticizes C. de Baca and other Hispanic New Mexican writers of her generation for mimicking the nonnative Euro-American discourse of a romantic Spanish Southwest that proliferated in New Mexico between 1900 and 1940. Nonetheless, in his short reading of C. de Baca's major work, he also perceives a "contradictory consciousness" in these narratives, with occasional "fissures of disquietude opening to critique." Despite its nostalgic, accommodationist stance, Padilla writes, the text also operates as a form of "resistance" to Euro-American domination (203-07). He already argued in this direction in "Imprisoned Narrative?" (1991). McShane's essay "In Pursuit of Regional and Cultural Identity" draws on her doctoral dissertation ("Beyond Cultural Authenticity: The Patterned Identities of Women's Southwestern Autobiographies, 1932-1955" (1996)). She approaches Agnes Morley Cleaveland's and C. de Baca's "collective cultural autobiographies" (183) on turn-of-the-twentieth-century New Mexico ranch life from the standpoint of revisionist western regionalism. In "The Rhetorics of Latino Survival in the U.S.: 1528-1961" (2003), Bruce-Novoa casts a panoramic glance over Spanish colonial and pre-movement Mexican American writing. He shows that, like contemporary Mexican American literature, it is concerned with cultural "survival" and that there has been a "literary tradition of communal survival" over the centuries. C. de Baca's memoir is one of the works examined in this context (2-4; 22-27). I am grateful to Prof. Bruce-Novoa for sharing manuscript copies of this and other unpublished essays of his with me. C. de Baca's biographer Ponce also offers a literary analysis of the book in her 1995 study (ch. 4). She treats formal aspects like genre and style and major themes such as Hispano folklore and the author's sense of place. In her recent research on C. de Baca, Reed highlights the contradictions in her life story, which she sees reflected in her autobiography. She looks at how this woman takes a preservationist perspective on the Hispano tradition even as she welcomes Euro-American progress and change (163-65). The British critic Elizabeth Jacobs explores contrasting conceptions of self and home in early Hispana texts like C. de Baca's and in the work of the contemporary New Mexican writer Denise Chávez—"New Mexican Narratives and the Politics of Home" (2000). Joan Torres-Pou employs Angel Rama's theories on Latin American literature to discuss parallelisms between Hispana life writings like *We Fed Them Cactus* and contemporary Hispanic autobiographical texts by Gloria Anzaldúa and Esmeralda Santiago ("Procesos de neoculturación en la autobiografía y la memoria femenina hispana en los Estados Unidos" (1999)). In "Does History Only Belong to You?" (2004) the Spanish scholar María Camino Bueno Alastuey focuses on the revision of a history of Euro-American male dominance in Hispana writing by C. de Baca and in Lucha Corpi's Chicana novels. Reviews of C. de Baca's book have been generally complimentary. Positive articles often commend its treatment of history and folklore, thus James Arrott (1955), T. M. Pearce (1956) and Felix Almaraz (1990). (Upon first publication, it was also briefly reviewed by Charles Poore in *The New York Times*.) Some reviews—according to Ponce, there are more than sixty (141)—are less favorable, for instance John Rothfork's negative evaluation from 1980 (more below). For a detailed inspection of reviews, see Ponce 138-42.

Euro-American present. In Rebolledo's words, one of the "narrative strategies of resistance" she detects in a Hispana work like C. de Baca's is "[a] sentimental recall of the past, generally expressed in nostalgic edenic terms, but which nevertheless questions present authority" (Introduction xx). Yet neither Rebolledo nor Padilla has described this tension as a defining characteristic of pastoralism, nor is there, as far as I am aware, a sustained pastoral interpretation of the narrative by any critic.<sup>159</sup> Besides, no one has undertaken a "new," environmental pastoral analysis in terms of Leo Marx (or any of today's ecocritics). The importance of landscape and natural environment to the Hispano culture depicted by C. de Baca has seldom been examined; the only exceptions are Rebolledo's essay on landscape symbolism and Ponce's rather superficial comments on the author's regional place attachment. In addition, Vera Norwood and Janice Monk once refer to the book as "explicitly environmentalist" in its preoccupation with old rural lifeways (Conclusion 231). None of these critics has viewed the text from an ecocritical vantage point. My own environmentally focused, ecocritical pastoral reading of *We Fed Them Cactus* will attempt to start remedying this deficiency. It will explore how C. de Baca utilizes and translates the philosophical assumptions and literary conventions of the millennia-old pastoral mode to serve her own ethnic environmental ends in this folk autobiography. Such a pastoral angle is not only of interest in the context of the great pastoral tradition in U.S. culture and literature, but also in view of the fact that New Mexico itself has, as Rebolledo briefly mentions, a strong native pastoral tradition in oral and written literature by both men and women ("Tradition" 98; 255, n. 6).<sup>160</sup> Moreover, an environmental critical investigation of the narrative will contribute to countering the prevailing disregard for the Mexican American environmental literary tradition that marks the little existent ecocriticism of this ethnic literature.

I will read C. de Baca's memoir as New Mexico-style pastoral in its narrativization of the ecopastoral theme of the Hispano "garden" and the Euro-American "machine" "counterforce" (Marx). As announced above, this literary enactment is characterized by sentimentality and a dualistic, rather melodramatic structure. Such is already the case of the narrative perspective. The I-narrator's self-

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<sup>159</sup> A pastoral configuration of the contrast between a traditional land-based Hispano lifestyle and modern urban America already appears in the writer's first important literary piece, *The Good Life*.

<sup>160</sup> An early example is the *pastorela* (pastoral or shepherd play) *Los pastores* (*The Adoration of the Shepherds*). Of medieval origin, it forms part of traditional Spanish religious drama in the New World (cf. R. Paredes 34; Padilla, *History* 20).

representation as marginalized Hispana other and subaltern constitutes a sentimental, melodramatic rhetorical technique that is widely used in Mexican American and other ethnic/minority culture and writing. It should be stressed here that, owing to the centrality of its ideological function, the text has aesthetic limitations. Not only in respect of overmuch formal simplification and stylistic emphasis, but also in the way in which it intermingles genres. As the autobiographical form is mixed with historical discourse, a literary, fictional device like the family plot remains fragmented and underdeveloped. There are, in other words, disharmonies of a structural nature within the text because of a lack of narrative organization. This lack—it may further be ascribed to the influence of the oral tradition—has been justly criticized by some commentators. As reviewer John Rothfork has put it, the “fundamental problem with the book” is that it is “neither history nor fiction,” containing “no fully developed stories” (181).<sup>161</sup> Altogether, *We Fed Them Cactus* certainly does not impress with its aesthetic quality.

Chapter 1.2 will supply the historical background of the narrative and introduce the focal topic of a critique of the Euro-American intrusion into the Nuevomexicano Llano “garden” celebrated in retrospect. In the succeeding chapters, I will elaborate on a number of aspects of this ethnic ecopastoral account of New Mexican history. Central to the critical portrayal is the impact of the eastern homesteaders on the land and the Hispano. Along with Euro-American cattlemen, they typify the “machine,” while C. de Baca’s father serves as the main symbolic representative of what is depicted as an ecologically harmonious Hispanic ranch culture. It is the traditional rural ideal nostalgically contrasted with the incoming culture. This pastoral myth also comprehends the Hispano’s supposed indifference to materialist values (chapter 1.3.1). Chapter 1.3.2 discusses the representation of the drought of 1918 and the Dust Bowl as they affect the author’s community and her family. It will describe her strategic appeal to reader emotion through the introduction of tears and other sentimental devices as well as through apocalyptic rhetoric. As Hispano ecopastoral, *We Fed Them Cactus* revises U.S. pastoral mythography of the West, as I will proceed to underline. Against this national historical narrative, C. de Baca sets her Llano homeland; this happens also on the linguistic level (chapter 1.3.3). The next

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<sup>161</sup> The same criticism is voiced in a 1954 review by O. L. P., “*We Fed Them Cactus* Worthy of Addition to Western Americana,” *Las Cruces Sun News* 9 Dec. 1954 (qtd. in Ponce 141). Ponce herself has noted organizational deficiencies in the text (210).

chapter (1.4) concentrates on the favorable view she takes of certain aspects of Euro-American progress and on her general interest in historical dynamism and cultural change in her native region. Within the dyadic pastoral ideology on which the text is founded, this creates oscillation and an element of ambiguity. An important instance is her representation of the positive repercussions U.S. modernity has for the Hispana in patriarchal Hispanic society. A series of secondary characters emblematic of the rural Hispano past will be examined in chapter 1.5, such as the shepherd, the cowboy and the *curandera*. Here and elsewhere I will also comment on the ideological ambivalence of Hispano pastoralism considering its hegemonic side. Chapter 1.6 deals with the depiction of the Plains landscape and its role in the ethnic culture. As “garden” protagonist, it is rendered in the emotional, hyperbolic style characteristic of the writer’s ecopastoral character presentation and her aesthetics in general. Even so, the text, which also stands in the larger American tradition of nature and desert writing, does not hide nature’s less idyllic sides and emphasizes the need for human environmental adjustment. A prominent image of the land’s power, in an episode that forms part of the sketchy family plot, is a rainstorm taking place on Spear Bar Ranch sometime early in the twentieth century. The concluding section of my discussion (1.7) will sum up the book’s significance, conceptually and aesthetically, as an early work of Mexican American ecological pastoralism and as such a forerunner of the contemporary literature.

## 1.2. Llano Pastoralism and Its Historical Context

C. de Baca defines her subject in the first sentence of her preface: “This is the story of the struggle of New Mexican Hispanos for existence on the Llano, the Staked Plains” (ix). She goes on to declare, “Through four generations, our family has made a living from this land—from cattle and sheep, and lately by selling curios, soda pop, gasoline and food to tourists traveling over U.S. Highway 66” (ix). While the latter is a somewhat exaggerated statement regarding the fate of this upper-class clan, the memoir’s opening passage already expresses, by implication, a critical perspective

on the coming of the U.S. and its consequences for Hispano New Mexico. It is a fairly melodramatic ecopastoral critique that will surface again and again in the course of the text. In terms of ideological content and narrative representation, the “machine” is flawed by its lack of sophistication. The pastoral “garden” balanced against this history of oppression and loss is the traditional Hispano sheep and cattle ranching culture of the High Plains. As the narrator relates, Hispano sheep and some cattle were already grazing on the New Mexico grasslands in the late eighteenth century and particularly since 1840 (75). That year sheep owners from the Upper Rio Grande Valley (the core of Spanish settlement in the Southwest) first sent flocks east into the Plains (5). Spanish-speaking sheep- and cattlemen—among them the (C. de) Bacas who, like a few other moneyed Hispano families, engaged in large-scale stockraising (72; cf. also Arellano 60)—prospered on the open ranges until the late 1800s. They spread as far east as the Texas and Oklahoma panhandles (*Cactus* 5). Until the advent of the large Euro-American cattle herds, we are told, the Llano was primarily a sheep country (72).<sup>162</sup>

As recounted in pastoral retrospection, Hispano stockmen find “the Promised Land” for their flocks and herds in the lush and extensive Plains grasslands (5, 145). A Roman Catholic’s typological reference to the Biblical land of Canaan which parallels the Euro-American typological interpretation of the country’s secular history and westward expansion, the image of “the Promised Land” draws on the classical pastoral ideal of rural nature’s abundance.<sup>163</sup> The phrase describes the Hispano Llano ideal, the verdant paradise that forms the basis of C. de Baca’s ecopastoral portrait of Nuevomexicano stock culture. It is a New Mexican variant of the idealized rural “middle landscape” (Marx) of traditional pastoral, the pleasance

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<sup>162</sup> For a detailed historical-geographical account of the Hispano experience in New Mexico, including its stock economy (70-76), see Nostrand, *The Hispano Homeland* (1992). New Mexican and southwestern sheep and cattle culture is also treated in McWilliams’s book (136-47). A comprehensive source on cattle ranching in the Southwest and especially in New Mexico is *Bell Ranch* by David Remley. General background on New Mexican history is provided in Manuel Gonzales’s study as well as in *The Contested Homeland*, eds. Gonzales-Berry and Maciel (2000). A good historical introduction to the Mexican American in the nineteenth-century Southwest is also David Weber’s *Foreigners in Their Native Land* (1973), a collection of Spanish, Mexican and American writings. Donald Meinig traces the social geography of the region over four centuries in *Southwest: Three Peoples in Geographical Change, 1600-1970*.

<sup>163</sup> The ancient pastoral notion of an ideal locus like Vergil’s Arcadia has often also been melded with the myth of the Garden of Eden in the Christian tradition (cf. Weatherley 73; Gifford, *Pastoral* 32). For a study of Puritan typology and its legacy in the U.S., see Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*. The influence of Euro-American typological practice on diverse U.S. ethnic literary traditions with no connections to Puritan theology is explored by Sollors in an essay on literature and ethnicity (649-53). Cf. also his 1986 monograph (ch. 2).

projected onto the Plains. One is reminded of Cabeza de Vaca's agricultural pastoral vision of the Texas plains as pasture lands some four hundred years earlier (cf. ch. I.4). Due to its simplicity and frequently quite melancholy sentimentalism, the "garden" provokes throughout the book similar epistemological and aesthetic criticism as the opposite pole.

It must not be overlooked that the price for Hispano pastoral bliss on the Llano is paid by the Native American, notably Plains nomads like the Comanche (cf. *Cactus* 5, 67, 69). Hispano pioneers, the author observes, are the first "civilized people" to bring "colonization and religion [to] an almost savage country" (73; 61). This is imperialism with a religious gloss—what they might have called "the white New Mexican's burden." As usual in the European/Euro-American encounter with the New World and North America (cf. Nash, *Wilderness* 28), the indigene is practically considered part of wild nature here, and his plight is ignored by C. de Baca. This indicates an important point of similarity between Hispano expansionism in New Mexico and U.S. imperialism on the western frontier: the idyllic façade of pastoralism comes to mask a racist ideology of conquest of the land and its inhabitants. Such a deployment of pastoral for hegemonic purposes, which revisionist scholars have rightly decried in Euro-American pastoralism in the last decades, may also be perceived in *We Fed Them Cactus*. It illustrates the ideologically ambiguous character of pastoral discourse. C. de Baca draws a sharp line between the New Mexican Native and her own people, whom she refers to as "New Mexican[s] of Spanish origin," or simply "Spanish" (e.g. 43, 53, 119; 96, 132). For themselves, she affirms, the Catholic religion holds a significance "hardly comprehensible to those not of the faith" (53). She evidently subscribes to the Hispano myth of racial purity, which is part of a contrived Hispanicism Carey McWilliams has famously labeled the Spanish "fantasy heritage" of the borderlands (44). It is well entrenched in the minds of both Hispanics and Euro-Americans in New Mexico in C. de Baca's time (and to this day) (cf. Gonzales-Berry, Introduction 6).<sup>164</sup> Her Hispanicism as an early Mexican American writer will be replaced by the

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<sup>164</sup> The C. de Bacas have always taken great pride in their Spanish pedigree, but they also seem to have some Native blood, owing to ancestral intermarriage (cf. Ponce 22; 62, n. 13; 230). Racially, the New Mexican Hispano is in fact by and large mestizo (cf. Nostrand 18-19, 24; Gonzales-Berry and Maciel, Introduction 5). Most historians have attributed the Hispano tendency to identify with things Spanish while denying all ties to things Mexican to a desire to disassociate themselves from the poor masses fleeing Mexico during the revolution of 1910-21. According to Gonzales-Berry, the practice already emerged during the late territorial period of New Mexico (Introduction 4; 10, n. 7). Intraethnic

equally exaggerated indigenism of later “Chicano” authors like Villanueva and Anaya.

With the U.S. assumption of power under the banner of western expansion and “Manifest Destiny,” Euro-Americans from Texas and other places east migrate to the New Mexico Territory in increasing numbers after 1848. This leads to the institution of progressivism and capitalism from an East characterized by rapid industrial and urban growth, especially after the Civil War (cf. M. Gonzales 82-84, 98-106; Nostrand ch. 5). An important symbol of the U.S. “machine” in C. de Baca’s Llano history is the railroad. An embodiment of what David Nye has termed the “technological sublime,”<sup>165</sup> the railroad already constitutes a major image in nineteenth-century Euro-American pastoral literature and painting. The epochal significance of New Mexico’s connection to the transcontinental system in the late 1800s (the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad, e.g., reaches Las Vegas in 1879) is underscored by the narrator’s recurrent utilization of the phrase “the coming of the railroad” (e.g. 54, 76, 79, 143). The Euro-American influx is concomitant with Hispano land loss and dispossession, resulting in displacement and a disintegration of the traditional way of life. The indictment of what C. de Baca, in uncharacteristically strong words, once calls the “American occupation” of the Southwest (76), and of the loss of land suffered by the Hispanic population and her own family since 1848 is a fundamental theme in her memoir. The same goes for other Mexican American literature, particularly in New Mexico and California.<sup>166</sup>

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racism towards Mexicans also makes itself felt in C. de Baca’s text: one of the two “really bad characters” in the railroad camp on her uncle’s land is Mexican, she stresses (141). This serves to perpetuate the old Euro-American prejudice against “Mes’cans.” A perceptive discussion of U.S. stereotypes of Mexicans and Mexican Americans as based on a combination of the Black Legend (anti-Spanish views already inherited from England) and contempt for mixed-bloods is “‘Scarce More than Apes’” by Weber. Also see Richard Slotkin’s remarks on Euro-Americans’ racial preconceptions about their southern neighbors in connection with the war on Mexico (*Fatal* 173-90). On the negative representation of the Mexican in U.S. literature, cf. further Cecil Robinson, *Mexico and the Hispanic Southwest in American Literature* (1977; a revision of his 1963 book *With the Ears of Strangers*), and Marcienne Rocard, *The Children of the Sun*.

<sup>165</sup> Cf. *American Technological Sublime* (1996), which investigates the role of technology in American society and culture.

<sup>166</sup> Although declared property to be “inviolably respected” in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (qtd. in Briggs and Van Ness, Introduction 4), the Spanish and Mexican land grants in the Southwest and New Mexico were lost in a variety of ways, which included outright fraud. Ultimately, around eighty percent of New Mexican grant holders lost their lands to the American government as well as to a host of eastern entrepreneurs. Land-grant litigation continues to this very day. See Maciel and Gonzales-Berry’s short but useful overview of the issue of New Mexico land grants (16-17); also M. Gonzales 103-04. An interesting compilation on grant history in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado is *Land, Water, and Culture*, edited by Charles Briggs and John Van Ness (1987); it also has an ecological perspective. Concerning the complicated C. de Baca land process, one might mention that

The arrival of the railroad decisively promotes the Euro-American sheep and cattle industry in New Mexico and the migration of eastern homesteaders to the Plains (cf. *Cactus* 145). Both are at the heart of C. de Baca's ecopastoral critique, with special attention to the latter. Through the railroad (which boasts the new refrigerator car), the Southwest is now closely tied with the big centralized markets to the east (140), and the raising of livestock, eventually mainly cattle, develops into an extremely profitable business in the region.<sup>167</sup> It ought to be emphasized that the large land- and stockowning families of the Hispano elite, like the C. de Bacas, become deeply involved in the thriving U.S. sheep and cattle business in those days. At the price of accommodation, this stratum of society benefited greatly from the growing Euro-American presence in New Mexico since the early nineteenth century.<sup>168</sup> With regard to the homesteaders, they are lured to New Mexico particularly by the Three-Year-Homestead Act of 1912 (147; cf. Opie, *History* 358). As related in *We Fed Them Cactus*, these people, who arrive in huge numbers, join the large cattle companies in pushing Hispano stockmen west out of the lands settled for half a century (57, 71, 139, 152). Eastern cattleholders and homesteaders, we will

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the half-million-acre Las Vegas Grandes grant on the edge of the Plains, which the author's great-grandfather Luis María C. de Baca received from the Mexican government in 1823, was later exchanged for five tracts of land known as the "Baca Locations" or "Baca Floats." Baca Location Number Two, for instance, was finally paid to land lawyers and, like much other Hispano land, came to be incorporated into Bell Ranch in eastern New Mexico. Cf. Remley 38, 48 for background on C. de Baca's brief observations (73, 81). Note that, as she neglects to explain, those hardest hit by American land grabbing were not the handful of wealthy families with large private grants, but the mass of poor Hispanos with only small landholdings who depended on the legally especially problematic community grants. In Mexican American literature, the history of land grants and their decline has been thematized by historical novelist Nash Candelaria in his tetralogy about the fictitious Rafa family of Albuquerque, New Mexico, notably in *Not by the Sword* (1982), *Inheritance of Strangers* (1985) and *Leonor Park* (1991). Californian examples are *The Squatter and the Don*, a historical romance by María Amparo Ruiz de Burton (1885), and, a century later, Alejandro Morales's 1983 historical novel *Reto en el paraíso*. Morales's title already alludes to the image of a Californio (California Mexican) paradise lost.

<sup>167</sup> Rolling back the eastern Hispano frontier, Texan cattlemen reached San Miguel County in New Mexico in the 1870s. During the following decade, the open-range cattle industry on the Plains booms under expanded national markets, and by 1910 the New Mexican cattle population will have risen from ninety thousand in 1860 to one million (cf. Nostrand 113; Maciel and Gonzales-Berry 16). Also cf. Remley 91-92, 193-94 and passim, as well as Opie, *History* 290-91, 294-95. The role of Chicago, whose stockyards and meatpacking industry controlled most of America's meat supply by the late 1880s, has been studied by Cronon in *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (1991).

<sup>168</sup> In point of fact, it is only with the U.S. subjection of the Natives in the newly acquired territory, pledged under the terms of the 1848 treaty, that the New Mexico Plains become "safe" for settlement by Hispano sheepmen, as C. de Baca tells (50, 68, 140; cf. M. Gonzales 100-01). Thanks to the Euro-American, that is, Hispanic ranchers succeed in spreading so far east and come to thrive in the stockraising business before being gradually pushed out. Such interconnections with the incoming force point to ideological tensions within this pastoral narrative of history. I will identify numerous such ambivalences in the course of my analysis; as in the present case, they are sometimes quite unreflected or may be belittled in the interest of the "garden" myth.

see, are further assigned responsibility for the degradation of the fragile grasslands of the southern Plains, through overgrazing and farming respectively. In conjunction with natural factors like recurrent droughts, Euro-American stockmen and farmers thus play, as C. de Baca describes, a crucial part in the demise of the old Nuevomexicano sheep and cattle culture, including her own family's ranching interests, in the early decades of the twentieth century. Their declension goes hand in hand with the ecological catastrophe that would culminate in the infamous "Dust Bowl" of the 1930s. Though historically foreshortened and partial, this critical account of the Euro-American impact on the Plains ecosystem is by and large founded in fact.<sup>169</sup> The main thrust of environmental pastoral criticism in C. de Baca's "machine-in-the-garden" story involves the events leading up to and immediately connected with the harsh experience of 1918 and the Dust Bowl years. They are narrated chiefly in the fifth and final section, as I will now discuss in detail.

### 1.3. The Machine in the Nuevomexicano Garden

#### 1.3.1. Cabeza de Baca's Ecopastoral Story of the Past

In her relation of the homesteaders' massive settlement on the New Mexican Plains in the early 1900s, the author includes an episode in which she and her father find yet another family squatting on their pastures. Several decades after the alleged encounter, she describes Graciano C. de Baca's "anгр[y]" reaction.

"If those 'Milo Maizes' have put their house on my land," he says, "they shall rue the day they came here. They will ruin the land for grazing and they will starve to death; this is not farming land. . . . [T]hose idiots in

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<sup>169</sup> Cf. John Opie's excellent environmental history of the U.S., *Nature's Nation* (1998), for information on the Dust Bowl and on the High Plains as a region severely harmed by Euro-American agricultural exploitation (344-46, 355-68). Opie has also authored *Ogallala* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2001), an environmental and historical analysis of the Plains. Seminal work on the Dust Bowl has been presented by environmental historian Donald Worster in *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (1979). See also Remley's book on the repercussions of the Dust Bowl and preceding dry cycles on southwestern cattle ranching (220, 222, 239-40, 254-56). Devon Peña's recent study of the environmental history of the Hispanic Southwest has already been mentioned (cf. note 60 herein).

Washington, who require that they break eighty acres for farming, are to blame for these poor fools destroying the land. It is a crime for these misguided people to try to make a living in a country that does not have enough rain for growing crops.” (146)

C. de Baca here denounces the “machine’s” ignorance and arrogance towards the land and the Hispano culture centered on it.<sup>170</sup> As Rebolledo and others have observed, accommodation and acquiescence in the U.S. system are joined with a noticeable critical discourse underlying the narrative. In a period of great pressure to adapt to “the ways of the *americanos*,” Erlinda Gonzales-Berry has stressed, such discontent was not easy to enunciate for an upper-class Hispana (Introduction 7). Also in respect of environmental matters, it is therefore inappropriate to reproach C. de Baca with an imperviousness to political concerns and with suppressing ethnic reality, as an early Chicano critic like Lomelí has done. In its precontemporary critique, *We Fed Them Cactus* forms part of the body of texts produced in response to the conflictive Mexican American history that represent, in Ramón Saldívar’s words, “the Chicano resistance to the cultural hegemony of dominant Anglo-American civil society” (*Chicano* 24).

C. de Baca, it is obvious, creates negative stereotypes of the Euro-American. Exemplary is “Milo Maizes” in the above quotation, a metonymical label derived from the hardy feed crop the homesteaders introduced into New Mexico, which her father applies to the people (also 148). It is a denomination no less one-sided and insulting than the attitude of the affable but racist squatter who approaches him (148). A second, often similarly derogatory term is employed for the Euro-American, especially the cattlemen and cowboys as another type of the encroaching “machine”: “Tejanos”/“Texans” (e.g. 48, 49, 63, 70, 79). Mexicans in the U.S. Southwest actually considered Texans the worst of all Euro-Americans (cf. R. Paredes 36-37). As the New Mexican writer Erna Fergusson has pointed out, in New Mexico, where relations between Hispanos and Texans became particularly strained in the late nineteenth century, the word “Tejano” was used for all prejudiced Euro-American newcomers, whether or not from Texas.<sup>171</sup> Such a conception of characters as

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<sup>170</sup> Here and at other points in the text, she seems to feel that in speaking through a character like her father, she can become more explicit, even polemical, in her choice of words than she usually is when using her own voice.

<sup>171</sup> Cf. her book *New Mexico: A Pageant of Three Peoples* (1951) (qtd. in Tonn 158). There was indeed intense violence between Euro-American cattlemen and Hispano stockowners in late-1800s

melodramatic types—the bad Anglo vs. the good Mexican for reader identification—is a frequent compositional technique in Mexican American literature. As a reflection of the ecopastoral theme on the level of character, it also recurs in C. de Baca’s text and the other works explored here. Such characters bear out an observation Werner Sollors has made about ethnic American literature at large. “Because ethnic realism,” he writes, “sets out to overcome prejudices against the ethnic group spoken for, not to combat prejudice as such, one finds the same array of stereotypes in the literature by ethnics as in mainstream writing” (“Literature” 659). In its ethnic pastoral construction, instantiated by character types on either side, C. de Baca’s narrative may clearly be charged with essentialism. Regarding this melodramatic structure, it is useful to recall that the melodrama is an important mode of cultural and literary expression in the U.S. As Frank Kelleter and Ruth Mayer note, the melodramatic mode has always lent itself to the representation of power struggles—such as the political struggle between America and Britain, I would add—and sociocultural processes of marginalization and stratification. In America it further gained the dramatic potential of race (cf. Kelleter and Mayer 9).<sup>172</sup> This explains the attractiveness of melodrama also to Mexican American literature as an ethnic practice and to the authors I am concerned with. Their use of the melodramatic is reinforced by the environmental dimension and the binarism built into pastoralism. In C. de Baca’s constellation of characters, the villain stands in sharp contrast to the “garden” victim personified by the idealized, sentimental figure of the Hispano in touch with the land. One might dub this figure the “Ecological Hispano.”<sup>173</sup> Principal representatives are those synecdochically termed the “old-timers” (e.g. 2, 68), first

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eastern New Mexico (cf. *Cactus* 46, 50, 63). The best-known example of these range conflicts are the Lincoln County wars of 1869-81 (79; cf. M. Gonzales 104).

<sup>172</sup> The essays in *Melodrama! The Mode of Excess from Early America to Hollywood*, eds. Kelleter, Barbara Krah and Mayer (2007), belong in the context of current cultural and literary scholarship on melodrama. Long regarded merely as a low form of cultural expression, the melodramatic is taken seriously now and examined as a significant mode of representation, oftentimes also as a type of alternate social discourse.

<sup>173</sup> I will expand on the “Ecological Indian” (Shepard Krech) and his Mexican American counterparts in my discussion of Villanueva. C. de Baca’s land-wise Hispano already evinces the kind of cultural essentialism—a “strategic essentialism” in the sense of postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak—that often characterizes environmental discourses connected with indigenous peoples, like Native Americans, in our time. Such essentializing tendencies also mark contemporary efforts to affirm the “ecological legitimacy” of Hispanos and Mexican Americans. On this, cf. Pulido’s insightful article “Ecological Legitimacy and Cultural Essentialism,” which focuses on Hispano grazing in northern New Mexico. Ganados del Valle, the Hispano community development group studied by Pulido, served as model for the successful Hispano-based sheep-grazing wool-weaving cooperative in Ana Castillo’s New Mexican novel *So Far from God* (1993) (Castillo 146). The cooperative expresses the Chicago writer’s ecofeminist pastoral ideal.

and foremost her father. After a lifetime as a Plains rancher, his daughter stylizes him as a man with “deep roots” in the land, “roots deeper than the piñon and the juniper. . . . He had his children, but they could never be as close to him as the hills, the grass, the yucca and mesquite and the peace enjoyed from the land. He loved solitude,” she adds, “and the noise of the cities was not in accord with his life” (175). Within the old pastoral opposition between the country and the city embodied in this passage, the primary “garden” setting on the Llano is the family ranch Spear Bar. Early on, this home is described as almost blending with the landscape: “a rambling structure without a plan. It was built of the red rock from the hills around us, put together with mud” (9).

Casting her revered “Papá” as the main character, C. de Baca mythicizes him into a figure physically and spiritually at one with his environment, whose damage by farming he is made to predict. He is a sage in nature in the tradition of the wise old shepherd of pastoral<sup>174</sup> and pivotal to the book’s celebratory portrait of the traditional lococentric Hispano stock economy as perfectly adapted to and integrated with the land. This includes what might be referred to as a protoscientific awareness of ecological limits. The narrator comments on her father’s critical remarks in the episode of the squatter:

Young as I was, I realized that [the homesteaders] could not make the land provide them with even a meager living. I had grown up with a ranch background, where sheep and cattle furnished our livelihood, and I knew the hard times Papá and Grandfather had endured in order to survive. Then, we had control of the land, and only that had saved us from destruction. . . . We had to think of droughts and when they occurred we [now] had no lands toward which the cattle could be moved. On the Llano, unless it is very unusual, droughts are not general; there are always spots where it rains when others are dry. In one’s pastures there are rainy and dry spots, and the pioneer sheep and cattlemen knew them. (146-47)

Except for periods of drought, she affirms elsewhere, grass was available at all times on the open range. This was also owed to a system of rotational grazing of the

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<sup>174</sup> This stock pastoral figure appears as the sage Silenus in Vergil’s sixth eclogue; a later instance from English literature is Meliboe in the pastoral of Calidore and Pastorella in book six of Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* (1590) (cf. Hardin, “Pastoral” 8). The wise old man is an archetypal figure throughout world mythology.

transhumance type (128).<sup>175</sup> In the days of Hispano ranching, when children like Fabiola were brought up to watch the weather, “the old-timers,” she emphasizes, “knew every canyon, spring and lake from Las Vegas to the Panhandle of Texas” (12-13; 2). Prefiguring the ecopolitical message of the work of Villanueva and Anaya, this Hispano Llano “garden” is more or less overtly compared to the environmental insensitivity and misuse associated with the homesteaders and the cattle companies as symbols of Euro-America. The former engage in dry farming and the plowing of non-arable land and thereby irreparably break the soil, which would finally blow away in the dust storms of the 1930s. The stockmen, who gradually fence the grasslands, contribute to this natural disaster by causing a significant erosion of the range through overstocking with their huge herds (50; 175, 176-77).<sup>176</sup>

A similarly critical view of the way in which the Euro-American has affected the Plains and their Hispanic community appears in connection with the hunt of the bison (popularly known as buffalo). It is the subject of one of the stories (chapter five) told by another major pastoral “old-timer,” El Cuate (the Twin). C. de Baca describes him as “a real western character reared on the Llano. To me, he seemed to have sprung from the earth” (15). A generation older than her father, he participated in the annual buffalo hunts organized by her grandfather Tomás C. de Baca during the late nineteenth century. In her transcript version of his tale, Hispano and Euro-American ways of hunting are presented as very different from each other. Whereas Hispanos distinguish themselves by subsistence hunting and an economical use of the entire animal (42-43; similarly Van Ness 191), eastern hunters are linked with

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<sup>175</sup> Transhumance grazing is an age-old practice used all over the world. It consists in the seasonal move of livestock between various regions with different climate, typically to lowlands in winter and highlands in summer (cf. Pulido, “Legitimacy” 124; 139, n. 6).

<sup>176</sup> Opie notes that the homesteaders mistook the semiarid shortgrass High Plains for the good farmland of the midwestern tallgrass prairie. The extent of Euro-American environmental ignorance at that time can be measured by the absurd trust, even among scientists, in popular slogans like “Rain follows the plow” (cf. *History* 357; 358). Besides, there is the imposition of the grid as a U.S. concept totally alienated from the givens of the land. It subdivided it into uniform 160-acre sections, the normal size of a homestead (cf. Karrer and Lutz 37, Van Ness 193-94). Concerning C. de Baca’s praise for the Nuevomexicano model, the Hispanic land use system, with its extensive stock ranching and *acequia* farming imported to the Southwest from Spain, may, unlike U.S. practices, really be considered an example of good adjustment to the natural environment (cf. Opie, *History* 164-65, 311, 314). As Peña observes, many scholars have specifically described the Hispano culture of New Mexico in terms of sustainable land- and water-use traditions and firm conservation ethics (“Animalitos” 39; 55-56, n. 20; also Nostrand 214-17). Peña himself amplifies this argument in his 2005 monograph (69-71, 77-90). Rubén Martínez refers to *We Fed Them Cactus* in his case for the reconstruction of native New Mexican practices of land and water use within the social action research agenda he proposes for the Upper Rio Grande region in the name of social ecology (75).

wanton slaughter and wastefulness. The ranch cook, who invokes the dead buffaloes left to rot on the Plains (45), declares:

“We enjoyed hunting the buffalo, and had not the *Americanos* come in with their guns, we might still be enjoying the sport, but it did not take them long with their rifles to clear the Llano of buffaloes. . . . [W]e were a happy bunch of *ciboleros* [buffalo hunters]. . . . [B]ut there came a day when we did not return because the wonderful sport had vanished. . . . Ballads are still sung in the villages about the *cíbolos* and the *ciboleros*, but never again will the colorful processions be seen . . .” (42-44)

I have quoted at length to highlight the criticism of the Euro-American that runs even through a passage as nostalgic and sentimental as this pastoral reconstruction of the Hispano past. Here too C. de Baca re-creates the traditional bucolic state of harmony between man and nature.<sup>177</sup> For all glorification, however, the buffalo hunt and the “garden” as a whole show that there is a distinct element of ecopastoral critique as well as ethnic self-validation even and especially when the text is at its most wistful. To quote from Frederick Garber’s reflections on the oppositional function of pastoral: “Where the surface speaks of plenitude and the fatness of flocks, the subtext shows deprivation and irremediable loss . . . [T]he surface points to *presence* as the pervasive bucolic condition, but the subtext announces *absence* as a contrary force and an equally necessary component” (440). In other words, it is through its nostalgic evocation of the lost ideal that a pastoral text like C. de Baca’s can also articulate an oblique, nonthreatening yet certainly self-conscious critical comment on the realities of the present as well as assert its own past. Rather than being ahistorical, pastoral may, with Garber, also be regarded as “an acknowledgment of [history’s] hold and an attempt to understand the conditions of that hold” (459). As already noted, this duality between nostalgia/escapism and criticism in pastoral has always been a major source of ideological equivocality. We will observe this tension over and over in the literary works examined in this study. It may be traced as far back as Vergil’s

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<sup>177</sup> As to the reasons for “ecological” conduct in the rural Hispano culture she depicts, material, utilitarian concerns of an anthropocentric nature are clearly in the foreground. This is underlined by the view of wild animals devoid of any “use,” such as the prairie wolf. The shepherders hate it as a “wholesale” “kill[er],” El Cuate tells (45). A reevaluation of the wolf takes place in our more ecocentric age of dwindling wildlife, as will be seen in relation to Villanueva’s novel. For an ecocritical analysis of western animals as portrayed in the writing of Mary Austin, cf. Barney Nelson, *The Wild and the Domestic* (2000).

*Eclogues*, where I detect the nostalgic Hispano buffalo hunter's literary forebears in a character like Meliboeus.<sup>178</sup>

Pastoral disagreement in C. de Baca's memoir is occasionally also uttered in a satirical mode. This constitutes another point of connection with classical pastoral writing: in the Greco-Roman period, pastoral often satirized urban life (cf. Buell, *Environmental* 31-32). In C. de Baca's clear-cut distinction between the two cultures, Euro-American environmental maladjustment is thereby again set against the Hispano tradition. An illustration of cautious but audible ridicule of the "machine" and its types is the Santa Fe Expedition of 1841, in which Texas sought to annex New Mexico. As described by the narrator, the exhausted Texans "nearly perished from hunger and thirst" on the Plains and had to be assisted by those they would conquer, e.g. at the sheep camp of her great-uncle. Even the children helped feed them, she stresses (78-79).<sup>179</sup> In addition, there is her anecdote of the "young easterner" who comes to the railroad camp on C. de Baca land as an office secretary in the early 1900s. The night after his arrival he does not get a wink of sleep on account of one of the region's thunderstorms, and the following morning he discovers two rattlesnakes coiled under his bed. It is not without some secret gloating and an attitude of superiority towards such an eastern "tenderfoot" that she wryly concludes, "[h]e took the next stagecoach for other terrain" (142-43). In this Hispana work, satire operates as a subversive counterdiscursive strategy; such an ecopastoral

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<sup>178</sup> The critical potential of pastoral reveals itself from the start of eclogue one, sometimes called "The Dispossessed." It was written against the background of the expropriation and eviction of small landholders by the Roman government to provide land for veteran soldiers; the son of a small farmer, the poet himself was menaced by this fate. The text explicitly contrasts the rural idyll enjoyed by Tityrus with Meliboeus's unfortunate condition as an evicted farmer. Much like El Cuate almost two millennia later, Meliboeus laments: "But the rest of us must go from here and be dispersed— / . . . Ah, when shall I see my native land again? after long years, / Or never?—see the turf-dressed roof of my simple cottage, / And wondering gaze at the ears of corn that were all my kingdom? / To think of some godless soldier owning my well-farmed fallow, / A foreigner reaping these crops! To such a pass has civil / Dissension brought us. . . . / Move onward, little she-goats, onward, once-happy flock! / No more shall I, stretched out in some green dingle here, / Watch you poised far off on the bushy brows of a hillside. / No more singing for me . . ." (qtd. from C. Day Lewis's translation 2-3). A similar lament by another evictee follows in eclogue nine. Also cf. in this context Raymond Williams 16-17 as well as Marx, *Machine* 19-23. As mentioned in my first part, environmental critic Weatherley identifies a "dispossession archetype" in pastoral literature. Based on Vergil's opening eclogue, its main elements are a threatened or displaced "shepherd figure" and a counterforce of a materialistic, technological kind (74). This describes well C. de Baca's narrative, in which her father and others serve as such "shepherd figures." With respect to the critical reception of the book, recall that scholars like Rebolledo and Padilla, without taking a pastoral approach, have advanced an argument similar to my own as to the oppositional purpose of the author's nostalgia for times past.

<sup>179</sup> This Texan attempt at invasion did fail due to incompetence (cf. M. Gonzales 74-75). Being the stuff of low comedy, Raymund Paredes notes, it became the subject of a play titled "Los Tejanos" by a nameless New Mexican playwright a few years later (37).

use of satire will figure largely in Anaya's mystery. In times of environmental problems, *We Fed Them Cactus* shows, satire is also employed to criticize the majority society's relationship to nature. There is actually a deep-rooted tradition of satirical resistance to the U.S. in Mexican American culture and literature since the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>180</sup>

An important aspect of the Hispanic "garden" has not been addressed yet. In connection with the Hispano's material dependence on the land, the narrative also accentuates the nonmaterialistic character of his land concept, which sets it off from Euro-American materialism. Even with little cash on hand, C. de Baca states, "[w]e [her family] had never been poor, because those who live from the land are never really poor . . ." (11). "Money in our lives was not important," she continues, "rain was important. We never counted our money; we counted the weeks and months between rains" (11). In the preface she already proclaims, "There are different ways of reckoning wealth and a set pattern does not exist and may never be found. People who live from the soil have abundant living and, compared with that of the wage earner, it can be classed as wealth" (xii). These excerpts may be read as a subtle reproval of the prevalent materialism and the cash economy introduced into New Mexico by the capitalist system. Concurrently, the writer lauds her own culture in terms of nonmaterialist values associated with the land-centered lifestyle. What I see at work here is the classical pastoral idea(l) of the simplicity and (self-)sufficiency of rural life and the agricultural economy, as opposed to the concern with worldly goods and a commercial, growth-oriented economic system that is connected with the city (cf. Gifford, *Pastoral* 15-16; Marx, *Machine* 127). Such divergences in the assessment of things material play a defining role in Marx's concept of "(new) pastoralism." As explained earlier, he distinguishes between a pastoral advocacy of

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<sup>180</sup> In *Chicano Satire* (1991) Guillermo Hernández explores the use of satire in contemporary Mexican American literature, centering on the writings of Luis Valdez, Hinojosa and José Montoya. General considerations on satire and the Mexican American can be found in his introduction (1-30). According to Américo Paredes, the traditional oral folkloric genre of the *canción* includes satirical pieces which deride Euro-American customs ("Folk" 14). Other commentators mention the emergence of satirical oral genres among Mexicans after the U.S. takeover of New Mexico (cf. Maciel and Gonzales-Berry 18). A notable early written work of Mexican American satire in the shape of a novel is Ruiz de Burton's *Who Would Have Thought It?* (1872); it satirizes the opportunism, hypocrisy and racism of northeastern U.S. society and the political establishment during the Civil War period. C. de Baca's type of the ridiculous easterner—a figure that recurs in the Euro-American western literary tradition (cf. Marshall)—will have a successor in John Nichols's satire on the eastern volunteer Herbie Goldfarb in his *chicanesca* New Mexican novel *The Milagro Beanfield War* (1974). The term "*literatura chicanesca*," which was coined by Lomelí and Donald Urioste in 1976, refers to literature about Mexican Americans by non-Mexican Americans (12).

nonmaterial values and the ruling materialist-progressive worldview abusive of nature. C. de Baca anticipates the environmental pastoral authors dealt with below also in this regard.<sup>181</sup>

Certainly, the nonmaterialist pastoral ideal she presents cannot simply be taken at face value. As becomes evident between the lines, the Hispano elite and the (C. de) Baca clan quickly assimilated to the new eastern materialism since the early 1800s and derived enormous material profit from the Euro-American coming to New Mexico. Already at the end of the preface, following her remarks on differing ways of calculating wealth, the author proudly refers to her extended family's riches in livestock in former days. The Baca brothers from Upper Las Vegas, she notes, "jointly were running half a million head of sheep in the 1870's" (xii).<sup>182</sup> To my mind, this passage indicates a clash of her objectives in writing the book. I.e. its function of Hispano upper-class self-definition for the sake of rectifying Euro-American preconceptions about Hispanic New Mexico's supposed poverty (xii) conflicts with the text's repeated emphasis on a simple, nonmaterialistic life as part of the basic pastoral project. Generally, the profitable Hispano relation to the Euro-American world in the narrative is an unresolved contradiction which has the effect of undermining its ideological message of the "garden" vs. the "machine." I would further suggest that this shows an imbrication between Mexican American pastoralism and the national pastoral ideal, whose split attitude towards the antipastoral has been explored by Marx.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> A similarly romanticizing description appears in *The Good Life*. Life was "good," she writes in her 1981 preface to the second edition, when Hispanos "drew their sustenance from the soil and from the spirit," leading the "rich but simple" life in the country (v). C. de Baca does not dwell on this in her autobiography, but it is clear that the materialistic, profit-seeking Euro-American philosophy of land use—in Cronon's formulation it treated land as "a thing consumed for the express purpose of creating augmented wealth" (qtd. in Remley 5)—was the basis for the unrestrained exploitation of the western landscape through farming, overgrazing and the extermination of the buffalo. On this land concept and its ecological consequences, also in contrast to traditional nonmaterialistic Mexican American values, see Opie, *History* 155, 345; Worster (he sees the causes of the Dust Bowl in the economic institutions and ethos of American capitalism (5-8 and passim)); Remley 4-5, 35-36, 106-07, 158-59 as well as Karrer and Lutz 35-38. For a general examination of materialism as a major issue in U.S. cultural and literary self-definition in the Gilded Age, cf. Winfried Fluck's essay "Money Is God." Also see Fluck and Marx's introductory piece on the perceived "materialist turn" in post-Civil War American society in the same volume.

<sup>182</sup> In contrast to the old noncommercial economy of the region, wealthy Hispanos now combined subsistence farming with stockraising for cash (cf. Maciel and Gonzales-Berry 17). According to McWilliams, three-fourths of New Mexico's sheep were owned by some twenty families, sixteen of them Hispanic, in 1880 (141).

<sup>183</sup> Another early historical instance in the text is the lucrative Santa Fe Trail trade (opened in 1820), in which Hispanos were actively involved (cf. M. Gonzales 67). C. de Baca's paternal grandfather, a Las Vegas merchant and stockowner, also possessed wagons on the trail (*Cactus* 81). In the early

Rather than representing pastoral independence and rural retirement, as C. de Baca likes to make us believe, her family was far from being isolated on the Plains. Together with other Hispano clans, it in fact dominated the sheep and cattle industry, trade and politics in the Las Vegas area during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (cf. Ponce 26 and *passim*). To speak with Bruce-Novoa, “she refuses to place her father and his family in their historical roles of influential political figures in the struggle for hegemonic control of the urban center from which life on the plains was determined. Instead CdB chose to tell a different story” (“Survival” 24-25). As is underscored by the examples I have given, she often chose myth over history. Here as throughout her account of Nuevomexicano Llano culture, she subordinates exactness and impartiality to the transformation of historical fact into ecopastoral myth. She idealizes and fictionalizes a past in which “Papá” and her family are made to posture as epitomical representatives of a pre-U.S. Hispanic rural New Mexico. As the narrator herself observes, “There was so much unwritten history of the Llano, and as I rode out in the pastures, ruins of houses and chapels made me wish they could speak so that they might tell of the life of the inhabitants who had dwelt within. But they were silent and I had to create in my mind imaginary characters living in these lonely ranchos” (138-39). Owing to the reductionist character of this pastoralist reification of history, extensive background knowledge on the part of the reader is indispensable. In terms of the text’s ideological intentions, I perceive tensions between its referential and practical functions: message overrides mimesis in C. de Baca’s ethnographic portrait. Such friction, Heinz Ickstadt has pointed out, is a recurring feature of realistic forms of narration in U.S. literature.<sup>184</sup>

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1870s, he financed a toll road into Las Vegas to facilitate trade (51). With regard to Las Vegas, New Mexico, the writer’s home town owed its rise and bloom to the American presence. First to the Santa Fe Trail and then to the advent of the railroad, which put an end to the trail in 1879 and turned Las Vegas into an important railroad town on the Plains. By 1890 it was the largest and most significant trading center in the New Mexico Territory, slightly outnumbering Santa Fe and Albuquerque. Around the turn of the century, decline set in (83-84, 145). Further information on the history of Las Vegas is gathered in Nostrand 77-79, 204-05, 209. Bruce-Novoa traces the town’s development in a 2002 article (“Las Vegas, New Mexico”)—thanks are due to Prof. Bruce-Novoa for passing also this unpublished piece on to me. Also cf. Lynn Perrigo’s monograph *Gateway to Glorieta: A History of Las Vegas, New Mexico*. In C. de Baca’s pastoral memoir, the representation of Las Vegas vacillates between the pole of the Hispano “garden” and that of the antagonistic outside world, depending on the turns her argument takes.

<sup>184</sup> He cites 1930s narrative texts with their interest in documentation (*Roman* 12, n. 15; 93). This documentary impulse—a return to mimetic representation in American writing—was prominent in literary and cultural expression in the 1930s as a period of economic and social instability (91-94). It also gave impetus to the depiction of the ethnic experience in literature, Ickstadt notes (109). C. de Baca’s work, which was conceived in the cultural climate of the 1930s and the New Mexico Federal

### 1.3.2. Narrative Strategies of Emotionalization and Reader Appeal

In the course of the ecological degeneration caused by farming and overgrazing on the Plains, a first crisis is reached in 1918. That year a drought strikes the New Mexican cattle ranges and adjacent Plains areas, providing a foretaste of the 1930s (*Cactus* 171-72; cf. Remley 239). Since no grass is left on Graciano C. de Baca's now fenced pastures, he is forced to burn the spines off cacti to feed the starving cattle (171, 173)—this gave rise to the book's unusual title. Finally, the cattle must be shipped to remote grazing lands. As she watches the train pull out, C. de Baca describes herself as breaking down in tears:

I do not know why, but I felt sorry for the cattle riding so close together in those cars . . . [P]arting to me has always been hard. Papá was standing beside me and tears rolled down his cheeks when he saw me weeping. We did not speak, but we each knew what was in our hearts. One is never lonely on a ranch while cattle roam in the pastures, but it can become a very forlorn place when one does not see them grazing as one rides the range. I knew what Papá was thinking. (173)

This poignant, tearful scene cannot only be considered the text's narrative climax, it is also the moment of the highest emotional temperature. The end of old-time Hispano ranching is near. Although the cattle return one last time, most have to be shipped to market that fall, and the remainder do not survive the next winter (174). Spear Bar Ranch too must eventually be sold, a traumatic experience for the family which C. de Baca relates in a sad, mournful tone (175-76). The use of the emotive image of tears is, like the scene of parting, a good illustration of the way in which she resorts to sentimental narrative procedures in advancing her pastoral criticism and praise.<sup>185</sup> The aim of such strategies is, in Winfried Herget's words, "to affect the reader, to move the reader—*movere* in the classical terminology—by means of pathos" ("Rhetoric" 4). Rhetorical indulgence in feelings in an attempt at emotional engagement of the audience for the sake of a moral purpose has been of great importance in American protest and reform literature since Harriet Beecher Stowe's

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Writers Project, resembles 1930s narrative literature in showing similar conflict between its documentary and pragmatic functions.

<sup>185</sup> On a different occasion, El Cuate "brush[es] away a tear" while reminiscing about the old days (19).

*Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852).<sup>186</sup> As was the case with slaves in Stowe—and prior to this, women and then children in late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century English and American sentimental novels—the Hispano/Mexican American is turned into a sentimental protagonist and object of reader compassion by C. de Baca. Simultaneously, he who was not deemed worthy of affection in Euro-American writing is elevated to the status of social equality and superior moral authority vis-à-vis his antagonists in society.<sup>187</sup> Sentimental rhetoric, which is widespread in contemporary Mexican American and ethnic U.S. writing, will also appear in Villanueva and Anaya.<sup>188</sup> There the emotionalization of oppressed nature and animals, which is so significant in contemporary environmentalist discourse—the environment being the latest “minority”—, will come to the fore. “The sentimental tradition was always the tradition of the underdog,” Klaus Hansen has correctly observed, so “[a]s long as there is power and powerlessness, . . . Richardson’s pattern will live on, and that is why it is still alive today” (24). Sentimentalism is not merely part of C. de Baca’s—and the other Mexican American writers’—appellative textual strategies, but, we have seen before, also an intrinsic component of the pastoral

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<sup>186</sup> *Sentimentality in Modern Literature and Popular Culture*, edited by Herget in 1991, is a recommendable source on sentimentality and its continuing cultural and literary appeal in the twentieth century. Herget’s essay “Towards a Rhetoric of Sentimentality” explains the origins and evolution of sentimentalism in the Western tradition and analyzes the constituent elements of sentimental rhetoric. Fluck, in “Sentimentality and the Changing Functions of Fiction,” discusses the use of sentimentality in American literature and culture from the late 1700s until modern times. An interesting piece on kitsch has been contributed by Dagmar Buchwald. For an overview of the sentimental tradition in American literature as well as its beginnings in England, cf. also Klaus Hansen’s article. In another essay on the role of “Emotional Structures in American Fiction,” Fluck includes helpful theoretical reflections on the reader’s emotional engagement with a fictional text. *Das kulturelle Imaginäre* offers a study of the American sentimental reform novel as epitomized by *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (ch. 3.5). Stowe, Fluck shows, articulates her protest by combining techniques of the historical novel with those of the sentimental novel (157 and passim). On the significance of feelings in postmodern American culture, examined from an interdisciplinary perspective that encompasses literary studies, see further *Emotion in Postmodernism*, eds. Hoffmann and Hornung (1997). And: Evelyne Keitel, *Von den Gefühlen beim Lesen: Zur Lektüre amerikanischer Gegenwartsliteratur* (1996).

<sup>187</sup> The type of the villain has evolved by analogy. The seducer of the early sentimental novel developed into the slaveholder of the abolitionist novel and eventually into the Euro-American oppressor in a Mexican American work like *We Fed Them Cactus*. On Stowe’s emotionalization of characters, see Fluck, *Imaginäre* 149, 152, as well as Philip Fischer’s article on the function of sentimentality in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. As Jane Tompkins and others have stressed, Stowe’s primary intent in her sentimental anti-slavery novel was, according to herself, to make the reader “*feel right*” (Tompkins, “Sentimental” 276). Cf. Tompkins’s rereading of Stowe’s enormously influential book with an eye to its political purpose of social critique and reform—the 1986 piece just cited is adapted from a chapter in her monograph *Sensational Designs*.

<sup>188</sup> In “Sentimentality and Social Pluralism in American Literature” Victor Strandberg provides a succinct discussion of sentimentality as an important mode of expression in twentieth-century ethnic American writing. He looks at Hispanic (William Carlos Williams), African and Jewish American authors.

worldview. As such, it is further intensified by narrative devices like tears and the other examples mentioned. Besides, it should be underlined that, here and in the primary texts that follow, their melodramatic structures are closely linked with their emotionalism.<sup>189</sup> Grave aesthetic shortfalls which result from the hyperbolic, mawkish exploitation of sentiment of course cannot be excused for being in the service of a good purpose. In analyzing literature, there can be no separating the aesthetic and social uses of a text.

“The drought of 1918”—also the title of the climactic final chapter—is presented as a watershed to the C. de Bacas as much as all over the Llano. Many Hispano sheep- and cattlemen, the author notes with regret, go out of business, while the homesteaders, too, are abandoning the land again (174; 171). The 1918 drought and the events connected with it are invested with greater significance in this Hispano history than the nationally more consequential events of the 1930s, narrated comparatively briefly towards the end of the closing chapter. After 1918, C. de Baca tells, the New Mexico grasslands cannot recover in spite of rains and snows: “[T]he land had undergone too much erosion and it would be many years before all the plowed and overgrazed land would go back to grass” (175; 176). “Papá,” as depicted by his daughter, has practically foretold the Dust Bowl. He has witnessed the progressive deterioration of the range and, some pages down from the encounter with the homesteader, is made to prophesy in ominous tones: “Someday the land will be washed away, for there is no grass nor shrubbery to protect it. I may not live to see it, but you young folks will realize why I have been so perturbed over this colonization by the Nesters” (153). “But he did live to see it,” C. de Baca emphatically adds, “for when the ‘Dust Bowl’ became a menace, he was here to see his predictions become a reality” (153). Pronouncing a jeremiadic warning of ecological disaster, the pastoral protagonist evidently serves as a kind of environmental prophet here. In the early 1930s, unprecedented drought, combined with windstorms, hits the Plains country and Graciano C. de Baca’s partially rebuilt herd of cattle. The Dust Bowl has struck, having been bred for decades across the southern High Plains and compounded by economic crisis during the Great Depression (cf. M. Gonzales 149). C. de Baca describes it thus:

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<sup>189</sup> Melodrama is not always sentimental. All the same, as Kelleter and Mayer point out, there is a deep affinity, near synonymity, between the melodramatic mode and the rhetoric of sentimentality with its equation of victimhood with virtue (12). This obviously applies to Mexican American ecopastoral writing.

The winds blew and the land became desolate and abandoned. Gradually the grass and other vegetation disappeared and the stock began to perish. There was not a day of respite from the wind. The houses were no protection against it. In the mornings upon rising from bed, one's body was imprinted on the sheets which were covered with sand. One no longer breathed pure air, and continuous coughing indicated that one's lungs were permeated with the fine sand. One forgot how it felt to touch a smooth surface or a clean dish; how food without grit tasted, and how clear water may have appeared. The whole world around us was a thick cloud of dust. The sun was invisible and one would scarcely venture into the outdoors for fear of breathing the foul grit.

The winds blew all day and they blew all night, until every plant which had survived was covered by hills of sand. (177)<sup>190</sup>

As happened first in 1918 (171), the Hispano grazing paradise has turned into a barren wasteland. There is only dust in the "garden" now, and the Llano setting functions as the narrative's principal natural symbol of "machine" destruction. Like her father's jeremiadic predictions, the long passage just quoted exemplifies C. de Baca's employment of the trope of environmental apocalypse. It is a secularized version of the Biblical threat of the cataclysmic end of the world, which here includes the use of Biblical style ("The winds blew all day and they blew all night . . ."). This trope belongs to the rhetorical strategies of emotionalization introduced to manipulate the reader. By means of melodramatic exaggeration, an apocalyptic scenario is envisioned in symbolic form so as to enhance the pastoral denunciation of environmental reality. To quote Lawrence Buell, "Apocalypse is the single most powerful master metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal." It is an image undergirded by a "pastoral logic . . . which rests on the appeal to the moral superiority of an antecedent state of existence when humankind was not at war with nature" (*Environmental* 285; 300-01).<sup>191</sup> Death

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<sup>190</sup> By her own account, there was no rain from the fall of 1932 until May 1935, and the drought was not broken until the following winter (176-77). More matter-of-fact than her depiction are the remarks by Albert K. Mitchell, manager of the eastern New Mexican Bell Ranch in those days. "North and east of here," he reported in June 1933, "there has been no rain to date and cattle are dying . . . with people desperately trying to find grass." And in March 1935: "Still dry as the devil here, and the wind blowing a gale most of the time. Yesterday one of the worst days I ever saw in New Mexico" (qtd. in Remley 255, 256).

<sup>191</sup> As Buell notes, the classic American tradition of apocalypticism, which thrives as a theological force within sectarian thought to this day, has resurged time and again as a form of secular imaging (296-98). He traces the emergence of environmental catastrophism to George Perkins Marsh's work *Man and Nature; or, Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action* (1864) as the first full-scale

and its menace to the bucolic realm have traditionally been thematized in pastoral literature and art, with its conflict between the ideal and the real (of which nostalgia and critique are also part). Today, however, as Glen Love has observed, pastoral nature itself is perceived to be dying (cf. “*Arcadia*” 200-01). The application of eschatological imagery in relation to the environment in an ecopastoral work like *We Fed Them Cactus* may therefore be regarded as a modern version of the *Et-in-Arcadia-ego* device of seventeenth-century pastoral painting, which combines the Latin phrase with a skull or tomb.<sup>192</sup> I should also like to stress that the discourse of ecological apocalypticism, with its threat of doom to a world refusing to listen to prophets like “Papá,” is questionable for the simplistic didacticism of its concepts and aesthetic.<sup>193</sup> The motif of ecocatastrophe will take center stage in the environmental literature of C. de Baca’s Mexican American successors, as in the work of many contemporary U.S. environmental writers.

Her father, C. de Baca goes on, is unable to maintain his herd through the Dust Bowl years, loses the strength to fight and has to sell. “He could not take it,” she writes, “and he became ill of an illness from which he never recovered” (177). We learn of his death at the close of the book (178). An emblem of the Hispano Llano like El Cuate, who passed away some twenty-five years earlier (154), “Papá” seems to lose even his life to the Euro-American, in his daughter’s melodramatic

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diagnosis of impending environmental disaster in the English-speaking world (301-02). In his 1995 book, Buell dedicates a chapter to examining the pervasiveness, history and cultural force of environmental apocalyptic discourse (ch. 9). (On the influence of the Puritan jeremiad on the American imagination, cf. Bercovitch’s *The American Jeremiad*.) The history of the apocalyptic narrative as a major form in U.S. environmental writing in the last decades is outlined by M. Jimmie Killingsworth and Jacqueline Palmer in “Millennial Ecology.” The authors also comment on the etymology of the word “apocalypse”: while it originally meant simply “revelation” in the Bible, it has come to be associated almost exclusively with the destructive force of the battle of Armageddon (42, n. 1). This essay appears in a collection of rhetorical analyses of environmental discourses in contemporary America, *Green Culture*, eds. Carl Herndl and Stuart Brown (1996). Regarding the rhetoric of environmental apocalypse, see further Slovic’s study of the widespread use of rhapsody and jeremiad in American nature writing (“Epistemology and Politics”). Within a British frame of reference, there is Barbara White’s piece on the jeremiad’s historical roots in seventeenth-century sermons and its persistence in today’s environmental discourse.

<sup>192</sup> On the *Et-in-Arcadia-ego* device, cf. Love, “*Arcadia*.” Love draws on art historian Erwin Panofsky’s work from the 1930s. C. de Baca’s text is also an ethnic contribution to American Dust Bowl literature. In “Terror in the Heartland” Brad Lookingbill only concerns himself with Euro-American writing about the Dust Bowl.

<sup>193</sup> Garrard also deals with apocalypticism in environmental writing in his book on ecocriticism (93-107); one section treats the problems connected with apocalyptic rhetoric (“The Trouble with Apocalypse”). As he rightly notes, this type of rhetoric brings with it “philosophical and political problems that seriously compromise its usefulness,” e.g. because of its tendency to polarize responses (105).

representation.<sup>194</sup> As a character that stands for the cultural tradition, he also points forward to more recent Mexican American writing with its frequent pedagogic emphasis on old teacher figures who instruct the young in allegorical identity quest plots. Villanueva's and Anaya's ecopastoral novels will illustrate this.

### 1.3.3. Rewriting the Myth of the West

The father's death underscores that the old Nuevomexicano way of life, both ovine and bovine, has disintegrated along with the land by the early twentieth century.<sup>195</sup> In C. de Baca's rendition of New Mexican history, this story has been told through an ecopastoral indictment of the eastern newcomer in tandem with a glowing elegiac portrait of the defunct rural culture. It is a Hispana author's adaptation of the universal pastoral motif. This includes an ethnic variation on what is not just a Vergilian theme but a recurrent concern in Euro-American pastoral writing as well: the conflict between the independent agriculturalist and some larger power threatening the traditional system.<sup>196</sup> In her eulogy to rural ways, C. de Baca also follows the convention in using stock pastoral language. "Who would now believe that there had been gay and happy plazas on the Llano?" El Cuate once remarks in plaintive *ubi sunt* fashion (37). As with the buffalo hunt above, the lost past is described in an often relatively formulaic style that draws on hackneyed bucolic

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<sup>194</sup> While it remains unspecified in the narrative, the illness which claimed Graciano C. de Baca's life in 1936 was prostate cancer (cf. "Estéfana" 4).

<sup>195</sup> For a socioeconomic analysis of a typical rural Hispano community conducted for the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture in 1939/40, cf. Olen Leonard and G. P. Loomis's report on El Cerrito, New Mexico. Settled for sheep grazing on the Plains in the early 1800s, this village southwest of Las Vegas was on the decline in the late 1930s. The government report, which is complemented by a photographic essay by Irving Rusinow, was published together with *We Fed Them Cactus* in *The New Mexican Hispano*, ed. Carlos Cortés (1974). Nostrand revisited El Cerrito in 1980 (cf. *Homeland* 169-81).

<sup>196</sup> Jefferson, for instance, would have gladly protected the American husbandman from what he felt to be the corrupting influence of the nascent industrial age, as Marx observes in his pastoral reading of *Notes on the State of Virginia* (cf. *Machine* 116-44). In our time Wendell Berry has revived Jeffersonian agrarianism in literature as a weapon against agribusiness (cf. Buell, *Environmental* 44; 445, n. 27). Note with respect to genre that the term "georgic" in its original sense refers to a poem about rural life and husbandry. In addition to a didactic purpose, the georgic tends to extol country living and nature; the best-known example are Vergil's *Georgics* (cf. Cuddon, "Georgic" 366-67). Beyond traditional genre definitions, georgic is, like pastoral, now also used in a wider sense, namely for all literature about farming (cf. Garrard, *Ecocriticism* 108-20). In U.S. literary history, georgic as a genre can be said to have merged with pastoral. Like Buell, I therefore treat georgic writing as part of American pastoralism (cf. *Environmental* 439, n. 4).

adjectives like “gay,” “happy” and “colorful” (e.g. 29, 66, 139; 8, 19, 49, 35). In short, as she harks back to “the days of Spanish fiestas” and “lovely señoritas” in New Mexico (31, 152; 30), the pastoralist creates a Hispano variety of Arcadia in her memoir—what she saw as the “Golden Age” in her people’s history.<sup>197</sup>

C. de Baca has depicted the Hispano mode of life as an environmental pastoral utopia since the days of the buffalo. She credits her community with a far higher degree of harmony with nature than the Euro-American, who is responsible for heavy ecological damage. For her the Hispano pastoral ideal of “the Promised Land” of the Llano has revealed itself as ecologically superior to that of the homesteaders and the cattlemen. The “land of promise” which the former hoped to find in New Mexico (147) turns out to be an utter failure. In the narrator’s words, the farmers eventually became “disillusioned” and “although late, realized that their Utopia was a cruel land ready to suck the last trace of hope from them” (153). She thus presents as a failure the great old Euro-American pastoral dream of the West as a paradise of natural abundance. Within the national conception of the lands towards the west as “an open space of unlimited desire” (Ickstadt, “Painting” 4), the Great Plains had been envisaged as the “Great American Garden” to be settled by virtuous yeomen farmers in the tradition of the Jeffersonian agrarian ideal.<sup>198</sup> Ironically, in C. de Baca’s

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<sup>197</sup> Cf. her 1983 oral interview with Ruleen Lazell (qtd. in Ponce 27). As said in my introduction to C. de Baca, her romantic, quaint portrayal of the “Spanish” American experience has been criticized by a scholar like Padilla as an influence of the invented Euro-American discourse on the Southwest and particularly New Mexico during the first half of the past century. It is a pastoral discourse that arose among the artists, writers and tourists who retreated to Santa Fe, Taos and other southwestern locations from the crowded industrial East around the turn of the century. Padilla points out that Charles F. Lummis’s book *The Land of Poco Tiempo* (1893), a romanticist portrait of New Mexico, may be regarded as the generative text in the Euro-American image of the Southwest. He also names Austin, Willa Cather, Mabel Dodge Luhan and D. H. Lawrence as representative of this discursive formation, which has survived down to the present (*History* 202-03, 297-13). On this version of the U.S. myth of the Southwest, cf. also the study by Michael Porsche (95-106) as well as James Byrkit’s acerbic censure of the myth. As Calderón and Saldívar remark, a romantic view of Spanish-Mexican life was held by many Mexican American writers, both male and female, in the early decades of the 1900s (Introduction 4). That C. de Baca, who was active in Mary Austin’s traditionalist Spanish Colonial Arts Society (founded in 1925) (cf. Reed 122), was affected by the prevalent Euro-American discourse seems evident. As an early Nuevomexicana author, she certainly participated in what Padilla terms the “mass romanticizing project” in New Mexican writing at that time (*History* 203). Yet, for all criticism of such stereotyping, which I definitely share, I find it productive to interpret a work of Mexican American pastoralism like C. de Baca’s in terms of its critical dialogue with the larger Euro-American pastoral tradition. Again, Mexican American literature should not be disassociated from its cultural context, a practice some Chicano critics (though not Padilla) continue to cultivate with isolationist, almost incestuous zeal in a field that has frequently maintained its cultural nationalist orientation to this day.

<sup>198</sup> See, e.g., Opie, *History* 310, 155, 164. On the Euro-American image of the Plains since the mid-nineteenth century as a future agricultural utopia (which came to include the commercial use of the analogy of Canaan as the “land of promise” by land agents trying to attract settlers to the region), cf. Roy Gridley’s essay. Gridley identifies various versions of the primitive and the pastoral in travel

telling, the eastern pastoral ideal becomes the “machine” that ends up destroying the Hispano rural idyll. From the viewpoint of the conquered, this Hispana demystifies and subverts the Jeffersonian dream of agrarianism and, more generally, the Turnerian pastoral master narrative of the American West and Southwest, which was still in bloom at the time *We Fed Them Cactus* came out.<sup>199</sup> Decades before the emergence of a revisionary approach to western history and of its offspring environmental history,<sup>200</sup> C. de Baca writes the Hispano into U.S. history. She does so by creating an ethnic ecopastoral counterhistory, in a style just as mythopoeic, idealizing and ethnocentric, indeed nationalist, as that of the received historiography of the West. Therein the Mexican American has, like the Native, often been associated with the subdued land. C. de Baca now introduces her own Hispano heroes and “great men” untold of in U.S. history books (*Cactus* 160). Aside from her

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literature about the Plains written before the beginning of white settlement around the middle of the century. He discusses Anglo American pastoral conceptions of those lands as well as early Spanish and French accounts. As regards the outcome of U.S. homesteading in the West, the federal government’s homesteading policy peaked in New Mexico between 1916 and 1923 with over seven million acres being homesteaded. By the 1930s it was bankrupt (cf. Jensen, *Promise* 86, 90). Rather than characterized by “rugged individualism,” the American family farm was by then becoming a long-term client of government aid (cf. Opie, *History* 365). Part of this were agencies like the Agricultural Extension Service, for which C. de Baca worked in New Mexico since 1929.

<sup>199</sup> Henry Nash Smith’s *Virgin Land*, one of the principal Americanist books on the mythology of the West, appeared in 1950. Central to the Euro-American myth of the West, which gained such popularity in a literary and later filmic genre like the western, is Frederick Jackson Turner’s famous frontier thesis of American history formulated in 1893, upon the closing of the frontier, in “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.” Also cf. Ickstadt’s work on the Euro-American West and the frontier: In “Painting, Fiction, and the Rhetoric of Westward Expansion” (1987) he explores the representation of the westering movement in works of painting and fiction up to 1880. A later piece, “The Rhetoric of Expansionism in Painting and Fiction (1880-1910),” inspects the portrayal of the vanishing world of the western frontier in the paintings and writings of Frederic Remington and Owen Wister, author of *The Virginian* (1902). Ickstadt shows their depictions to be a nostalgic escape from and an idealized counterimage to the present of urban industrialist America (13-14 and passim). He has also studied the different perceptions of the frontier experience in the U.S. and Canada, along with the role of nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature in the countries’ national self-images. See “Myth and History,” published in a 2001 compilation of his essays by the title *Faces of Fiction: Essays on American Literature and Culture from the Jacksonian Period to Postmodernity*.

<sup>200</sup> In the 1970s a long-needed revision of the official history and mythology of the American West and the frontier, including the Turner thesis, starts from various neglected angles such as the history of women, ethnic groups and the environment. A focal figure and the founder of New Western History is historian Patricia Nelson Limerick. In her book *The Legacy of Conquest* (1987), she discards Turner’s ideas as “ethnocentric and nationalistic” (21) and sets out to analyze the history of the West as a “legacy of conquest” into the present. A major project of western historical revisionism since the early 1970s is Richard Slotkin’s three-volume study of the frontier myth in America from the 1600s to our time: *Regeneration through Violence* (1973); *The Fatal Environment* (1985), which also discusses the conflict with Mexico; and *Gunfighter Nation* (1992). For a survey of the contemporary revisionism in the debate about the American West from the perspectives of feminism, multiculturalism and environmentalism, cf. *The Cultures of the American West* by Neil Campbell (2000). It also considers Mexican American literature. See further my remarks about post-1970 revisionist American pastoral criticism in chapter I.3 and about scholarship on women and the western landscape in the introduction to the present literary analysis.

stockraising father and family, we learn, for example, about the famous New Mexican mustang hunter Teodoro Gonzales. “No greater *mesteñero* ever lived, perhaps . . .,” the author avers in her usual guarded voice (135; 137). In the process of recasting the pastoral myth of the West and its inhabitants, she also counteracts stereotypical eastern notions about the Mexican American rural culture being an outmoded relic of the Middle Ages, guilty of a mismanagement of the Southwest’s natural wealth.<sup>201</sup>

In their representation of the Hispanic paradise lost, these memoirs serve as a prototype of the environmental pastoral theme in later Mexican American literature. Furthermore, C. de Baca’s critique and her concern with portraying her people’s traditional agrarian lifestyle as an alternative to the Euro-American model antedate today’s Mexican American environmental justice movement and its focus on social ecological equity. *We Fed Them Cactus* anticipates it by some forty years, being published at a time when even the environment itself was not yet a big issue in American society at large. The book is thus a precursor of what has now become a prominent discourse in Mexican American literary writing, especially by women. Along with Native authors, Mexican American women writers are in fact the main promoters of socioecological ideas in U.S. literature (cf. Platt 145; Killingsworth and Palmer, “Ecopolitics” 198). Environmental (in)justice will figure significantly in the works examined later on, notably Anaya’s.<sup>202</sup> Maureen Reed has called C. de Baca a “pathbreaker[ ]” for *Chicanismo* in “bravely voic[ing] a nascent Chicana identity” (277). This, I argue, holds also true for the environmentalist message relayed in her

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<sup>201</sup> This view underlies the statement of a southwestern irrigation booster in 1889: “We believe that the Anglo-Saxon needs no example from Mexico or Spain, but will find in itself the intelligence, virtue, and grit to conquer this land as it has every country where it has ever set its foot” (qtd. in Opie, *History* 314; also 164). Beyond her principal work, C. de Baca also wrote about prominent Hispanos in some of her columns on local history for *Santa Fe Scene*, a short-lived weekly magazine she helped found in the late 1950s (cf. Ponce 229). In one article she proudly notes that “the Delgados [both her grandmothers’ families] and the Cabeza de Bacas in New Mexico are what the Cabots and the Lodges are in Boston” (“Pioneer Merchant: Don Manuel Delgado,” *Santa Fe Scene* 17 May 1958; qtd. in Ponce 55; 67, n. 68).

<sup>202</sup> Among studies of the literary treatment of issues in environmental justice by contemporary Mexican American women, there is Killingsworth and Palmer’s essay “Ecopolitics and the Literature of the Borderlands.” In addition to the fiction of Silko, the authors deal with the work of Anzaldúa and Castillo. Also cf. Kamala Platt, “Ecocritical Chicana Literature,” which explores Castillo’s incorporation of environmental justice concerns into *So Far from God*. And: Grewe-Volpp’s discussion of Chicana environmental justice writing in her monograph, specifically Viramontes’s novel *Under the Feet of Jesus* (ch. 7). See further the article by Susanne Bounds and Patti Capel Swartz for a crosscultural overview of women writers’ resistance to the exploitation of the earth and its denizens in the U.S. Southwest. It also mentions a number of Mexican American representatives. I have already addressed the subject of environmental justice, also in relation to the Mexican American, in chapters I.1 and 2.

1954 narrative. For all skepticism on the part of some Chicano critics towards an early Hispana elite writer like Fabiola C. de Baca, her pre-movement pastoral has an important place in the Mexican American literary canon of a period that predates the much more radical cultural criticism and revisionism of our day.<sup>203</sup>

As she rewrites western history, C. de Baca also anticipates the Chicano movement in giving expression to the ideal of a Hispano homeland on the New Mexico Plains. As Padilla has observed, she does this some thirty years before the “homeland” concept is radicalized by Chicano historical and literary scholars like Rodolfo Acuña and John Chávez (*History* 172-73, 230).<sup>204</sup> In her book the homeland image in its Hispano interpretation is integral to the ecopastoral story played out on the Llano. This becomes particularly plain in the section programmatically entitled “Places & People” (three). For much of chapter eight, the narrator presents us with catalogs of the names of (former) Hispano settlements and their residents since the late eighteenth century. They provide a welter of detail about people’s lands, wealth and social rank before the demise of Hispano ranching. A typical passage reads as follows:

San Hilario, on the Canadian river, was founded by Don Hilario Gonzáles, who ran sheep on a thousand hills, as the old-timers used to say. Don Hilario was a very influential man in his day. Even half a century after he passed on, he was remembered and mentioned as the wealthiest man in the ’70’s. . . .

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<sup>203</sup> Bruce-Novoa situates the text in the long tradition of cultural “survival” in early Mexican American literature for its recovery of Hispano livestock culture (“Survival” 23). The work of this Chicano critic has always revolved around his theory of Chicano literary “space” as a response to chaos and the perceived threat of cultural disappearance. Cf. the updated 1978 version of “The Space of Chicano Literature” (1975), which is one of his essays on this literature assembled in *Retrospace* (1990). In her 1999 analysis of sociopolitical landscape discourse in contemporary women’s writing of the American West, Comer briefly acknowledges C. de Baca as a literary “foremother[ ]” of the “new female regionalists” she sees emerging in the mid-1970s. They include some Mexican American authors (31-32). Let me further suggest that C. de Baca’s Hispana account can also be read as a prefiguration of the present Mexican American concept of “*la frontera*” (“the border”). Referring to the 1848 border between the U.S. and Mexico, the term embodies the Mexican American perspective on the Euro-American history of westward expansion and the frontier. The *frontera* concept forms part of the larger “border”/“borderlands” discourse that has been of significance in literary and cultural studies, Chicano and beyond, in recent decades. A seminal text in this respect is Anzaldúa’s also generically transgressive *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987). On the *frontera*/border paradigm and its revision of the frontier, see Killingsworth and Palmer, “Ecopolitics” 198-99 as well as Heide 47-50. Also cf. my earlier comments on the border as a critical focus in Chicano studies research (ch. I.2).

<sup>204</sup> See for instance Chávez’s *The Lost Land: The Chicano Image of the Southwest* (1984) and his essay “The Image of the Southwest in the Chicano Novel, 1970-79.” An important incarnation of the homeland that is longed for in the culture and literature of a people dispossessed and oppressed in the U.S. for more than a century is the Chicano nationalist myth of Aztlán, the Aztec homeland allegedly located in the American Southwest. Cf. also my Anaya chapter on this.

The plaza of San Lorenzo was about ten miles from San Hilario and five miles from the present Conchas Dam. Don Francisco López, whose flocks and herds ran into the thousands, founded the town of San Lorenzo. Don Francisco came from Santa Fe. His son, Don Lorenzo, was one of the best-known and most respected citizens in the territory. . . . In 1824, Don Pablo Montoya from La Cienega, near Santa Fe, was given a land grant extending from the Ceja [Cap Rock country along the Llano's northern and western rim] to the Río Colorado (the Canadian river). (68-69)

And so on. This and similar passages, which are quite tiring in their endless enumerations, fulfill the cultural function of symbolically reaffirming the Hispano's native ties to the landscape of New Mexico. One might call this self-assertive ethnic cartography: the retrieval of the Hispanic map—a kind of “invisible landscape” in scholar of place Kent Ryden's terminology<sup>205</sup>—underlying the U.S. map that was added onto the southwestern palimpsest since 1848. In C. de Baca's text, published during the decade when the majority of New Mexican Hispanos came to live in urban communities (cf. Nostrand 209), the official geopolitical order is thereby deconstructed in the name of those who see themselves as “foreigners in their native land.”<sup>206</sup> In the present, she sadly remarks, many of the old Nuevomexicano settlements have crumbled into ruins.<sup>207</sup>

In memorializing bygone times in her catalog sequences and all through the narrative, C. de Baca employs code-switching. Like many Mexican American writers, she inserts Spanish words and phrases in her English text; it even furnishes a Spanish glossary at the end. This form of bilingual Mexican American expression—Bruce-Novoa has labeled it “interlingualism”—is a central linguistic technique to

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<sup>205</sup> “For those who have developed a sense of place,” Ryden writes, “it is as though there is an unseen layer of usage, memory, and significance—an invisible landscape, if you will, of imaginative landmarks—superimposed upon the geographical surface and the two-dimensional map.” Qtd. from *Mapping the Invisible Landscape* (1993) (40).

<sup>206</sup> The phrase “a foreigner in my native land” goes back to the erstwhile mayor of San Antonio, Texas, Juan Nepomuceno Seguín. He eventually joined the wave of Texan refugees to Mexico after the Texas Revolution of 1836. See the piece titled “A Foreigner in My Native Land” from his 1858 reminiscences, which appears in Weber's book (177-82). The latter takes its own title from Seguín.

<sup>207</sup> Ruins are another rather melodramatic symbol which repeatedly occurs in this lament for Hispano declension. Thus at the beginning of the place catalogs in part three. “As one travels on the paved highways,” we read, “ruins of once colorful villages, of ranch houses and chapels, are there to remind us of fiestas, gay pastoral life, and history . . .” (66; similarly 75). John Pinto notes that ruined architecture also points to threat or tension in traditional pastoral landscape painting (179).

represent the theme of cultural identity and hybridity on a formal plane.<sup>208</sup> To quote Gabriele Pizarz-Ramírez, “the confrontation by Chicano/a authors of monolingual speakers of English with a text in a displaced and suppressed language signals a claim of and an insistence on the presence of an alternative discourse” (68).<sup>209</sup> C. de Baca thus reclaims pastoral Hispano culture as well as cautiously exposing Euro-American ignorance of the regional inheritance. Her interlingual discourse starts at the opening of the preface with the translation of “Staked Plains” as “Llano” (ix), the word used throughout. This discourse is especially well illustrated in chapter seven. She there declares that “the names of hills, rivers, arroyos, canyons and defunct plazas linger as monuments to a people who pioneered into the land of the buffalo and Comanche” (66). They are “sonorous” names, in a pastoral vein, but “[v]ery likely many of those who pronounce them daily are unaware that they are of Spanish origin” (67, 70; 66). She therefore adds a lengthy lesson in the etymology of Spanish toponyms, which supplements the ethnic map. For instance:

Amarillo was named Los Barrancos Amarillos, the yellow cliffs. . . . Atascosa, boggy land, is today called Tascosa. . . . Cañon de Tule, bulrush canyon, has been abbreviated to Tule and even spelled Tool. . . . Cuervo is the Spanish word for crow, and the creek received the name from the abundance of crows in that area. . . . Zanjon, translated deep gully, is today called San Jon, a change which would amuse the early buffalo hunters if they were to travel over the Llano again. (66-67)

As obvious in the last example, there is occasionally also some gentle mockery of English speakers’ unwitting mutilation of Spanish place names.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> Cf. Bruce-Novoa’s essay “Spanish-Language Loyalty and Literature,” which sketches the history of the Spanish language in what has become the U.S. Southwest (49-51). On the linguistic issue and Mexican American bilingualism, see also the collection edited by Jacob Ornstein-Galicia, *Form and Function in Chicano English* (1984). Two dictionaries I have found helpful in studying Mexican American culture are Ilan Stavans’s 2003 work *Spanglish* (which also looks at other varieties of U.S. Hispanic language) and *The Dictionary of Chicano Spanish/El diccionario del español chicano* by Roberto Galván (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1995).

<sup>209</sup> In “Bilingual, Interlingual—Language and Identity Construction in Mexican American Literary Discourse,” Pizarz-Ramírez focuses on the strategic use of interlingualism in writings by Alfredo Véa and Francisco Alarcón.

<sup>210</sup> It is interesting to add that Spanish-language newspapers proliferated all over the Southwest after 1848. They served as a platform for Mexican American opposition to U.S. domination, voicing anger and protest as well as cultural pride. A prominent paper in New Mexico was *La voz del pueblo*. It was edited by C. de Baca’s uncle, the later governor Ezequiel C. de Baca, in Las Vegas in the early 1900s (cf. Ponce 26, 129, 199; Gonzales-Berry, Introduction 5; 10, n. 10; Arellano 59-60 and passim). A good book-length source on the cultural work of New Mexico’s Spanish-language press in that period is Doris Meyer’s *Speaking for Themselves* (1996).

#### 1.4. Progress and Cultural Change

Notwithstanding her celebration of the old days prior to the Euro-American rise to power in New Mexico, C. de Baca betrays at the same time a marked openness to modernity and the benefits of change in the Hispano world. As already noted with reference to the underaddressed ambivalences in her depiction of her social class's relations with the Euro-American, this generates a situation of conflict within the book's pastoral ideological system. More clearly represented are instances that directly concern the author's own person. A woman with an unusual education even by Hispano upper-class standards, C. de Baca was, to speak with biographer Ponce, in some ways "fiercely independent" all through her life. In the traditional patriarchal society she had been born into, she indeed proved "somewhat of a rebel" (205; 232). In her autobiographical narrative, her resistance to rigid gender roles manifests itself from an early age. Thus she tells of her girlhood efforts to get away from her "Spanish" grandmother with her "fastidious" education, which granted little freedom to girls and young women (84, 132, 83). What becomes evident throughout is that C. de Baca was far from desiring to lead herself the life of the *señoritas* from her bucolic fancies, nor did she in much of her extratextual life strive to even remotely live up to the old ideal. As is clear in *We Fed Them Cactus*, she valued Euro-American modernity for giving greater freedom to her own sex. First, there can be no doubt about the favor with which she looked on the fact that, due to increasing "American influence" in the late nineteenth century, fewer young women were forced into arranged nuptials by their families (33). Her disapproval of parental matchmaking is highlighted by the emphasis she subsequently puts on the "tragedy" of a pair of young lovers (34, 37) she has El Cuate digress on at the close of his story about festive traditions (37-38). Rosa and Narciso, the old cook relates, eloped in the 1880s because the young man was an undesirable match in the eyes of Rosa's affluent father. He killed Narciso, breaking his daughter's heart, who would from then on cry at her lover's grave every year "while the merrymakers were reveling at the *baile* [dance]" (38). As underlined by this antithetical rhetorical construction, C. de Baca calls attention to a negative feature of traditional Hispano culture and the ideal of "the days of Spanish fiestas" invoked when El Cuate began on his tale (31). This provides a check on the pastoral myth propagated in the text.

She becomes very outspoken in her criticism when she has the storyteller call the father an “old tyrant” and, in the exposed position at chapter’s end, even a “murder[er]” (38).<sup>211</sup>

C. de Baca’s positive attitude towards modernization from the East in terms of its repercussions for the Hispana shows most distinctly in relation to her job as a government-employed public-school teacher.<sup>212</sup> In chapter fifteen she nostalgically recalls her first year teaching at a rural school in Guadalupe County (1916)—one of the few occasions in the narrative that she dwells on her own life story. She takes the job against the will of her father, she tells, who did not consider it the “proper” thing for her to do (154). Being a teacher allows her greater independence from her family (e.g. 155)—as she said in an oral interview with Paula Thaidigsman in 1975, she was very “happ[y]” “living away from home for the first time” (qtd. in Ponce 224). It also offers her plenty of “adventure” on the long cross-country walks to school (*Cactus* 158). Her teaching experience moreover gives her the opportunity to try out her “city ideas” on pedagogy, progressive notions in which she takes great pride and which she seeks to put into practice despite the “limitations of a country school” (166). C. de Baca closes her account in the familiar pastoral style: “As I look back to my first year of teaching, I know I have never been happier . . .” (170).

The proto-Chicana feminist treatment of the female condition in this memoir<sup>213</sup> reveals conflicting tendencies within that serve to qualify the larger message. The Hispano “garden” of yore, the author has made clear, is not entirely positive and certain aspects need questioning. “Machine” reality and the change and progress it

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<sup>211</sup> In the old Spanish tradition, “honor” was of such overriding importance that, on a mere suspicion, murder of the woman in question was condoned by society. *Siglo de Oro* playwright Pedro Calderón de la Barca demonstrates this in his *drama de honor* (honor play) *El médico de su honra* (1635). C. de Baca’s arraignment of tradition becomes yet more meaningful if the reader is cognizant of what appears to be her own elopement to Mexico with Carlos Gilbert, a divorced insurance broker. Much to the displeasure of her family, notably her father, she married Gilbert in 1931—and divorced him again some ten years later (cf. Reed 143-44, Ponce 232). She eschewed mention of these very unconventional aspects of her life in her writing and in interviews, perhaps, as Reed suggests, to avoid estranging her tradition-minded audience (144, 124). For a social history of marriage and sexuality in the context of the Spanish conquest of New Mexico and its Pueblo culture, see Ramón Gutiérrez’s study *When Jesus Died, the Corn Mothers Went Away*.

<sup>212</sup> As Scharff points out, western national expansion provided the catalyst for American women’s move into the teaching profession. This opportunity was also open to educated New Mexican Hispanas like C. de Baca (124). In early-1900s New Mexico, where the better part of students only spoke Spanish, Hispanas were particularly sought-after as teachers for rural schools, and many were recruited (cf. Ponce 79-81).

<sup>213</sup> I contest Elizabeth Jacobs’s contention that women’s subordination to paternalistic family structures is “naturalised and accepted” as part of an “unproblematic and apparently fixed ideal of women’s roles” in the society portrayed (44). This statement is a crude overgeneralization and fails to describe C. de Baca’s critical negotiation of the issue.

brings to New Mexico are not obfuscated in some sort of ahistorical narrative idyll; on the contrary, C. de Baca gladly receives them in their desirable features. These tensions and contradictions form an—albeit inconsistent—undercurrent in her binary ecopastoral discourse. Ethnic pastoralism, we have seen, can be viewed as reflecting the Euro-American pastoral fantasy’s ambivalent nature as a modern manifestation of the classic ideal-real tension in pastoral. For C. de Baca, too, one might therefore employ Marx’s concept of the “ambiguous ‘double consciousness’” of the American pastoralist. Far from being a simple-minded rustic, this person is a sophisticated intermediary between nature and culture (cf. “Pastoralism” 56). It is “a kind of border life” (Scheese 6), which is further complicated by the dimension of ethnicity in Mexican American pastoral.<sup>214</sup> Reed has already stressed the “contradictory,” “double-edged” character of C. de Baca’s approach to cultural tradition in her life and writings (123, 165). In *We Fed Them Cactus*, Reed observes, she “wanted to show that Hispanics took pride in their past but were not stuck in it, nor were they cultural isolationists . . . [S]he embraced the pluralist world she lived in even as she mourned the world she saw being lost,” which is mirrored in her narrative (163). “Critically conscious of the role that the past could play in the present and highly motivated to find a usable Hispanic past,” Reed writes, “she sought a balance between tradition and change for others as well as for herself” in her life and work (124). Clearly, this Nuevomexicana writer is not the die-hard reactionary early Chicano critics would see in her. Rather, her representation of different aspects of the gender issue in her pastoral text demonstrates how she undercuts and complicates existent dualisms by moving between the poles of pastoralism and progressivism. The same will be detected in her literary heirs.

C. de Baca’s lively interest in the history of the New Mexico Plains as being defined by processes of cultural transformation is evinced on a number of occasions. She witnessed “great changes,” really a major historical “transition” in her native region at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, including 1912 statehood (140; 145). She gives special narrative consideration to her experiences with the Euro-American homesteaders. In addition to a critical

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<sup>214</sup> Marx traces the liminality of the pastoral character back to the presumable emergence of pastoralism in connection with ancient Near Eastern herdsmen some three thousand years before the classical pastoral poets (cf. “Future” 212-13). His concept of pastoral “double consciousness” bears some resemblance to W. E. B. DuBois’s idea of “double-consciousness” proposed with respect to African Americans in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). Ineke Bockting’s article explores DuBoisian “double-consciousness” in contemporary Mexican American novels.

ecopastoral judgment of these farmers, as discussed previously, we also perceive a different facet to their portrayal. The narrator's own view of them is found to differ from her father's in some regards. When they discover the new settler on their grazing land, she describes herself as mediating between him and her father, who is accompanied by El Cuate. She even defends the squatters and their "'right'" to some of her family's extensive land, stating that "'We have to live among them and we might as well live peacefully'" (149). To which Graciano C. de Baca makes the uncompromising reply, "'You can live among them. I intend to fence my land and stay within it'" (149). His children make friends with the different groups of homesteaders in their vicinity and join them for social activities and U.S. festivities such as the Fourth of July (148, 152). Besides, many of C. de Baca's students during her first year as a teacher are the children of homesteaders (156). In retrospect she declares, "My brother, Luis, and I loved [the homesteaders], but El Cuate and Papá kept aloof, never quite understanding what Luis and I saw in these uncouth people" (148). What we are dealing with here is a pronounced gap separating the older and the younger generations in the Hispano "garden." On the one hand, there are "old-timers" like her father and the old ranch worker; the younger generation, by contrast, is personified by C. de Baca with her more open stance towards U.S. reality, for all critique. Aware of the futility of retreating inside one's fences as her father does, she seems more capable of adjusting to the new times in New Mexico and willing to acknowledge the positive aspects of her personal relations with the eastern farming families. Whereas to the older Hispanos they are nothing but intrusive "machine" representatives, she concludes by remarking, "Although I did not live in the days of the Spanish fiestas on the Llano, I have happy recollections of the days of the homesteaders. My brother and I belonged to a different age from El Cuate and Papá. Both eras were colorful and both contributed much to the history in the land of the buffalo and the Comanche" (152).<sup>215</sup> She also includes a critical note about the old men's "intoleran[ce] towards these humble people" (148). C. de Baca's dividedness in depicting the homesteaders adds to the structural vacillations in her pastoral history, rendering it less one-dimensional.

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<sup>215</sup> At several points C. de Baca goes so far as to pastoralize the homesteaders as components of the old Plains idyll. An important reason for this is certainly the fact that these farmers were a prominent part of her own youth. Like the latter, they were long gone at the time of writing and consequently susceptible to becoming the stuff of sentimental memories.

On the whole, her open-mindedness to and appreciation of modern developments in New Mexico and the more recent “contribut[ions]” to its history are conspicuous, as illustrated in the foregoing discussion. I would also like to join Reed in arguing that “because she wrote from an empathetic intermediary position, rather than as an outsider looking in, Cabeza de Baca’s work ultimately showed a more complex understanding of how traditional cultures change over time . . .” (155). A book like *We Fed Them Cactus*, that is, is more complex in this respect than can be said about the stasis and utter timelessness of many romantic descriptions in early twentieth-century Euro-American pastoral writing about New Mexico (cf. also Reed 155).<sup>216</sup> In other words—historian Virginia Scharff’s—, the Hispana author “portrayed New Mexico not only as a timeless pastoral utopia but also as a lively place with a history of its own . . .,” characterized by “movement and change”—a dynamic place (119). To give another example from the text, this makes itself also felt in her admiration for the “great strides” science has made, reflected in its “myriad” inventions (13).<sup>217</sup> C. de Baca was a progressive woman with a career and even a radio program of her own,<sup>218</sup> and credited The Beatles and the space age with creating a “modern folklore” (in an undated piece titled “Folklore,” qtd. in Scharff 131). In sum, it would be shortsighted to reduce this author to the part of the traditionalist Hispanic *patrona* and folklorist, though she did choose to play this role as well, both in life and in her writing. Viewed in its entirety, C. de Baca’s pastoralism is not so simple as that, and this, I have tried to show, is also evident in her major literary work. As a New Mexico Hispana of her day and age, she actually defined herself as a person of dual

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<sup>216</sup> Reed notes the difference between C. de Baca and Euro-American writers and activists like Austin and Luhan. Both feared that an innovation such as technology could destroy the region’s traditional Native and Hispanic cultures (142, 151).

<sup>217</sup> C. de Baca further regarded World War II and the beginning of the atomic age as resulting in a major economic transition for northern New Mexicans in the mid-twentieth century. In 1975 she told interviewer Thaidigsman that she had started a new book, which she refers to by the title “A New Mexican Hacienda.” She intended it to document the extensive change Hispanic New Mexico experienced over the course of the twentieth century as well as the traditions that came to be replaced (cf. Reed 168-69; the unfinished manuscript forms part of the C. de Baca Papers). Anaya takes up this thematic thread in his own writing.

<sup>218</sup> In the 1930s and 40s, she hosted a weekly bilingual radio program on homemaking for a Santa Fe radio station (cf. Reed 145). Concerning her philosophy as a rural extension agent, various commentators have pointed out that she here too sought to combine the benefits of new techniques and technologies in home economics, such as food preservation by canning, with proven old methods. In her work with farm women in the Hispanic and Pueblo villages, she thereby attempted to bridge the conflict between pressures for modernization and Americanization on the part of the NMAES and her rural clients steeped in tradition and occasionally rather suspicious of change. In general, C. de Baca seems to have been far more sensitive to and respectful of local ways than most of her predecessors in the job (cf. Reed 137-42; Scharff 127; Jensen, “Crossing” 180).

heritage, describing her background as ““a mixture of Spanish and American cultures”” (in her uncompleted book manuscript, qtd. in Reed 127-28). This level of hybrid ethnic identity, an important issue in Mexican American culture and literature since the nineteenth century which would gain particular force with the advent of the Chicano movement, is also operative in C. de Baca’s pastoralism as a Mexican American variant of the U.S. cultural tradition.

### 1.5. Other Garden Dwellers

In staging her ecopastoral ideas, C. de Baca surrounds main “garden” figures like “Papá” and El Cuate with secondary characters who function as generic types symbolizing the fading Hispano Plains tradition. A prominent type is the classic (literary) pastoral figure of the shepherd. In an extended passage in the second half of the opening Llano chapter (5-8), the narrator gives a laudatory account of the Nuevomexicano shepherder as the mainstay of the sheep economy, as was the case in her own ranching family. She presents the shepherd as well adapted to the grassland environment and its frequently inclement conditions and praises his competence and “courag[e]” (6). “[H]e always took care of his sheep,” she affirms, “and I have never known any mishap due to the carelessness of the herder” (8). While she does make mention of the privations and dangers attendant on the pastoral existence (6-8), we get an overall idealized, rather stereotypical portrait of the Hispano shepherd; it is drawn in the *costumbrista* style C. de Baca uses throughout her ethnographic narrative.<sup>219</sup> At the end of the chapter, she proclaims, “When I think about the herders on the endless Llano, I know that they are the unsung heroes of an industry which was our livelihood for generations” (8). She therefore pays tribute to the shepherd as another pastoral “hero” in her Hispano reply to the Euro-American

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<sup>219</sup> The term “*costumbrismo*” refers to a literary style of early-nineteenth-century Spanish origin. It came to be associated with Latin American writers later in the century and eventually also entered Mexican American literature. Its focus is on depicting the customs and traditions of life in particular regions, often in a quaint fashion. On the use of *costumbrismo* by Mexican American authors, cf. Urioste’s essay as well as the piece by Charles Tatum, “Contemporary Chicano Prose: Its Ties to Mexican Literature” (53).

myth of the West. A staple bucolic figure transposed onto the Plains of New Mexico, the herder is “sung” in commemoration of an obsolete rural culture.<sup>220</sup>

The traditional pastoral ideal of class harmony is an important characteristic of the Hispano upper-class pastoral under discussion.<sup>221</sup> C. de Baca romanticizes rural class relations to produce the illusion of social harmony between *patrones* and herders/other laborers on the ranches. She is very proud of what she calls her “aristocratic rearing” (129); according to Ponce, she was inculcated from childhood with an elitist class consciousness and a paternalistic attitude towards the lower strata of society (cf. Ponce 28, 36, 38, 48-49). Instances of class-related mythmaking in the text involve, among other ranches, those of the C. de Bacas, like the one at La Liendre, where most male villagers work for the writer’s grandfather (52). Many Hispano ranch employees are caught in a system of debt peonage. Yet they are generally described as determined to repay their debts to the master, often over generations, without “bother[ing] to question whether the system was right or wrong” (6). Both the narrator and her puppet El Cuate emphasize the workers’ “loyalty” and, above all, their “happ[iness]” (6, 17; 8, 19). They are “as much a part of the family of the *patrón* as his own children,” the reader is insistently told (60; 31, 6). In this way social inequalities of ranch reality are glossed over in order to project a utopian pastoral image of the old feudal order of New Mexico. It is a society basically divided into a small wealthy—*rico*—*patrón* class and a large poor *peón* class—in Charles F. Lummis’s phrasing, the class who owned the sheep and those who tended them (cf. McWilliams 141; also cf. Nostrand 73).<sup>222</sup> Rifts aside, as

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<sup>220</sup> In contemporary New Mexican Hispanic literature, a nostalgic pastoral invocation of the past is also at the center of Sabine R. Ulibarrí’s short stories about the northern New Mexican ranching village Tierra Amarilla. Ulibarrí was the offspring of a wealthy stockowning family and one of the few present-day Mexican American authors to write entirely in Spanish. He too describes the old Hispano lifestyle and its shepherders as an idyll in complete harmony—“en total armonía”—with the land (qtd. from “El Apache” (1977) 140). See his story collections *Tierra Amarilla* (1964), *Mi abuela fumaba puros/My Grandmother Smoked Cigars* (1977) and *Primeros encuentros/First Encounters* (1982).

<sup>221</sup> Another reminiscence of the old pastoral mode is the Plains shepherds’ taste for singing. “As his flock pastured,” the author writes, “[the herder] sat on a rock or on his coat; he whittled some object or composed songs and poetry until it was time to move the flock . . .” (7). An embodiment of pastoral *otium*, the shepherds’ engagement in singing competitions goes back to Vergil and Theocritus. In this New Mexico version, pastoral singing fuses with the Mexican American *corrido* tradition (7).

<sup>222</sup> C. de Baca does disclose certain fissures and gaps in her rose-colored picture of class harmony. In El Cuate’s story about the rodeo, the ranch hands’ alleged “happ[iness]” is belied in succeeding passages that tell of their actual “fear[ ]” and “hum[ility]” towards their bosses (19; 28). In the voice of one boy, “. . . Don Manuel [the *patrón*] would not be swimming in wealth [if] we [did not] drink black bitter coffee and eat black bread” (18). In her preface the author already refers to the system of debt peonage as “bond slavery” (xii, 6, 121).

McShane has argued, C. de Baca creates a “simplified story of class relations because she wishes to promote a different version of pre-Anglo life in the Southwest—a version which counters Anglo American stereotypes of . . . *ricos*” and of the abusive *patrón* system (“Pursuit” 193; 182). In eliding class distinctions, McShane continues, she also aims to “construct [a] cohesive regional and cultural identit[y]” among her Hispano readership and thus “instill a sense of cultural unity” in the community (184; 194). In her desire to distance herself from the dominant culture, it is highly ironic that C. de Baca taps Euro-American pastoral mythology and the central notion of “democracy” associated with life in American nature as she attempts to validate and promote her socially harmonious ethnic “garden.”<sup>223</sup> Thus she stresses the “very democratic way of life” in the Llano ranches and villages and claims them to be devoid of the class distinctions of the larger towns (60). This is also true of Old (Hispano) Las Vegas of her youth, which is described as a “very democratic” place with all racial and ethnic groups “merged into one big family” (84). Examples such as these further underscore the ideologically mixed character of the Mexican American pastoral ideal in its—difference notwithstanding—dialogic relationship with the mainstream culture and pastoral inheritance. It is an interculturality that will grow yet more pronounced in the ecofeminist and New Age-influenced pastoral philosophies I explore in subsequent analyses.

In the face of the prettification of the rigidly stratified, oppressive Hispano society in *We Fed Them Cactus*, a critical stance as voiced by many commentators is in place. Raymund Paredes’s charge of a “hacienda syndrome” among early Hispanic New Mexican writers that is comparable to white southern authors’ plantation mentality (52) is pointed but certainly justified in view of the obvious kinship between a Hispano narrative like C. de Baca’s and post-Civil War southern plantation romanticism.<sup>224</sup> In contemporary pastoral scholarship, the obscurantist

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<sup>223</sup> In his idealized conception of the husbandman, Jefferson sees rural virtue as the moral center of a democratic society (*Notes on the State of Virginia*; cf. Marx, *Machine* 122-23). A century later Turner proposes in his frontier thesis the formative influence of the continually advancing frontier on the American national character and on the nation’s political and social institutions. In his view, American democracy grew out of the frontier.

<sup>224</sup> C. de Baca herself evokes this analogy when she likens Nuevomexicano *haciendas* with their “slaves” to southern plantations in the preface (xii). As far as Paredes is concerned, note that, not unlike the Hispano myth here, the myth of a single, pan-Mexican American “Chicano” identity was created for the sake of ethnic and cultural unification in Chicano nationalist days. In scholars like Paredes, who exalts “proletarian” forms of Chicano literary expression—i.e. texts reflective of “a proletariat with a distinctive ethnic consciousness” (53, 66-67)—, one might really diagnose a “proletarian syndrome.” In any case, this Chicano ideal of ethnic unity is no less biased and classist in

portrayal of actual country life in terms of the pastoral topos of a “beautiful relation between rich and poor” (Empson 11; also cf. Marx, “Future” 222) has been scolded in Marxist and other leftist readings of pastoralism. A major instance is Raymond Williams’s critique of traditional English pastoral poetry in *The Country and the City*.<sup>225</sup> Similar criticism applies to C. de Baca’s pastoral hymn to a Hispanic class society of European provenance. Hispano pastoral evidently differs from Euro-American pastoral in this regard. For historical reasons class never played a prominent role in the latter, and imperialism constituted the primary target of ideological attack—as seen above with the Hispano relation to the Native, an imperialist element is also present in this Mexican American pastoralism. C. de Baca’s treatment of class relations again points up the Janus-faced character American pastoralism at large has often displayed. As ethnic pastoral, her memoir has an oppositional dimension while being, simultaneously, an instrument of domination in its idyllicization of the Hispano rural elite. Which side gets emphasized, Buell has rightly noted (cf. ch. I.4 herein), depends also on the beholder’s ideological orientation, as has always been the case in pastoral studies, down to the present ecopastoral reevaluation.

Besides the shepherd, the Hispano cowboy (*vaquero*) is another essential pastoral type in ranch life, being integral to cattle raising. In his story of Graciano C. de Baca’s first rodeo in the late 1880s (chapter three), El Cuate relates in detail how a rodeo was conducted in the old days. The Hispanic cowboy is depicted as a figure closely tied to nature. “[A] horse,” El Cuate observes, “was as much a part of him as the pistol and the holder, which he never took off . . .” (27). These men, C. de Baca later adds, “were closer to [their favorite horses] than to their best human friends” (129). As with the herder of sheep, the environmental pastoral text glorifies

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its ideological foundations than the Hispana elite writers Paredes and others have so whole-heartedly condemned. Within Chicano circles Bruce-Novoa has exposed the nationalist myth of “Chicano” unity, which has been around in Mexican American politics and culture since the 1960s. In “Dialogical Strategies, Monological Goals” he is highly critical of the Chicano establishment’s “tribal rhetoric” and its habit of ignoring difference and plurality in the Mexican American community (227). Among other literary texts, he examines a key movement piece like Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales’s *I Am Joaquín/Yo soy Joaquín* (1967).

<sup>225</sup> In his 1973 book, Williams offers a Marxist inquiry into the changing attitudes to the country and the city as represented in English literature from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries. He studies English poetry and denounces its idealizing vision of rural life and the landed aristocracy’s exploitation of the country and its people. One of his examples is Sidney’s *Arcadia*, which he censures for suppressing the social reality of the rural park in which it was written. This park, Williams points out, was created by enclosing a village and evicting the tenants (22). On the scholarly critique of such dehistoricization and political obfuscation in traditional pastoral, see also Garrard, *Ecocriticism* 37-39.

the period in which the Hispano stock culture flourished on the Plains—“It seems only yesterday that we were branding . . .,” the old storyteller sighs (23). In the bucolic manner, he reminisces about the “gay” evenings spent with music and singing during a rodeo in the times when, as he affirms with hyperbolic relish, “Si señores, there was almost one cow to each blade of grass . . .” (21). Unlike the shepherd, the Hispano cowboy has a “machine” counterpart in the aforementioned negative figure of the Euro-American/“Tejano” cowboy employed by the cattle companies. The narrator indirectly constructs the former as a foil for the eastern cattleman’s perceived lack of connection with the land he overruns with large herds of hungry cattle. An explicit comparison between Hispanic rodeo and what Euro-America has made of it also occurs in the narrative. With respect to the 1886 rodeo, El Cuate takes care to emphasize that “[a] rodeo, in those days truly meant a roundup, not a public exhibition” (17). This is to be understood as a condescending sideswipe at Euro-American rodeo. Later on, C. de Baca expresses it yet more clearly in her own voice when she comments on the Las Vegas Cowboys’ Reunion of her teenage years: “By then, there were too many outsiders, and it was not as much fun. My experiences on the ranch did not make a rodeo interesting as I felt that it was not real” (85).<sup>226</sup> In her Hispano deconstruction of national western mythology, the author thus also revises the iconic figure of the U.S. cowboy and replaces it with the *vaquero* as an archetypal Mexican American hero. Villanueva and Anaya will proceed in a similar way in their own works.<sup>227</sup>

Further dwellers in the Llano “garden,” which are dealt with in the cook’s final tale (chapter six), are the *comancheros*. These are Hispano traders, mostly of the lower classes, who engaged in illicit dealings with American cattle stolen by Comanches. According to the text, this form of resistance to the Euro-American was

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<sup>226</sup> The Las Vegas Cowboys’ Reunion was an annual rodeo event that originated in the work routine, but then developed into a commercial enterprise (cf. Ponce 138).

<sup>227</sup> It is a fact that America’s cherished cattle ranching and cowboy tradition is Hispanic-Mexican in origin. As the Euro-American cowboy became a major emblem in U.S. culture, his real ancestry was ignored. In the process, Lomelí points out, the Hispanic *vaquero* underwent a transformation: “A symbol of permanence and tradition became radically changed to signify the American ideal of individualism and self-promoted achievement” (“Portrait” 136). For background on the Hispanic roots of U.S. cattle culture and the rodeo, see also Steve Cormier’s article and McWilliams 142-47. A pastoral portrait of California’s former ranching and *vaquero* tradition may be found in the many works authored by Arnold R. Rojas, such as *California Vaquero* (1953). Eva Antonia Wilbur-Cruce celebrates, and deplors the disappearance of, the cattle culture of early-1900s southern Arizona, where she grew up as a cowgirl, in her 1987 autobiographical narrative *A Beautiful, Cruel Country*. Bruce-Novoa briefly discusses Rojas and Wilbur-Cruce in his essay on Latino literary survival (27-36).

practiced until the Comanche were confined to reservations in the late 1870s (49).<sup>228</sup> The old man, once a *comanchero* himself, regretfully remarks on the wane of the trade: “So ended a colorful business which remains only as a happy memory of our meeting with our friends the Comanches . . .” (49). Although the Hispano *patrón* class did not approve of these dealings (48), C. de Baca opts for a pastoralizing representation of the *comancheros* through El Cuate. Actually, the Comanches are themselves subject to romanticization here, which jars with the writer’s openly racist attitude towards the Native elsewhere in the book. Obviously, *comancheros* and Comanches alike are enlisted in the pastoral cause for their ethnic opposition to the common enemy: the eastern cattlemen who took over the grasslands which, in El Cuate’s words, “belonged to the Indian and to the New Mexicans of Spanish descent” (43).<sup>229</sup> If the admission of unorthodox figures such as *comancheros* and even Natives into the lost Plains idyll already demonstrates the conceptual elasticity of the pastoral mode in C. de Baca’s rendering (as we have also observed with the homesteaders), this is particularly true for another group of Hispanos. These are the bandits represented by Vicente Silva and his gang, notorious robbers and murderers who “terrorized” San Miguel County in the 1890s (e.g. 95, 105, 118).<sup>230</sup> Nevertheless, the narrator evinces a distinct fascination with the criminals of her childhood stories about the “perilous days in San Miguel County” (95). These “Bad Men & Bold”—the telling title of section four which devotes two whole chapters (ten and eleven) to the Silva gang—become part of the romanticized Hispano past in *We*

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<sup>228</sup> Cf. M. Gonzales on the *comanchero* trade, which benefited from a truce between Hispanos and Comanches (100).

<sup>229</sup> In the course of her on the whole little favorable narrative portrayal of the Native American, C. de Baca also anticipates the environmentalist primitivism of later indigenist Mexican American pastoral, which describes the Native in terms of a model balance with his natural environs. I am referring to a passage in which she indulges in primitivistic fantasies about the aboriginal inhabitants while roaming the range: “I would often picture villages of happy primitive people living abundantly from the soil with no destructive civilization to mar their joyful lives” (139). Generally, as does this Nuevomexicana, Europeans and Euro-Americans in North America held highly ambivalent, albeit invariably dehumanizing views of the continent’s native populations from the start. This becomes plain in Elizabethan travel reports, whose images of the New World are frequently very contradictory. As Marx has noted, American indigenes are often pastoralized by the English explorers, along with the landscape with which they are identified (*Machine* 36-39).

<sup>230</sup> C. de Baca here quotes extensively from a book written by her uncle Manuel C. de Baca, *Historia de Vicente Silva, sus cuarenta bandidos, sus crímenes y retribuciones* (1896). A staunch conservative, he condemns the outlaws. See Ramón Sánchez’s piece for more information. As the Hispana author also mentions (92), Silva was purported to have once been involved with the Gorras Blancas (White Caps). This clandestine Hispano organization fought Euro-American encroachment of Hispanic lands in northeastern New Mexico in the late 1880s and early 90s. Nocturnal acts of defiance such as fence cutting were also directed against wealthy Hispanos who profited from the breakup of communal land, like C. de Baca’s paternal grandfather (90). On the Gorras Blancas, cf. M. Gonzales 104-05, R. Sánchez 40, 41 and the essay by Anselmo Arellano.

*Fed Them Cactus*. As Hispano outlaws, Silva and his men are elevated, if not heroized to some extent, in this work of pastoral history. This is even more evident when the robbers' victim is a moneyed Euro-American merchant. Silva burns his records of debts, stating, as "quoted" by C. de Baca, that they ought to "be charitable to the poor fools who owe money to the rich merchant" (107).<sup>231</sup> In view of figures like *comancheros*, Comanches and bandits joining C. de Baca's elite family in the bucolic world, it remains to be noted in conclusion that pastoral may truly create strange bedfellows.

Let me finally mention a typified female character that is depicted in close proximity to nature: the *curandera* (folk healer). Among all the males, she is the one female figure emblematic of the old land-based Hispano life. The term *curanderismo* refers to a syncretic plant medicine derived from the Spanish and, unacknowledged here, the Native heritage. Performed by men and especially women, it continues to be of significance in the Spanish-speaking Southwest to this day.<sup>232</sup> In the narrative, folk medicine is described as an important practice on the Plains, where girls are instructed in the curative potency of plants from childhood on (59). Even in the days of modern (Euro-American) medicine, C. de Baca stresses, "we still have great faith in plant medicine" (59).<sup>233</sup> According to her, every Hispano village had its *curandera*, often the wife of the *patrón* (59). Such is the case of her grandmother Estéfana Delgado C. de Baca, who taught her about herbal remedies as a girl (50; cf. Ponce 50). She now delivers an ecopastoral panegyric about her grandmother and her successful healing ways; her smallpox vaccination "has passed many doctors' inspections" (60).<sup>234</sup> The author pays homage to her female ancestor in what is also a feminist celebration of the Hispana pioneer women on the New Mexico Plains and of

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<sup>231</sup> Rebolledo has also commented on the writer's admiration for Hispano banditry and cites it as one of her resistant strategies (Introduction xxvi).

<sup>232</sup> An informative introduction to *curanderismo* and its history, concentrating on South Texas, is the book by Robert Trotter and Juan Antonio Chavira. Also cf. Ponce's observations on the use of such healing methods in Hispanic New Mexico (49-50).

<sup>233</sup> This pastoral opposition is particularly marked with the *curandera* in her fictional work *The Good Life*. Old Señá Martina, who gives a lesson in the declining art of herbalism to the younger Hispana generation represented by Doña Paula Turrieta, is portrayed as superior to any modern doctor (chapter two, "The Herb Woman").

<sup>234</sup> The *curandera*, it is obvious, combines herbalism with modern methods such as vaccination. This again lends a note of ambiguity to the pastoral model. C. de Baca not only considers vaccination a positive achievement of progress, she also expresses her satisfaction that her grandmother managed to "conquer[ ] many superstitions which the people had [about vaccination]" in the late nineteenth century (60).

the “great part [they played] in the history of the land” (59-61).<sup>235</sup> From her beginnings in the oral storytelling tradition, the *curandera* has actually evolved into an archetype in contemporary Mexican American literature.<sup>236</sup> It is a figure that has intrigued both female and male writers; the most famous example is Ultima in Anaya’s novel *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972). A specifically Mexican American addition to U.S. pastoral, the *curandera* will reappear in the literary texts to be discussed below.<sup>237</sup>

## 1.6. The Role of the Landscape

*We Fed Them Cactus* opens with a section titled “The Llano,” the only one with just a single chapter. In a kind of overture, C. de Baca zeroes in on the Plains landscape itself in the first few pages and gives a detailed description of its peculiarities, before turning her attention to the human beings that have inhabited it. As in much nonfictional literature about nature and the environment, we first get geographical and topographical detail—instead of autobiographical information as in a conventional memoir. She begins,

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<sup>235</sup> The long-neglected history of Hispanic women in New Mexico is a focal subject in *New Mexico Women*, eds. Jensen and Darlis Miller (1986). *Promise to the Land* (1991), a collection of Jensen’s seminal essays about American rural women’s history, also contains work on Hispanic New Mexican farm women. Sarah Deutsch, another historian, examines Hispanic women of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado in *No Separate Refuge*. For a general history of Mexican women in twentieth-century America, see further Vicki Ruiz’s 1998 book *From Out of the Shadows*.

<sup>236</sup> Cf. also Rebolledo, *Women* 83-84. In chapter 4 of her 1995 monograph, she studies the figure of the *curanderalbruja* (witch) in Mexican American women’s writing.

<sup>237</sup> Another female occupation in Hispanic rural New Mexico is ranch housekeeping, which, by her own account, fascinated C. de Baca already at a young age (*Cactus* 131). As a literary image, food is especially prominent in *The Good Life*; the text blends written and oral forms by including recipes in the narrative. Anne Goldman has shown for C. de Baca’s and Jaramillo’s cookbooks that food and food preparation do not just mean nourishment, but may also be read as “metonyms for the whole of traditional Hispano cultural practice” (18). The Hispano tradition is thus “reaffirm[ed] and maintain[ed]” in writing as food becomes a symbol of “cultural critique” and “resistance” to the Euro-American influence (18; 23; 20). Goldman analyzes *The Good Life* and the women’s other cookbooks as “culinary autobiography” with an underlying sociopolitical discourse of cultural affirmation in her 1996 study (ch. 1; an antecedent essay version was published four years before). The topic of food and the cultural implications of ethnic foodways in particular has given rise to a fair amount of serious scholarship in cultural and literary studies in recent years. On Mexican American women’s literature, where food often looms large (as with the male authors), see also Rebolledo, *Women* 130-44. Articles that treat the subject in cultures around the world, such as the U.S., are collected in *Eating Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Food*, eds. Tobias Döring, Markus Heide and Susanne Mühleisen (2003).

The Llano is a great plateau. Its sixty thousand square miles tip almost imperceptibly from fifty-five hundred feet above sea level in northwest New Mexico, to two thousand feet in northwest Texas.

From the Canadian River, the Llano runs southward some four hundred miles. The Pecos River and the historic New Mexican town of Las Vegas mark its ragged western edge, while two hundred miles to the east lie Palo Duro Canyon . . . and the city of Amarillo . . . (1)

C. de Baca then takes the reader on a literary tour across her native landscape (1-3). From the start the Ceja and Llano country is introduced in the role it is assigned throughout the text. It is not just a setting that holds the episodic chapters together, but the central nonhuman “garden” character, really the overall protagonist. As already evident previously, the physical environment is, to use Christa Grewe-Volpp’s formulation, an “autonomous force, an active agent” (“Nature” 78) which exercises great influence on human characters and events in this ecopastoral New Mexico narrative. This is an important rhetorical strategy for environmental authors, nonfictional and fictional, to foreground a green theme in writing. Through the literary portrayal of nature’s agency and autonomy, Grewe-Volpp adds, writers “work[ ] against notions of human exceptionalism and superiority. Humans are [represented as] an integral and equal part of a complex net of relationships” (79).<sup>238</sup> In the service of the ecopastoral message, this narrative device of nature’s protagonism will also be employed by Villanueva and Anaya.

Since a text’s social purpose shapes its outer form (and its liabilities), the preeminence C. de Baca attaches to the landscape is, as with her other pastoral symbols, also the cause of overstatement in the imagery used to depict nature. This happens in a passage near the end of her introductory description. She waxes lyrical, voicing lofty sentiments and a feeling of reverence in the presence of the Llano. “It is

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<sup>238</sup> In this 2006 essay, in which she proposes a model for ecocritical analysis of U.S. literature and beyond based on an understanding of nature as a physical-material reality as well as a cultural construct (cf. ch. I.1 herein), the critic also discusses the role of the natural environment in a text (78-79). See her ecocritical monograph for an earlier version of this piece which provides examples from the novels studied in the book (388-91). Aside from the obvious case of nature writing (“Nature”), she finds nature to be an autonomous force and a protagonist in works by Euro-American as well as Native and Mexican American (Viramontes) novelists (*Ökokritische*). Cf. also her article “How to Speak the Unspeakable” (2006), which deals with aesthetic strategies for representing nature and the human-nonhuman relationship in environmental literature. In “Nature” Grewe-Volpp refers to the man-made natural catastrophe of the Dust Bowl as an illustration of nature’s autonomous power (78). This is what C. de Baca tries to represent in *We Fed Them Cactus*. All through her memoir, the idea of the Plains’ presence is also underlined—*mise en abyme*—by the intermedial insertion of Dorothy Peters’s drawings of the land (starting on p. 3).

a lonely land because of its immensity,” she writes, “but it lacks nothing for those who enjoy Nature in her full grandeur. The colors of the skies, of the hills, the rocks, the birds and the flowers, are soothing to the most troubled heart. It is loneliness without despair. The whole world seems to be there, full of promise and gladness” (3). The narrator here gives expression to her profound emotional and spiritual, even quasi-religious tie with her natural surroundings; they offer her comfort and spiritual recreation. It is an experience she shares with Thoreau, John Muir, Mary Austin and so many other pastoralists in Euro-American literature particularly since the Romantic age. As noted in part one, wonderment at nature in American writing may be traced back to Cabeza de Vaca’s admiration for sixteenth-century Florida’s forests.<sup>239</sup> Regarding aesthetics, the lines just cited from C. de Baca suffer stylistically from an excess of sentiment and pathos in their paean to “Nature.” To name some further instances of this exaggerated style of “garden” depiction: In the above excerpt as much as elsewhere in the opening section and the ensuing chapters, she makes ample use of adjectives and other words that are expressive of a positive value judgment, often in a superlative phrase. Wild flowers, we are told early on, grow “in abundance” in this stark land, and with the spring rains, “the earth abounds in all colors imaginable” (2). When in full bloom, C. de Baca enthusiastically declares, this landscape of oregano and cactus “can compete with the loveliest of gardens” (2). She mentions numerous springs “gushing from the earth in the most secluded places”—“oas[es] . . . of sweet water” in this dry environment (2). There are moreover “picturesque” canyons and “majestic” buttes to be found, “[n]o other land, perhaps, [being] more varied in its topography than the Ceja and the Llano country” (2; 75; 1). Throughout, the book presents us with a romantically idealizing, rhapsodic portrait of the New Mexican Plains, whose “wonders” the author likes to

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<sup>239</sup> Landscape spirituality is seen as a central ingredient of the traditional Hispano land concept introduced earlier. Armas has observed that there is a “reverent, even religious attachment to the land” in Hispanic New Mexican culture, which holds it “sacred” (40). As to the sources of such spirituality in connection with the physical environment, some scholars have suggested parallels to the Spanish mysticism of the *Siglo de Oro* (cf. Gerdes 239-40; Lane, *Sacred* 100-13). Others have ascribed Hispanos’ spiritual relationship to the land to Pueblo influence (cf. Maciel and Gonzales-Berry 12). Generally speaking, C. de Baca’s Mexican American land philosophy appears to have been shaped by diverse cultural influences. Her experience also resembles that of the Euro-American literary pastoral protagonist who feels a fleeting moment of transcendent harmony with nature. This is another of the three episodes Marx has highlighted about the retreat as typically depicted in American pastoral narrative (cf. Afterword 378). Such spiritual experiences will play a major role in the work of C. de Baca’s Mexican American successors. Furthermore, as the Hispano attitude towards a wild animal like the wolf has already indicated, there is clearly no wilderness ideal in her landscape representation yet as in later Mexican American writing.

explore on solitary excursions (139). In describing the landscape, she obviously also resorts to stale linguistic pastoral conventions; this makes for a frequently rather stereotypical representation, as with her rendition of rural Hispano culture.<sup>240</sup>

In its interest in an ecopastoral depiction of the New Mexico landscape and the Hispano, as well as a repudiation of the Euro-American subjection of the same,<sup>241</sup> much of C. de Baca's narrative can also be read within the nature/environmental writing tradition as a major form of pastoral expression in U.S. literature. The text constitutes an ethnic female variety in this nonfictional literary genre. It is a genre traditionally associated with Euro-American male authors who relate their solitary experiences in nature in an often rather scientific style adopted from natural-history writing (as Powell does). As an ethnic writer, C. de Baca places her focus on the Mexican American community that is historically tied to the land and being degraded along with it. This proto-social ecological outlook distinguishes her memoir from wilderness-minded Euro-American nature writing, which, like parts of mainstream environmentalism and ecocriticism, sometimes shows a deep mistrust of the environmental qualities of native peoples. Besides, as is characteristic of much female nonfiction about nature, she forgoes scientific background and detail in

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<sup>240</sup> The impact of Old World aesthetics on Mexican American landscape perception is especially noticeable in C. de Baca's utilization of the "picturesque" as a descriptive category. As defined by the English aesthetician William Gilpin in the late eighteenth century, the term refers to the pleasing quality of nature's roughness, irregularity and intricacy (cf. Nash, *Wilderness* 46). In the days of Romanticism, Nash points out, an adjective like "picturesque" was applied so indiscriminately already as to lose meaning (61). For an interesting analysis of the influence of European aesthetics of the picturesque on the management of U.S. national parks, see the essay by Alison Byerly. In the Hispana portrait of the Plains, notably in the "loneliness without despair" passage, we further detect the aesthetic category of the sublime. Classifiable as the opposite of the concept of the "beautiful"—the "picturesque" takes an intermediate position—, the "sublime" also serves as a category of nature description. Edmund Burke, in *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757), connects sublimity in nature, as opposed to beauty, with vastness and the infinite, solitude and darkness. These arouse powerful emotions such as terror and awe, according to Burke. During the Romantic movement, when the concept of the natural sublime had its greatest vogue, this also included spiritual and religious awe in an association of God and wild nature (cf. Cuddon, "Sublime" 928-30; Nash, *Wilderness* 45-46). An important monograph on the sublime continues to be Marjorie Hope Nicholson's *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory* (1959).

<sup>241</sup> Ethnic self-affirmation against the Euro-American in respect of the land itself also appears in the Llano overture. C. de Baca draws a parallel between the red Bull Canyon of the Ceja's Luciano Mesa and the celebrated Grand Canyon of Arizona. Offering a "picturesque" panorama "typical of the land," the former is "a sight comparable, perhaps, to the Grand Canyon" (2). Her usual reserve notwithstanding, we see a Hispana's defense of her local landscape vis-à-vis the national myth of the Southwest. To this day this mythical image is fostered by John Wesley Powell's famous account of his scientific expedition in *The Exploration of the Colorado River and Its Canyons* (1875). In her geographical nationalism, C. de Baca reminds one of those Euro-American writers and artists who began to value their own homegrown nature and wilderness above the Old World, Europe and the Alps in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (on the latter, cf. Nash, *Wilderness* ch. 4, "The American Wilderness").

describing the biophysical environment.<sup>242</sup> As an early Mexican American female contribution to southwestern U.S. nature writing, in which the New Mexican landscape rather than a traditional green world forms the pastoral ideal, *We Fed Them Cactus* also shares in the young tradition of desert appreciation in American culture and literature. The arid landscapes of the West and Southwest, including the Great Plains, were long conceived as the “Great American Desert” in the national imagination. This started with an explorer like Zebulon Montgomery Pike in the early nineteenth century, when these regions represented a formidable barrier on the way to the more promising lands in the Far West (cf. Heller, “Desert” 184; also Gridley 61-63, 75). While the negative image of the Plains was already revised in the 1850s in connection with the above-named dream of an agricultural utopia (cf. Gridley), it is not until the 1890s that a new appreciation of desert landscapes began to emerge among Euro-Americans in the Southwest. Since then a desert aesthetic has flourished in the literary and cultural production of the region (cf. David Teague’s study as well as that by Catrin Gersdorf).<sup>243</sup> The Hispana narrative thus takes up and refashions the themes and style conventionally used in writing about nature in America. It thereby points up the necessity to expand the old definition of nature

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<sup>242</sup> She only mentions the botanical name “*gutierrezia teunis*” for snake brush (142). Long overlooked and often attacked for not being “scientific,” female-authored U.S. nature writing has been recovered and revalued in recent times. The first fully realized work of nature literature by an American woman is generally acknowledged to be Susan Fenimore Cooper’s 1850 seasonal journal *Rural Hours* (cf. Anderson 2-7). Anderson and Edwards’s anthology *At Home on This Earth* (2002) is a first attempt at outlining a tradition of two centuries of U.S. women’s writing on nature; it considers ethnic voices and a variety of genres. Aside from texts by contemporary Mexican American authors Terri de la Peña and Denise Chávez, *We Fed Them Cactus* is also represented (chapter two, “The Night It Rained”). Anderson and Edwards are the first critics to relate C. de Baca to the American nature writing tradition. Their collection has a critical companion volume, edited by Edwards and Elizabeth De Wolfe in 2001, *Such News of the Land*. On American women’s interest in and writing about the world of nature, cf. also Norwood’s 1993 book. She builds a case for “a distinctly female tradition in American nature study” from the early 1800s to the present and notes that very few minority women have participated in this elite tradition (xv; xvii). Fabiola C. de Baca from the Hispano upper class is evidently one of the few.

<sup>243</sup> *The Desert* (1901), a nonfictional work by the eastern art historian John C. Van Dyke, may be regarded as the grafting stock of all later literary desert celebrations (cf. Wild 111); he gushingly labels the southwestern desert “the most decorative landscape in the world” (Van Dyke 56). Austin’s portrait of the California desert in *The Land of Little Rain* (1903) is an early female classic of U.S. desert literature. Important later writers of southwestern desert nonfiction and fiction include Joseph Wood Krutch, Abbey, Terry Tempest Williams, Anaya and Silko. See the anthologies of American desert writing edited by Peter Wild and, with a focus on the late twentieth century and its ethnic and cultural diversity, by Slovic in 2001. In-depth critical discussions are provided by David Teague and Catrin Gersdorf. In *The Southwest in American Literature and Art* (1997) Teague investigates the rise of a desert aesthetic. Gersdorf’s recent ecocritical study *The Poetics and Politics of the Desert* engages with Teague’s approach as it explores the discourse of the desert and its evolution in American culture and literature (including Vea’s *La maravilla*) since the mid-1800s. On U.S. desert writing, cf. further the essays by Arno Heller and Andrea Herrmann.

writing to include an author like C. de Baca. Such an extension is all the more needed if one takes into account the growing significance of the genre of nature writing in late-twentieth-century Mexican American literature, of which the Hispana writer is a forerunner. Prominent is here the work of the Texan Arturo Longoria as well as some writing by Luis Alberto Urrea.<sup>244</sup>

Concerning the issue of gender, it is also in another regard that C. de Baca's relationship to nature resembles that of numerous Euro-American (especially precontemporary) and Mexican American women authors. Like other women in nonfictional and fictional writing, she seeks freedom in the natural world from the constraints of patriarchal Hispanic society and its representatives. The idealizing pastoral notion of the freedom from society enjoyed by the shepherds (cf. Ruhe 117) is modified in conformity with a Mexican American woman's needs.<sup>245</sup> In her striving for independence, the narrator tells of the "carefree" summers she relished as a girl at Spear Bar Ranch away from her grandmother in town (132). On the ranch, contrary to "Spanish" custom, she is delighted to be allowed to join her father and brother in the "adventure" of riding the range, and enjoys the "free[dom]" to explore the land on her own (138, 172; 139). Reared to lead a "ladylike" life on the back of gentle ponies, she "always envied" any (lower-class) woman who could ride a bronco and romanticizes the "privilege" of having to catch and saddle one's horse (129). The narrative prefigures the contemporary ecofeminist pastoralism of an author like Villanueva, in whose writing gender becomes a salient category in nature.

Another aspect of the ecopastoral theme is of importance here. As is recurrently emphasized with reference to the powerful, protagonist presence of the Plains, they are full of "hardships" and "dangers" for those who live off the land (xi, 146, 175; 4, 6, 46). Thus the risk of "dying of thirst" is mentioned along with the bucolic springs in the opening description of the landscape (2). The climate and the weather present a special challenge, the latter being "as changeable as the colors of the rainbow" (6). Aside from the image of the drought, this is exemplified by the "terrible" Plains blizzards, as in El Cuate's anecdote of the buffalo hunter trapped inside a frozen

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<sup>244</sup> In my remarks on Mexican American nature nonfiction in the general conclusion, I will also refer to texts by De la Peña, Denise Chávez, Wilbur-Cruce and Ray Gonzalez.

<sup>245</sup> Norwood, among others, calls attention to the freedom American women, both settlers and visitors, found in western nature ("Women's" 173-74). In a Mexican American context, there is also C. de Baca's contemporary Jaramillo. In her 1955 book of memoirs *Romance of a Little Village Girl*, she describes an outing to the northern New Mexican countryside and likens her youthful self in nature to "a wild bird set free of a cage" (10) (also cf. Rebolledo, "Tradition" 102 on this).

carcass or in C. de Baca's experience of a night she spends stranded at school (xi; 45; 168-69). The rural author injects a distinct dose of environmental realism into her pastoral text; such an element of reality already appeared in Vergilian pastoral.<sup>246</sup> In this modern Hispana work of pastoral, an ecological idea is advanced by the portrayal of the land and its harsh sides. C. de Baca seems to point out the need for human adjustment to and a life in tune with the "vast[ ]," "endless" landscape which dominates man, at times—in anthropomorphizing terms—in a "cruel" manner (3, 67, 153, 158). The latter is what the homesteaders must eventually "realize[ ]" in the early twentieth century (153). They are, I have shown, the central representatives of Euro-American environmental disharmony, in contrast to traditional Hispano ways.

An integral component of the Plains climate, the rain performs a special role in the book, which has been practically ignored by critics.<sup>247</sup> It serves as an important symbolic motif in depicting the land. Rain is crucial to Hispano stockraising, and its presence, or absence, impress themselves on oral historical memory in this culture. "Rain for us made history," C. de Baca states. Even world history: "When we spoke of the Armistice of World War I, we always said, 'The drought of 1918 when the Armistice was signed'" (12).<sup>248</sup> The image of rain recurs all through the narrative; in this way meaning is structurally underscored. Two thirds of the text are organized around some nights and days during one of young Fabiola's summer vacations at Spear Bar Ranch sometime in the early 1900s. There is a prolonged enactment of the family's wait for rain and then the rain itself, an issue taken up again and again from chapter two through chapter fourteen (out of sixteen). It is addressed particularly in the portions of narrative framing El Cuate's stories in part two, often in a prominent place at the beginning of a chapter. Chapter two, e.g., which is (anticipatorily) titled

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<sup>246</sup> As part of the friction between ideal and real, wild nature threatens the *Eclogues*' shepherd idyll in the shape of bad weather or the wolf (e.g. in eclogue three). A certain referentiality in representing land topography actually entered New World pastoral in the age of discovery. As Marx points out, the usual setting of European works of pastoral since antiquity had been a highly stylized and only vaguely localized landscape. During the Renaissance a sense of an actual landscape—"a note of topographical realism"—became a distinguishing characteristic of pastoral set in the New World (cf. *Machine* 47). This, Marx goes on to note, is also true for later U.S. pastoral writing, e.g. *Walden* (245; cf. also "Future" 214). In my own study, we have observed a measure of topographical realism in C. de Baca's detailed description of the Plains landscape at the outset of her New Mexico pastoral, as well as in Cabeza de Vaca's account of the American topography in his 1542 chronicle (though no pure pastoral).

<sup>247</sup> Only Rebolledo (briefly in "Tradition" 100-01) and reviewer Almaraz (124) have remarked on the prominence of the rain in *We Fed Them Cactus*.

<sup>248</sup> This is a concept of history characteristic of traditional rural societies rather than the modern West. It again shows how the writer has adapted historiographic method to her own pastoral intentions in this Llano history.

“The Night It Rained,” introduces the topic of rain and explains its significance to Hispano culture. We also hear about the first signs of rain in the shape of “promising clouds” observed by the father (11). Eventually, in chapter four, set that same night, the cook’s tale is interrupted by C. de Baca’s reference to the first drops of the approaching rainstorm (37). When it abates again, a few days of gentler rain follow, as we learn at the outset of chapter six (47). The author praises the rain in pastoral terms and stresses the gratefulness and rejoicing of her family, above all her father, upon its coming. “Papá,” she notes, is always “radiant with happiness” when it finally rains (14). At the start of chapter fourteen, in the book’s final section, the rain that set in the first night is taken up one last time, unexpectedly after almost a hundred pages’ absence and out of context of the historical events being related. After three days of drenching, the exuberant narrator now tells us, “the land took on a new aspect. In a week, the grass seemed to have grown inches and the cattle were happily grazing and putting on slick covers on their bodies. Ours was a happy household!” (138) A formal textual break like this can be attributed to C. de Baca’s awkward, half-baked use of the literary leitmotif technique in the rain episode, which is part of the undeveloped family plot in her historical narrative. Through her ecopastoral representation of the rain, she seeks to provide the reader not just with an impression of the force of the land and the weather on the Plains. More implicitly, I would suggest, she again expresses the importance of being on harmonious terms with nature, as in her people’s rural tradition.<sup>249</sup> The seasons are in fact a favored organizing principle in environmental prose.<sup>250</sup> We will see a treatment of the summer rains similar to this Hispana writer’s in Anaya’s New Mexico mystery novel.

To make a final point, the image of the rainstorm is also an illustration of how, in C. de Baca’s time, the aesthetic value of Plains nature has moved into the foreground, compared with the old days. She contrasts her father’s perception of a

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<sup>249</sup> This is underlined by the rather patronizing comparison she makes between her stately ranch home at Spear Bar and the “lowly shacks” the homesteaders built. “[S]ometimes,” she writes, “they did not have even protection from the scant New Mexico rains” (147-48).

<sup>250</sup> Buell names a number of Euro-American writers in this connection, such as Susan Fenimore Cooper, Thoreau, Muir, Carson, Abbey or Dillard (*Environmental* 220). In Mexican American literature, one may also think of Texas author Pat Mora, whose poetic and prose work mirrors her close ties to the southwestern desert. Her family memoir *House of Houses* (1997) is structured by months and the corresponding weather. In northern New Mexico, the natural landscape and the weather also have a significant influence on nonliterary art forms. As mentioned in Marianne Stoller’s study of how subregional contexts shape Mexican American women’s visual art, the New Mexican thunderstorm has also been represented in textile art (129).

storm with her own. He does not appear to feel her “rapture” over its “beaut[y]” and visual details such as lightning (15; 14). “Papá never saw the lightning,” she remarks, “He was too busy watching for the raindrops” (15). Likewise, her own experience greatly differs from the cowboys’ fear of the ““terrible”” stampedes lightning and thunder could cause, described in El Cuate’s recollections of rodeo (25-26). In comparison with these men’s more pragmatic relationship to rain and thunder, the memoirist shows an increased aesthetic awareness of the world of nature, as has been evinced throughout by the way in which she exalts the landscape. To a significant degree, this can undoubtedly be ascribed to her belonging to a younger Hispano generation less immediately dependent on the land and the weather for survival. Another germane factor is surely her experience of the devastation of the New Mexico grasslands during her lifetime. Whatever the source of it, *We Fed Them Cactus* may be said to reflect the move towards a modern Mexican American consciousness and appreciation of nature and its beauty. Such an aesthetic emphasis will be found to be a major ecopastoral and environmentalist value in Villanueva and Anaya.<sup>251</sup>

### 1.7. *We Fed Them Cactus*: A Precursory Text

As stated at the opening of the preface, C. de Baca set out to tell the story of “the struggle of New Mexican Hispanos for existence on the Llano” (ix). At the end of the book, this is taken up again in relation to her father’s death. “Life . . .,” she writes, “is a continuous struggle for existence . . .,” marked by “fights and fights for survival.” She also includes a conciliatory note by observing that reverses are part of life (178). Yet her rhetorical stress on the Hispano “struggle for existence” and “survival” serves to subtly underscore her pastoral narrative’s criticism of the fate of her

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<sup>251</sup> Marx notes that aesthetic pleasure derived from the beauty of nature is a vital element in the emotional bond people may form with a place like their native region. He therefore argues for “the potential efficacy of aesthetic motives in the defense of the environment” (“Degradation” 325).

community, represented by her father, since the U.S. takeover of New Mexico.<sup>252</sup>

The last paragraph reads:

[Papá] is gone, but the land which he loved is there. It has come back. The grass is growing again and those living on his land are wiser. They are following practices of soil and water conservation which were not available to Papá. But each generation must profit by the trials and errors of those before them; otherwise everything would perish. (178)

At the very close of the text, another central idea of the ecopastoral statement is highlighted again. The book ends as it began: with the Plains landscape. This circular structure emphasizes the notion of the constant presence of the land, which forms the frame for the lives of the human characters successively parading through this regional environment. In addition, the closing passage may be understood as a final warning in behalf of the land: to learn from the mistakes made by previous generations and follow modern conservation practices. “[O]therwise,” C. de Baca admonishes her audience, “everything would perish”—a scenario pictured on the preceding page in the apocalyptic portrayal of the Dust Bowl.<sup>253</sup> Her reference to new methods of conservation also underlines once more the fluctuant character of her pastoralism. Rather than linger over a bucolic past irretrievably lost by the end, she leaves us with an optimistic outlook for the rural future as she states her trust in the beneficial effects of modern insights and techniques of environmental protection.

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<sup>252</sup> C. de Baca’s words echo the well-known 1940 historical study *Forgotten People* by George Sánchez. It gives a critical analysis of the social and economic marginalization of Spanish-speaking New Mexicans since 1848, centering on Taos County during the late 1930s. Sánchez describes the history of New Mexico for more than three hundred years as “the struggle for existence of those men, women, and children who have clung tenaciously to a precarious foothold on this frontier.” It is the tale of “a people who have spanned the gap of centuries in an humble, yet relentless, day-by-day mode of survival,” down to the present (4). According to Lomelí, directly or indirectly, Sánchez’s exposé probably spawned a whole series of books on New Mexico’s Hispanic past (“Portrait” 144, n. 2). *We Fed Them Cactus*, for which C. de Baca consulted New Mexico histories (ix), seems a case in point. Besides, in the late 1930s and early 40s, she was deeply involved at the local and national level in the important early Mexican American middle-class organization LULAC, of which Sánchez became president in 1941. Founded in Texas in 1929, the League of United Latin American Citizens advocated civil rights for U.S. citizens of Mexican descent and pursued accommodation-oriented goals. For information on C. de Baca’s relationship to the organization, from which she distanced herself in later years, see Reed 145-53.

<sup>253</sup> As to the conservation practices she mentions, the 1930s saw the establishment of the Soil Conservation Service of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture within the framework of the New Deal. This new federal agency had the idealistic mission of changing the treatment of soil in the Dust Bowl region from severe erosion to conservation (cf. Opie, *History* 346, 360). From today’s point of view, C. de Baca’s optimism about environmental “wisdom” and conservation on the High Plains cannot be shared. A chronically vulnerable region, over ninety percent of which is now sodbusted, the Plains went on to suffer “little dust bowls” in the 1950s, 70s and 90s; they are a declining, increasingly depopulated area today (cf. Opie, *History* 345, 356, 360, 365).

This accords with her above-discussed openness to Euro-American progress and her dynamic view of the history of different generations and cultures in the region. She does not uphold the ethnoecological values of the lococentric culture, epitomized by an old-timer like her father, as an ecopastoral alternative for the present—as will be the case in contemporary Mexican American writers like the New Mexican Anaya.

The first analytic main chapter of this dissertation has treated C. de Baca's principal literary work as an illustration of her use of the pastoral trope. Her memoir has offered a Nuevomexicana environmental pastoral version of Plains history, setting the vanished old "Spanish" Llano "garden" against the Euro-American "machine." She has eulogized Hispano stock ranching, its shepherds, cowboys and rural traditions like the buffalo hunt and *curanderismo*. Represented by life on the C. de Baca ranches and by the focal figure of her father, this culture has been depicted as profoundly integrated with nature. Concurrently, the text has denounced the environmentally inconsiderate Euro-American, personified primarily by the homesteading farmer, and his part in the destruction of the grasslands and the ethnic style of life by the early twentieth century. Nostalgia for blissful days of old has, we have seen, constituted an essential, if indirect, source of pastoral critique and opposition. Ambivalence and a dual consciousness within the pastoral perspective have been due to the author's manifest approval of eastern modernity and change in various respects, despite rejection in many others. Expressive of this is also her view of recent innovations in nature conservation voiced at the end.

Occasional crosscurrents aside, I have pointed out the fundamental schema of binary opposites in the narrative's ecopastoral ideological and aesthetic construction with its simple, emotional and frequently hyperbolic structures. A symbolic-mythical dimension has thereby been added to a Hispano history basically told in a mimetic model of narration. Overall, we perceive a symmetrical structure and style in much of C. de Baca's design of pastoral celebration and reproval: characteristic tone, language and imagery have been employed to render each side. This ranges from lyrical effusions in extolling the one to the use of environmental jeremiad for criticizing the other. As regards other important categories of literary analysis, both poles are found to be represented by their own character types—which includes the protagonist role of nature itself—and spaces of action—generally, the country vs. the city. In respect of the difficult relationship between the ideological and nonideological functions of the text, we have observed that sentimentality and the

melodramatic pattern, being immanent in the ethnic pastoral stance, lead to inescapable deficits in its narrative rendition. What further aggravates this is C. de Baca's additional reliance on means of emotional appeal such as imagery of tears and ecological catastrophe. Needless to say, the message in turn anything but gains from being transmitted in this fashion.

*We Fed Them Cactus* has presented us with an, in form and content, bicultural construct in its Mexican American reformulation of the pastoral tradition of U.S./Western culture and literature. With regard to genre and form already, this Hispana work resembles other ethnic American literature in being a product of cultural synthesization: a historical-folkloric autobiography with a strong infusion from the genre of nature writing. The author has mixed in her own ethnic tradition also in the shape of a marked thematic and formal influence from the oral heritage. Her treatment of the pastoral motif consists in a New Mexican Hispano interpretation of the old idea of favoring the rural over the metropolitan, including the temporal opposition of past vs. present. This goes along with a perpetuation of indestructible topoi about country living such as its bountifulness and simplicity. In the process C. de Baca has dismantled the Euro-American pastoral myth of the West. At the same time, her narrative is part and parcel of the U.S. pastoral paradigm. In my reading this has been demonstrated also and especially by the pastoralist's selective appreciation for the "machine" as well as by her incorporation of a national pastoral value like nature's "democratic" quality into her ethnic Plains idyll. These examples serve to accentuate the tension-laden character of the Mexican American relation to the larger pastoral tradition—its separation as well as interaction—already in this early text. A remodeling of conventional formal and stylistic elements of the pastoral has been identified in connection with character creation—the shepherd and his modern incarnations—and spatial dichotomization. This goes also for the use of a standardized idiom of rural praise in a New Mexico context.

In conclusion, Fabiola C. de Baca's 1954 Hispana Plains remembrances ought to be acknowledged as an important early Mexican American expression of growing environmental pastoral concern in present-day America. As such, it is an antecedent of the contemporary ecological pastoralism of both male- and female-authored Mexican American literature. The basic concepts and narrative-rhetorical devices and characteristics I have called attention to in this book will be seen to reappear and evolve in the work of Villanueva and Anaya. Let us now turn to these two major

representatives of ecopastoral Mexican American writing in the late twentieth century.



## **2. Alma Luz Villanueva: *The Ultraviolet Sky* (1988)**

### **2.1. Introduction**

After the publication of the works of C. de Baca and other early Mexican American women authors in the 1930s, 40s and 50s, women writers of this ethnic group lapsed into what Rebolledo has termed a “Sleeping Beauty Silence” (“Tradition” 106). Mexican American women continued to write, but little was published and even less circulated. It was a situation of peculiar marginalization that lasted through the era of the Chicano movement and the attendant cultural and literary unfolding of the late 1960s and early 70s (cf. “Tradition” 106). This first decade of contemporary writing was dominated by authors like Tomás Rivera, Rudolfo Anaya, Oscar Zeta Acosta, Rolando Hinojosa or Alejandro Morales. Since the mid-1970s and particularly with the 80s, a feminist response has arisen in literary as well as theoretical writing. What is commonly labeled “Chicana” culture and literature focuses on a critique of Mexican American patriarchy, whose values held sway during the movement. It also takes issue with the dominant Euro-American society. Like the burgeoning Latina feminism as a whole, Chicana feminist discourse developed also as another “colored” countermovement against the liberal or “bourgeois” Euro-American feminism (cf. Madsen 17-18; 2-4, 10).<sup>254</sup> This upsurge in writing and other cultural practices has been accompanied by a continuously increasing amount of academic attention, Mexican American and other. As a matter of fact, Chicana culture, and the study thereof, is flourishing as much or more today than its male counterpart. This is particularly true of a rather small number of celebrated and often ostentatiously “Chicana” writers and artists.

Alma Luz Villanueva is, along with authors such as Cherríe Moraga, Gloria Anzaldúa, Sandra Cisneros, Ana Castillo, Pat Mora and Denise Chávez, a major exponent of the feminist literary activities of the second generation of contemporary

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<sup>254</sup> Besides Rebolledo’s book, Deborah Madsen provides a good general introduction to the work of contemporary Mexican American women writers in chapter 1 of her monograph *Understanding Contemporary Chicana Literature* (2000). A comprehensive German study from an intercultural angle is by Karin Ikas. On Chicana feminism and its close alliance with U.S. women-of-color/Third World feminism, see also Ikas 40-57. A groundbreaking feminist anthology is *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, first edited by Moraga and Anzaldúa in 1981.

Mexican American writers.<sup>255</sup> Of Yaqui-Mexican and German-Anglo American ancestry, Villanueva was born in Santa Barbara, California, in 1944. She was raised in San Francisco's Mission District by her maternal grandmother, a Yaqui immigrant from northern Mexico, who died when Villanueva was eleven. Difficult years followed, during which she had to cope with an unstable family situation and eventually became a teenage mother fending for herself. Since the late 1970s, Villanueva has established herself as a critically acclaimed writer. She has worked in all important literary genres.<sup>256</sup> Starting out as a poet, she has published a number of poetry collections over the decades, the first of which is *Bloodroot*, of 1977. That same year her volume *Poems* received the Third Chicano Literary Prize of the University of California, Irvine; it was followed by *Mother, May I?* (1978)—long her best-known work—and *La Chingada*, an epic poem (1984). Other books of poetry are *Life Span* (1985), the 1994 Latino Literature Prize winner *Planet* (1993), *Desire* (1998, a Pulitzer Prize nominee) and *Vida* (2002). *Soft Chaos*, the most recent compilation, came out in 2007. In addition to poetry, Villanueva has long been writing fiction. Her first novel, *The Ultraviolet Sky* (1988), won the 1989 American Book Award of the Before Columbus Foundation. Her fiction also includes the novel *Naked Ladies* (1994), *Luna's California Poppies* from 2002, her latest novelistic work, as well as a collection of short stories entitled *Weeping Woman: La Llorona and Other Stories* (1994). She has further authored drama and a number of essays.<sup>257</sup> Villanueva, who holds an M.F.A. degree in creative writing from Vermont College of Norwich University (1984), has taught fiction and poetry at various U.S. colleges and universities. She now lives in San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, Mexico, where she continues to write.

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<sup>255</sup> The designation "Chicana" is hardly ever used by Villanueva (and utterly absent from *The Ultraviolet Sky*).

<sup>256</sup> For biographical and bibliographical material as well as brief surveys of her writings, see Santiago Daydí-Tolson's article (1992) and that in *Contemporary Authors Online* ("Alma" (2008)), which includes a useful bibliography of critical studies. Villanueva's autobiographical essays—"Abundance" (1992) and her contribution to *Contemporary Authors* (1996)—are illuminating on her personal history, worldview and literary concerns. Also cf. the 1982 interview she gave to Binder and a recent one with Aldama. Her Web site is located at <http://www.almaluzvillanueva.com>; it contains personal comments on her works as well as several newsletters.

<sup>257</sup> "The Curse" and "La Tuna" are both allegorical plays of masks. Cf. Elizabeth Ordóñez's essay ("Villanueva" 417-18), which offers an overview of Villanueva's early literary production. It forms part of *Chicano Literature: A Reference Guide*, eds. Julio Martínez and Lomelí (1985). The first guide to cover all genres and most authors, this book remains a valuable source for research. Villanueva's writings have appeared in numerous periodicals and anthologies as well as in textbooks from grammar to university level. Her poetry has been translated into several languages.

As elsewhere in Mexican American and any developing U.S. ethnic literature, autobiographical elements are occasionally very prominent in Villanueva's work. From the start it has centered on an exploration of feminist and ecofeminist themes. Of particular interest to her, she recently underlined in an interview, have been "opposites" and their "fusion" (with Aldama 292). Specifically, her texts have represented again and again the sharp opposition between a men-ruled modern world alienated from and abusive of nature and women, and what is viewed as the ancient nature-bonded condition of womanhood. The latter constitutes the vision Villanueva means to articulate to her implied addressee, the (Mexican American) female community as well as beyond. In her early poem "a poet's job," she describes a poet as someone who "see[s] / the contours of the / world and make[s] / a myth to share / for others to see" (17). She believes in art's power to "transform" the given (Interview with Binder 201; Villanueva, "Villanueva" 314), expressing the hope that her words as a writer "are for the world" (Interview with Aldama 289; also cf. "Alma" 4-5). This notion of the poet/writer's special social role as a kind of prophet stands in the Romantic tradition. It was shared by the British and American Romantics—indeed Plato already (cf. Buell, "Transcendentalists" 377).<sup>258</sup> Villanueva's writing is concerned with resistance and the presentation of an ethnic female counterdiscourse. As in C. de Baca and other such literature, she is primarily interested in communicating her ideas, of an (eco)feminist orientation.<sup>259</sup> With respect to her claim to literary universality, it will be found to be quite exaggerated in its desire to transcend the specifically (Mexican American) female. This happens with many Mexican American/ethnic and minority writers, as well as their critics, who tend to invoke the universal dimension of those literary works all too frequently.<sup>260</sup>

Central significance throughout Villanueva's writing is given to the biophysical landscape, and in particular to woman's alleged special tie with nature. This reflects,

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<sup>258</sup> The English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, for instance, saw the purpose of his pastoral poetry in its relevance to the social problems of his times, occasionally in the form of an explicitly radical politics (cf. Gifford, *Pastoral* 94).

<sup>259</sup> In its didacticism this conception of art may perhaps also be ascribed to the influence of the Spanish-language poems Villanueva heard her grandmother recite in church, and which she was herself taught to memorize for such recitals. She has repeatedly affirmed the significance of this poetry to her own work (e.g. Ordóñez, "Villanueva" 414, Interview with Binder 201, "Villanueva" 304).

<sup>260</sup> As Carmen Salazar Parr has remarked, "[one] danger with the whole question of universality . . . is that too often it emerges as a means of defending a literature which would otherwise not be accepted by 'others.'" African American literature has gone through a similar phase (136).

in my interpretation, a pastoral view of the world.<sup>261</sup> It is here based on ecofeminism. In my introductory survey of environmental criticism (ch. I.1), I have already dealt with ecofeminism. This gendered environmental theory, which has become a significant arm of global environmentalism and an important subdivision of especially U.S. green literary and cultural studies, emerged in the mid-1970s.<sup>262</sup> As explained above, ecofeminism is a heterogeneous philosophy and movement that postulates intersections between the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature across patriarchal societies (Gaard and Murphy, Introduction 3). From an ecofeminist viewpoint, such domination issues from the Western philosophical and intellectual tradition. It is described as having devalued whatever is associated with women, emotion, animals, nature and the body, while simultaneously elevating in value those things associated with men, reason, humans, culture and the mind.<sup>263</sup> This is not the place to engage in an extensive discussion of the various strands and taxonomies of ecofeminism. Even so, it is vital to point out the importance, since the early days of the movement and above all in the U.S., of a New Age-related wing focused on feminine nature spirituality and arcane forms of worship of the earth as a mythical “Goddess.” Women, it is believed, have a special, biologically linked connection with feminized nature and are endowed with a peculiar sensitivity to environmental problems. This strand of ecofeminism must be judged highly critically on account of the epistemologically simplistic, sentimental character of its feminine nature ideal. As commentators have noted, such biological essentialism is a striking ideological revaluation of the old Western stereotype that women are “closer to nature” than men (Marx, Introduction in *Earth* 254). It has been justly criticized, also by other ecofeminists, for inadvertently reinforcing the gender binarism in which the subordination of women and nature has allegedly been grounded for millennia (cf., e.g., Norwood, *Made* 264-66). As Greg Garrard has pithily phrased it, such radical ecofeminism presents us with “a mirror-image of patriarchal constructions of

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<sup>261</sup> Recall Marx’s insightful observation cited above that the “‘green’ tendencies” within the feminist movement may be regarded as one form of the contemporary “new” pastoralism with an environmentalist bent.

<sup>262</sup> The term “*éco-féminisme*” is credited to the French feminist Françoise d’Eaubonne (1974). Cf. Merchant, “Ecofeminism” 100.

<sup>263</sup> See Gaard’s introduction (4-5) to her edited *Ecofeminism: Woman, Animals, Nature* (1993). Philosopher Val Plumwood, in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, gives a detailed analysis of Western philosophy in terms of this dualism. A widely known formulation of it is anthropologist Sherry Ortner’s argument that female is to male as nature is to culture. Problematically, though, she applies this globally.

femininity that is just as limited and limiting” (*Ecocriticism* 24). While some of its more unabashedly homogenizing claims have been qualified since the mid-1980s, this spiritual, essentialist (or “cultural”) type of ecofeminism remains influential in the U.S. to this day. A second major wing in the American ecofeminist movement is represented by a non-essentializing, more pragmatic materialist ecofeminism.<sup>264</sup>

As obvious in her writings, Villanueva is a Mexican American adherent of the spiritual-essentialist wing of ecofeminism. A member of Greenpeace, she stresses her great disquiet over the degradation of the “Earth”—often capitalized by her in the ecofeminist manner. “The fate of our planet, Earth,” she has stated, “preoccupies my work and my daily life—I love this planet, our place on her as a species, living on her in need of a diversity of other species, our responsibility and connectedness to all life on Earth” (“Abundance” 53). “. . . I pray . . .,” she adds elsewhere, “that the Earth survives (us) . . .” (“Villanueva” 323). In the texts of contemporary Mexican American women authors, ecofeminist concerns of various stripes often figure conspicuously. Aside from Villanueva, a pioneering and important representative since the publication of *Bloodroot* in 1977, one could mention writers such as Moraga, Anzaldúa, Castillo and Viramontes as prominent examples (cf. also Herrera-Sobek, “Nature” 90, 91; Parra 1100). In the ecofeminist discourse found in Villanueva and the other authors, social ecological aspects also play a significant role. Appropriately, as in the environmental and ecocritical movements at large, issues of race/ethnicity, class and (neo)colonialism are now also increasingly being considered in white Western ecofeminist thought. Like feminism in general, the latter has long tended to emphasize gender over aspects like race in its analyses (cf. Gaard and Murphy, Introduction 3, 9).<sup>265</sup>

Villanueva’s feminist pastoral bond with the world of nature is deeply rooted in her personal life, as is reflected in her literary work. To begin with, her Yaqui

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<sup>264</sup> Generally, the label “ecofeminism” has today come to refer loosely to a whole range of activities and studies dealing with women and environment that often do not share early ecofeminist premises (cf. Conway and Garb 271). For a critical discussion of ecofeminism and its different forms, see also Grewe-Volpp’s book 43-80.

<sup>265</sup> A recent subform of ecofeminism is “social ecofeminism.” As editor Carr explains in the introduction to her 2000 literary-critical collection, “social ecofeminism” (used in the sense developed by Plumwood) incorporates multiculturalism and environmental justice. It is intended as a revision of the perceived philosophical and political shortcomings of liberal and cultural ecofeminisms (17, 20; 24, n. 1). Carr’s social ecofeminist collection also includes studies of Mexican American writing. For an examination of the interconnections, overlappings as well as disjunctions between ecofeminist perspectives and Mexican American environmentalism, cf. further the essay by Kirk, “Ecofeminism and Chicano Environmental Struggles.”

grandmother, Jesús Luján de Villanueva (“Mamacita”), had a crucial influence on her outlook on life. She taught her the Mexican heritage and, as her granddaughter would later put it, “to listen to the Earth” in the tough urban Hispanic neighborhood of her childhood. “[T]o listen . . . to those dandelions that survived to sing through the implacable cement,” in Villanueva’s pastoral imagery (cf. Daydí-Tolson 313; “Abundance” 40). “Mamacita” actually recurs as a literary character in her writings. From an early age, Villanueva also began to experience the California countryside as a pastoral refuge and spiritual haven away from San Francisco and her life in the poverty and violence of its ghettos, particularly the years as a girl without a home after her grandmother’s death and later as a young mother on her own (Daydí-Tolson 313). The first such formative pastoral experience is linked with Bolinas, a small town by the ocean north of San Francisco. In this place, which had ties with the urban Beat scene in the mid-1950s, the girl was taken in for some time by a woman artist (cf. “Villanueva” 311, 312). In the 1970s, having separated from her first husband, Villanueva spent six years of communal life on a farm in Sebastopol, California. There, she says, the close contact with nature inspired her to start writing poetry in a sustained fashion at age thirty (313-14). A key episode in her life and the culmination of her continuous search for a more direct relationship to the natural world is her four-year retreat to a remote cabin in Spring Garden in the eastern Californian Sierra Nevada mountain range. In the early 1980s, she moved there with her teenage son upon leaving her second husband (317-18). As Santiago Daydí-Tolson has pointed out, her writing acquired a yet stronger emphasis on nature and nature’s rhythms in the mountains (313). To quote Villanueva herself on her attachment to the regional landscape: “[W]henver I’m in need I come to the Earth, and I’m given what I need (the answer, the poem, the words, these stones)” (“Villanueva” 307). It is, she told Wolfgang Binder in the Sierra, an environment from which she feels she is “constantly learning” (202). All through this California author’s works, Bolinas and the Pacific Ocean coast—where she returned to live again later in life—, the farm and the Sierra Nevada have been transformed into literary pastoral loci.

Villanueva’s debut novel, the ecofeminist bildungsroman *The Ultraviolet Sky* (1988),<sup>266</sup> grew out of her own experience of withdrawal to the mountains. Set during

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<sup>266</sup> All quotations from the text will be from the 1988 edition.

a period of nearly one and a half years, around 1979/80, the book tells the story of Rosa Luján, a thirtysomething San Francisco painter and college teacher of mixed Yaqui descent. The omniscient third-person narrator largely takes the Mexican American protagonist's perspective, using the technique of indirect discourse. This serves to highlight her inner life. Rosa, who was raised in the Mission by her grandmother "Mamacita" and who has an almost grown son, escapes from her conflictive marriage with Julio and an unhappy urban existence. She retreats to a cabin in the Sierra Nevada in search of spiritual enlightenment and the mythical Aztec goddess Quetzalpetlatl. As she tries to come to terms with her estrangement from her unsympathetic family and friends in the course of her rather uncompromising quest, she also experiences an unplanned pregnancy and the birth of her daughter Luzia. She has moreover an affair with a young neighbor. All the while, she is struggling to paint the eponymous picture, a lilac sky that long defies completion. This artistic search represents an important strand in the main quest plot; on this level the novel is also a *Künstlerroman*. In the end Rosa achieves self-identity as a woman and a painter, having gradually learned a more harmonious relationship to nature and the world. In lieu of chapters, *The Ultraviolet Sky* is formally divided into two parts with textual segments that integrate dreams, poems and some letters. It experiments with a nonlinear temporal structure, opening *in medias res* with an anticipatory fragment from a point near the end. Then follows a long, mostly chronological flashback that narrates the events preceding and surrounding the main character's decision to leave the city the summer of the year before. It tells of her ensuing relocation to the mountains at the beginning of part two, and of her sojourn there. The flashback section thereby moves beyond the events already related in the opening fragment and up to the narrative present in the late fall of her second year in the Sierra.

The maturation of a female protagonist in a progressive ecofeminist quest for identity already appeared as a structural pattern in Villanueva's poetry prior to its extended fictional treatment in her first novel. Notably, this occurs in the long autobiographical poem *Mother, May I?* This reflects the author's ideological-didactic intent. For the same reason, the identity quest/bildungsroman form has been a highly popular narrative medium in much of the literature, in particular fiction, by contemporary Mexican American (as well as other ethnic, e.g. Native) writers, both male and female. A major subgenre in the Mexican American novel, the

bildungsroman characteristically delineates the development of a young protagonist. In contrast to the characters of much other modern fiction, however, Vernon Lattin has noted, alienation and the lack of identity that lead to the search here are not so much due to a meaningless world in which the gods have died. Rather, they are grounded in the specific social and cultural circumstances of life in the U.S. (“Contemporary” 186-87). In an attempt to cope with this contemporary world, the Mexican American characters’ literary quest through a sequence of rites of passage has frequently resulted in a near-circular return to the community’s cultural heritage of traditional values and myths. It is a transmission of knowledge from the elder generation to the young which recalls the old oral tradition. The part of the guiding mentor in such works of literature has recurrently been given to *curandera* figures and wise old men.<sup>267</sup> As with Villanueva’s protagonists, the ethnic quest typically takes on symbolic meaning for the community and even for modern man in general, often with echoes of the classic mythical hero journey.<sup>268</sup> *The Ultraviolet Sky* too exemplifies the adoption of canonical Euro-American models of narration in Mexican American literature. In analogy to what has long been the case in male-authored Mexican American writing, Villanueva now uses the quest/bildungsroman and the artist novel as U.S. novel subgenres in the service of an ecofeminist message.

Concerning the reception from readers and critics of Villanueva’s prize-winning novel—so far her most applauded work of fiction—, it has on the whole been favorable. Among the small number of critical studies, there are some important readings by U.S., French, German and Spanish scholars.<sup>269</sup> Several critics of *The*

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<sup>267</sup> See Herms’s survey article on Native American, Mexican American and Puerto Rican fiction (360). On the Mexican American quest motif, cf. further his 1990 book 119.

<sup>268</sup> Major examples of the Mexican American bildungsroman are *Pocho* by Villarreal (1959), Rivera’s . . . y no se lo tragó la tierra (. . . and the Earth Did Not Part) of 1971 and, most famous, *Bless Me, Ultima* by Anaya (1972). An early instance of a female protagonist appears in *The House on Mango Street* (1984), in which Cisneros depicts the coming of age of a young writer.

<sup>269</sup> In the chapter on Villanueva in her book about contemporary Mexican American women’s literature (2000), Madsen provides a discerning overview analysis of her poetic and fictional writings, including *The Ultraviolet Sky*, in respect of feminist and ecofeminist themes, imagery and style (ch. 6). Geneviève Fabre’s 1991 essay “Leave-Taking and Retrieving in *The Road to Tamazunchale* and *The Ultraviolet Sky*” compares Ron Arias’s and Villanueva’s novels in terms of the quest motif; Fabre identifies leave-taking and retrieving as essential symbolic acts. Another French critic, Marcienne Rocard, contributes an interesting comparison between Villanueva’s and Atwood’s portrayals of their women artists’ spiritual journeys in conflicting cultural contexts—“Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacing* and Alma Luz Villanueva’s *The Ultraviolet Sky*” (1991). Annette Maier, in “*Dark, Distinct and Excellently Female*”?: *Die Sexualität der Frauen in ausgewählten Werken der modernen Chicana-Literatur* (1996), has also dedicated a chapter to Villanueva’s novel (ch. 7). Heiner Bus briefly discusses her poetry and fiction in relation to Chicana feminism in his survey of Mexican American literature (1997) (448-49). He has further written a piece on the repression and expression of female sexuality in *The Ultraviolet Sky* and *Naked Ladies* (“I/Woman Give Birth: And This Time to

*Ultraviolet Sky* have remarked on the contrast between a nature-alienated patriarchy and a feminine position in unison with nature (especially Fabre, Rocard, Maier and Madsen). It is the dichotomy between both worlds that is the principal theme throughout Villanueva's writing.<sup>270</sup> Besides, Deborah Madsen has pointed to the ecofeminist precepts underlying the novel. There is, however, as far as I can see, no pastoral/ecopastoral or even detailed environmentally oriented inspection of it to date.<sup>271</sup> An ecocritical, green pastoral approach to its ecofeminist ideology and theme will thus furnish fresh interpretive insights into the book. This is also significant in light of the prominence of ecofeminism in contemporary Mexican American women's writing and the environmental movement at large. The second case study of my ethnoecocritical investigation will therefore be devoted to another environmental avatar of the pastoral topos in Mexican American literature. It is the "machine" in the "garden" in its ecofeminist manifestation in Villanueva's environmental formation novel.

I have already previously discussed typical traits of content and formal composition in Mexican American ecopastoral. The same applies to this work of fiction. Generally, it too has a melodramatic-sentimental conceptual and aesthetic structure. As for the narrative point of view, which is primarily that of the Mexican American protagonist, it further gains in melodramatic force in comparison with C. de Baca's memoir. This is because of the inclusion of the category of gender in the ecopastoral story of ethnic subjection in nature. The aesthetic function of the literary text, which is of great importance to many Euro-American postmodern authors, is not Villanueva's focal interest. In chapter 2.2 my analysis will concentrate on the novel's vehement accusation of the treatment of women, ethnic and indigenous cultures and the "Earth" at the hands of a Mexican male, Euro-American and global

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Myself" (1996)). In "Autoexilio chicano en *The Ultraviolet Sky*, de Alma Luz Villanueva" (2000), Juan Antonio Perles Rochel critically considers the implications of the heroine's self-exile and its consequences both within Chicana feminism and Chicano nationalism. An earlier paper of his is "Utopia and Dystopia in Alma Luz Villanueva's *The Ultraviolet Sky*" (1999). Another critical article is by Kimberly Kowalczyk: a superficial and distortive psychological reading that sees Rosa as a despicable alcoholic incapable of love, being the victim of a dysfunctional family. Finally, there is Ernst Rudin's linguistic study of the novel in his 1996 book *Tender Accents of Sound: Spanish in the Chicano Novel in English (197-209)*. *The Ultraviolet Sky* is also listed in *500 Great Books by Women* (1994); cf. editor Holly Smith's short positive review.

<sup>270</sup> The author herself has referred to the "integration of opposites" as her central subject in *The Ultraviolet Sky* (qtd. in Daydó-Tolson 317).

<sup>271</sup> As to Villanueva's other work, the only ecocritical readings I know of are by Chicana feminist critic Herrera-Sobek. She looks at poems from *Bloodroot* both in "The Nature of Chicana Literature: Feminist Ecological Literary Criticism and Chicana Writers" (1998) and "'The Land Belongs to Those Who Work It': Nature and the Quest for Social Justice in Chicano Literature" (2003).

white world. Patriarchal and violent, this world is characterized by sexism, racism, imperialism and militarism. It is symbolized, in the first instance, by the heroine's problems with her husband and with city life. In the ecofeminist pastoral configuration, Julio is the principal "machine" character. With regard to setting, the antipastoral is represented by the city of San Francisco (chapter 2.2.1). In terms of the rhetoric of criticism used, special attention will be given to the image of nuclear apocalypse. Its utilization is joined with an ecofeminist attack on the perceived overdependence on science and technology in this progressive world; Rosa's experience with modern medicine underlines this. The pastoral indictment also extends to the Christian god and religion. Owing to life under the "machine," the central character suffers a spiritual and artistic crisis, which provokes her turn to nature (chapter 2.2.2). Her ecofeminist quest structures the plot development from a condition of personal crisis through a learning process towards maturity and identity, with an eventual return to society being adumbrated at the end. In fact, this closely resembles the tripartite structure of classic Euro-American pastoral narrative. As described by Marx, the pastoral protagonist moves through the consecutive stages of disengagement from the established order, a quest or journey "closer to nature" and, at last, the return (cf. "Pastoralism" 54, 55-56, Afterword 378).<sup>272</sup>

In the following (chapters 2.3 and 2.4), I will deal with the ethnic ecofeminist "garden," whose values are diametrically opposed to those of the ruling society. Chapter 2.3 examines the goddess theology that gives rise to the pastoral ideal of "balance" and "love" Rosa comes to understand in nature. It is a primitivistic Mexican American ecofeminist belief system melded out of Euro-American and Chicano/a cultural nationalist elements. It contains a lesson for humans as well as an ecoethical model in relation to the planet earth. The author has included a second layer of signification underlying the narrative which critically engages with this pastoral vision. Ultimately, though, the latter is defined by escapism as the text maintains its problematic ecofeminist ideal. The central "garden" figure is the Native grandmother; she also serves as a guide for the protagonist.<sup>273</sup> Chapter 2.4.1 will be concerned with the wilderness myth that is integral to the goddess epistemology.

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<sup>272</sup> Other scholars, such as Hardin, have observed a similar narrative pattern in much of pastoral literature since the days of Vergil (1-2).

<sup>273</sup> The contrasts of *The Ultraviolet Sky* are further expressed in the outer form of the text. Part two, which sets the mountains as the primary pastoral site against the urban setting Rosa has abandoned, is positioned separately and constitutes the longer half of the book.

Villanueva's use of wilderness, which shows an important contemporary form of U.S. pastoral space, redefines wilderness pastoralism within an ethnic ecofeminist framework. I will then focus on the identity quest plot and its various threads. For one thing, there is great emphasis on the ecopastoral lessons in a succession of educational experiences the woman has in nature. A major ecological insight she gains in the mountains is into wild nature's might (chapter 2.4.2). Chapter 2.4.3 addresses the issue of the body and sexuality. They form an essential aspect of the Chicana ecofeminist nature relation which the protagonist also pursues in a sexually oriented strand within the quest plot. This concern with corporeality and the erotic markedly deviates from the pastoral tradition. The artistic search story will be studied as another important narrative strategy. Rosa's ecofeminist paintings, first and foremost that of the sky, are intermedial *mises en abyme* on a semantic and a formal plane (chapter 2.4.4). As discussed in chapter 2.4.5, the pastoral seeker has finally found herself personally as well as professionally. In the process Villanueva has tried to provide her readership with an ecological feminist vision, which will be recapitulated here. In the last chapter (2.5), I will shortly compare the ways in which Villanueva and C. de Baca have handled the ecopastoral mode. This section ends with a brief survey of Villanueva's later fiction in respect of her perennial subject.

## 2.2. The Ecofeminist Critique

### 2.2.1. "Planetary and Personal Grief"

In *The Ultraviolet Sky's* representation of the "machine" pole, a central image of the male oppression of women is the protagonist's relationship with her second husband Julio López. He is in many regards the "typical possessive macho" exhibiting what Rosa calls "the Mexican man syndrome" (*Sky* 88; 61, 243-44). Theirs is a conflict-ridden marriage—the novel opens with one of their frequent altercations—characterized by a lot of "pain," "dread," "anger," "hate" and even mutual physical and psychic violence (e.g. 7, 8, 11, 42, 168, 183). One morning in bed, for example,

he begins undressing her, “covering her with his mouth almost sucking away her breath” (20). His wife relates her own sexual domination to the radio news of a nuclear cloud heading for Japan in the wake of a failed arms test: “she imagined the clouds, briefly, as the breath of the world deranged . . .” (20). The nuclear issue, one should add, is Villanueva’s principal symbol of the “machine’s” maltreatment of the earth. The bed scene serves to illustrate a marital relationship that leaves the protagonist drained of all “energy” for her own life and for painting (21, 22). Her ecofeminist posture of identification with the earth is elaborated a little further down: “When they began making love [the news] stuck to her like a grief her body had to consume, and she had: planetary and personal grief. . . . Why do I connect my own heart to the Earth’s heart? Why do I assume that because Julio must always sever himself from me, men must sever themselves from Earth? But it is how I feel, secretly, Rosa thought” (32). So as it is bluntly put elsewhere, “the Earth was feminine, and everything that was feminine, she felt, was in danger of being destroyed by the masculine. She included herself. Tears came to her eyes . . .” (23). In passages such as these, in a frequently melodramatic tone and language, the text launches into diatribes about the alleged masculinist subjugation of the female sex and the “Earth.” It is a very reductive Chicana ecofeminist assessment of a society out of touch with feminized nature, what the novelist has once termed “the world order of the Patriarchy” (“Abundance” 51).

In the “machine” personnel, the major male character Julio largely functions as a representative of those collectively denominated “men”/“the masculine,” in particular “the Mexican Man” (e.g. 243-44). Ecopastoral characterization has already been commented on in connection with C. de Baca. Similar negative types appear also in Villanueva’s book as well as throughout her works. In addition to immaturity, dumbness or vulgarity (e.g. 51, 60, 87), she often draws men as despotic masters and “destroy[ers]” of women and nature. No less stereotypical is the presentation of the few good guys in *The Ultraviolet Sky*.<sup>274</sup> This woodcut-like portrayal of male characters is, as Marta Ester Sánchez has accurately observed, a “neat reversal” of many male Mexican American writers’ oversimplified depiction of

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<sup>274</sup> Julio is in fact not a wholly bad and contemptible character and has also some favorable traits. Repeatedly he is even described as “ashamed” of his behavior towards his wife (56, 99). Besides, there is mutual “love” in their marriage as well (e.g. 7; 22, 115). The textual binaries are thereby somewhat blurred, but remain overall in place.

women as either whores or virgins (344-45, n. 33).<sup>275</sup> Just like the ecofeminist conflation of woman and nature, male-bashing in character conception constitutes an ideological and thus technical blemish, and, if anything, serves to deepen the division between the sexes—as is true of many (eco)feminist works of literature.<sup>276</sup> At the opposite end in Villanueva's novel are the innocent female victims of "men": Rosa as reader identification figure, "[the] feminine" in general as well as the anthropomorphized "Earth."<sup>277</sup> These morally motivated tactics of sentimentalization in ecofeminist rhetoric also remind us of C. de Baca's pastoral. The author further introduces tears, an empathetic technique itself employed by C. de Baca. Shed excessively in the text—one instance is cited above—, they lend a frequently lachrymose tone both to the critical discourse and its antithesis.

Race, ethnicity and class are significant factors in the Mexican American ecofeminist invective against the "machine." Take the protagonist's own ethnic community. She still feels, we read, like

a Spanish-speaking Mexican kid from a San Francisco barrio, one of the places the tourists didn't linger in . . .—poverty, an inarticulateness in the face of White Authority, or an irresistible urge (still) to scream FUCK YOU ALL, shame of the poverty, defiance of the poverty . . . drove her crazy (still)—. . . In a war she'd be raped, the final humiliation, and wasn't this war, she mused—am I not continually waiting for My Rapist, isn't the Earth continually struggling to survive Man? (41)

This extract highlights the anger and shrillness of much of the critique, a style as off-putting as the profusion of tears. The setting of San Francisco with its ghettos is depicted as a very negative place for people of color, especially women. Rosa sees it controlled by a racist "White Authority" and "My Rapist" as subtypes of the male oppressor, "Man." Obviously, capitalization is, like the use of capital letters in the expletive, a favored typographical device of Villanueva's. Aside from images of "poverty" and deprivation here as in other places in the text (e.g. 126), the city is

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<sup>275</sup> Sánchez's *Contemporary Chicana Poetry* (1985) is an early book-length study of Mexican American women authors. The chapter on Villanueva (2; an expanded version of the essay "The Birthing of the Poetic 'I' in Alma Villanueva's *Mother, May I?*") perceptively analyzes this work of poetry.

<sup>276</sup> A case in point is *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* by Utah writer Terry Tempest Williams (1991). Cf. also Glotfelty's critical remarks on such ecofeminist negative typing of men characters in her essay on Williams's nonfictional text ("Flooding" 297).

<sup>277</sup> The oppressive man, it is evident, is the Chicana ecofeminist version of who was once the seducer in the sentimental novel.

associated with “sudden, unpredictable” and “unguarded violence” by men, with which the woman has felt threatened all her life (11; 10). To a much greater degree than C. de Baca, Villanueva gives expression to an antiurban stance in her ethnic pastoralism. In Euro-American culture pastoral hostility to the city has been widespread since the early nineteenth century.<sup>278</sup>

As to the charges leveled at subjection on a global scale in *The Ultraviolet Sky*, indigenous cultures such as those in Vietnam and Central America are portrayed as the sufferers of U.S. and Western imperialism and a military-industrial complex seeking influence and material profit around the world (e.g. 161-62). A summary of the “long list” of “atrocities” committed on and against the earth (58; 220) is, among other similar litanies, the following interior monologue of Rosa’s:

Are we going to survive this fucking century? . . . How much life will die today because of our stupidity . . . atomic testing in the Pacific, the relocation of its people, their jellyfish babies that die within hours of birth, the villagers slaughtered in El Salvador, the children clubbed to death to save bullets, the bullets this, my, government supplies with my money, Guatemala, Nicaragua, South Africa, missiles, missiles, anti, anti-missiles cover the globe. (225)

Leaving aside the Cold War, the reader gets, in lurid imagery, a grossly generalizing interpretation of the global situation as a violent conflict between a white First World and a nonwhite “Third World” at the mercy of the former. “[B]rown, yellow, black[, that is]—people who’re suffering most now,” Rosa specifies, in brief the “ruling class” vs. the “other class,” in which she includes herself (54).<sup>279</sup> The environment is also subject to Western authority in the developing world here. The image of the “jellyfish babies” doomed by nuclear testing is invoked for special emotional effect—like that of the children—, a common strategy in environmentalist appeal. All in all, this is a reflection of social ecological attitudes, as often in contemporary Mexican American, particularly women’s literature. In her ecofeminist

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<sup>278</sup> An unfavorable representation of the U.S. city as a locus of alienation, discrimination and other social ills is characteristic of much contemporary Mexican American literature. Along with the corresponding desire to return to the land and nature, Lattin has rightly linked this to the pastoral motif of Anglo American Romantic writing. See “The City in Contemporary Chicano Fiction” (93) as well as a subsequent piece (“Quest”). On Mexican American women writers’ often rather negative view of the American urban landscape, cf. further Rebolledo, “Tradition” 107-15.

<sup>279</sup> Julio’s war trauma as a Vietnam veteran (e.g. 206) is a staple of Mexican American and other U.S. ethnic writing. A more complex rendering of the Mexican American Vietnam experience may be found in Vía’s novel *Gods Go Begging* (1999).

criticism, Villanueva is committed to what C. de Baca anticipated in her Plains history over thirty years earlier—in a much less radical and plainspoken discourse. In contemporary Mexican American women’s writing before Villanueva, socioecological pastoral dissent was brought under way by Estela Portillo Trambley’s early Chicana feminism in “Rain of Scorpions.”<sup>280</sup>

Starting from Rosa’s personal difficulties with her husband and life in urban California, this novel decries what is described as a worldwide patriarchal hegemony. The situation of women, ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples and the “Earth” itself are main symbols of the status quo.<sup>281</sup> This world is a near-dystopian place, ruled by “White People or the crazed masculinity that haunted [Rosa] personally, and the world globally;” and it is completely out of “balance” and devoid of “love” (59; 142). As such, it is, as in the above quotations, frequently connected with histrionic key words and images of “chaos,” “violence,” “struggle”—for “power” as much as “survival”—and indeed a state of “war” all over the globe (e.g. also 125, 219; 162; 141, 142; 106, 117). In short, it is, in Rosa’s words, a world “dedicated to death” and “destruct[ion]” (162; 67). In addition to these leitmotifs, the “machine,” as well as Rosa’s stance towards it, is often associated with emotions like “fear”/“terror,” “anger”/“rage”/“fury,” “sorrow”/“grief” and “hate” (e.g. 12, 17, 161, 8, 236, 23, 76). All this formula-like imagery is much dwelt on throughout the text. Villanueva’s appellative ecopastoral narrative therefore frequently takes on a sermonic quality as she attempts to persuade the audience of her views. As in many works of today’s environmentally concerned literature, such sermonizing is a rhetorical defect that

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<sup>280</sup> The title novella of the seminal *Rain of Scorpions* (1975, rev. ed. 1992)—the first published short fiction collection by a Mexican American woman—critiques social and environmental oppression in a Texan city’s Mexican *barrio* Smelertown. Portillo Trambley also constructs an alternative bucolic vision founded on traditional Native notions of universal harmony in nature.

<sup>281</sup> Villanueva even throws in the Holocaust in her analysis of global suffering. She has the principal character—who is herself part German—identify in a dream with a girl about to die in a concentration camp (57, 142). Rosa’s numerous occasionally italicized and often deeply symbolic dreams play an important structural role as an indicator of her psychic state and evolution. The ecopastoral theme is in this way placed *en abyme*, for the sake of added emphasis. Here and in what follows, I use Werner Wolf’s inclusive definition of *mise en abyme*, literary and nonliterary, as a reflection of a usually significant thematic or formal element of the diegetic level at a lower diegetic level. This makes it a form of similarity and thus self-reference. Cf. “*Mise en abyme*” 461-62. Also see Wolf’s essay “Formen literarischer Selbstreferenz in der Erzählkunst” (esp. 61-68) and his 1993 book 292-305. A classic study of *mise en abyme* as a literary and artistic device is Lucien Dällenbach’s *Le récit spéculaire: Essai sur la mise en abyme* (1977) (Engl.: *The Mirror in the Text*).

compromises the desired end. Beyond Villanueva's first novel, ecofeminist protest against the men's world recurs all through her writings.<sup>282</sup>

### 2.2.2. Apocalypticism, Science and God

In her portrayal of the "machine," the writer seeks to involve reader emotion also by making us feel downright afraid. Apocalyptic imagery and rhetoric is used as a supremely hyperbolic means of generating fears of an impending ecological apocalypse. The focus is on nuclear catastrophe, an image that will gain special import in Anaya. In the "particularly horrifying" "era . . . in which Rosa . . . lived," the sometimes very intrusive narrator laments, "[t]he major powers could exterminate an entire planet with ease . . ." (17). "[M]en and war," Rosa stresses on a different occasion, "can . . . blow us all to hell within minutes . . ." (235). The protagonist is virtually obsessed with the "nuclear threat" and the question of "surviv[al]" into the next century, "fe[eling] it daily, every single day" (157; 41, 142, 225; 17). This discourse of nuclear alarmism is reiterated over and over again in the book with almost hysterical fervor. Ideologically, it distinctly mirrors the spirit of parts of early-1980s America. In those days the nation was ruled by a Reagan administration indifferent to the needs of the environment. Americans were still under the impression of the Cold War nuclear arms race, atomic testing and a near-disastrous nuclear accident like the one at Three Mile Island (1979)—which Rosa mentions (296).<sup>283</sup> In her memoir published in 1954, we have seen, C. de Baca already resorted to the pastoral metaphor of secular, environmental apocalypse. Since that time and especially since the 1960s and 70s, "environment" and "ecology" have become household words in the U.S. (cf. Nash, *Wilderness* 254). Public worry over environmental deterioration has deepened, as is also evident in Mexican American literature. In fact, commentators have pointed out, the motif of anxiety about a poisoning of the environment and the fear of an oncoming ecological apocalypse is

<sup>282</sup> For instance also in the sequences of poems addressed to the "Dear World" since the 1990s. They are collected in *Desire* (113-40, 167-71)—a couple of the poems were sent to President Clinton in 1996—and, in a more recent installment, in *Vida* (127-45, 197-99).

<sup>283</sup> This accident at a nuclear plant in Pennsylvania raised the issue of nuclear energy safety in the U.S. In 1986 the Chernobyl catastrophe would heighten fears around the world, which is also manifest in Villanueva's writing.

particularly conspicuous in the U.S. cultural and literary production of the 1980s (Deitering 196; Scheese 32).<sup>284</sup> The so-called “literature of ecological apocalypse” was established by Carson’s *Silent Spring* in 1962 (cf. Buell, *Environmental* 285)—with a variant of the “machine-in-the-garden” trope for Marx. 1980s environmental apocalypticism seems to draw additional inspiration from the approaching close of the millennium some two decades later, as Deitering observes (197). This appears to be the case with Villanueva as a Mexican American representative of the ecoapocalyptic writing proliferating in the 1980s. In her later work, where the image of environmental doom returns, it is also carried to the generic extreme of ecological dystopia in the short story “The Sand Castle” (1994). The science fiction genre has been quite popular with U.S. writers and filmmakers in the past thirty years as a way of expressing environmental concern. It can also be found elsewhere in contemporary Mexican American literature.<sup>285</sup>

At the center of present-day ecological apocalypticism such as Villanueva’s lies a critique of modern science and technology and the Western world’s perceivedly excessive trust in them. In its condemnation of the progressive worldview, the novel testifies to a profound skepticism vis-à-vis the long-term consequences of the Enlightenment ideology of progress with its essential faith in the expansion of scientific and technological knowledge. As Marx notes,<sup>286</sup> since the mid-twentieth century a whole series of catastrophic events related to the invention of science-based technologies have led to a broad loss of confidence in science and technology,

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<sup>284</sup> Cynthia Deitering’s essay deals with toxic consciousness in 1980s fiction, mainly Don DeLillo’s *White Noise* and John Updike’s *Rabbit at Rest*. Buell also has a chapter on “toxic discourse” in his 2001 book (ch. 1). Cf. further Joseph Dewey, *In a Dark Time: The Apocalyptic Temper in the American Novel of the Nuclear Age* (1990).

<sup>285</sup> “The Sand Castle” takes up environmental problems that became the focus of attention in the 1990s, ozone layer depletion and the greenhouse effect. Set some decades into the twenty-first century, it depicts a scenario of global ecocatastrophe where only the old can still remember the times before the sun became a scorching force “killing whatever it touched” and condemning humans to protective clothing and sun goggles (129, 130). Villanueva’s story illustrates how the fictive genre of the short story, an important narrative form in Mexican American writing, is also used for ecological subjects. Like the environmental novel, it should therefore receive greater ecocritical interest. For a concise overview of the ecological short story in the U.S., see the 2004 article by Love. Book three of Morales’s novel *The Rag Doll Plagues* (1992) is the first major work of science fiction in Mexican American letters. It imagines a late-twenty-first-century dystopian world brought about by environmental apocalypse. Cf. Herrera-Sobek’s ecocritical essay on *The Rag Doll Plagues* (“Epidemics”). Environmental science fiction has become a significant area of research in ecocriticism.

<sup>286</sup> Cf. “The Domination of Nature and the Redefinition of Progress,” “Environmental Degradation and the Ambiguous Role of Science and Technology,” “The Idea of Technology and Postmodern Pessimism” in Marx’s coedited (with Merritt Roe Smith) *Does Technology Drive History?* (1994) as well as his piece on “Technology.” See also two older essays: “American Literary Culture and the Fatalistic View of Technology” and “The Neo-Romantic Critique of Science.”

in the U.S. as much as elsewhere. Hiroshima/the nuclear hazard and the destruction of the biosphere in recent decades are pivotal here (e.g. “Degradation” 321-22, “Neo-Romantic” 160-61). There has, Marx writes, arisen an unprecedented technological pessimism, and the formerly optimistic view of modern history as continuous progress has come to be seriously challenged. In lieu of progress, man now feels confronted with the menace of environmental apocalypse (e.g. “Domination” 201, 204). This criticism of science and technology and what might be metaphorically referred to as their entropic aspects forms part of the general postmodern attack on the Enlightenment tradition and the values it has begotten in the Western world. It may, as in Villanueva’s ecofeminist representation of a destructive impact of patriarchal science and technology,<sup>287</sup> be identified as neoromantic. In the cultural and intellectual history of the English-speaking world, one could, with Marx (“Neo-Romantic” 163-70, 177), draw a rough line from the British Romantics and Thomas Carlyle’s critical attitude towards the emergent industrial system as the “Age of Machinery” (1829) to Ralph Waldo Emerson. Under his auspices the mainstream of European discontent with science entered American literary thought.<sup>288</sup> Thence the idea may be traced forward to the invocation of the term “the machine” for organized society in the jargon of late-1960s and early-70s Western counterculture; there a diffuse neoromantic antagonism towards science and technology was a core issue (cf. also Nash, *Wilderness* 252-53). And finally on to Villanueva’s new pastoral arraignment of what she sees—in no less diffuse a fashion—as her own mechanistic, male-dominated age.

I have said that C. de Baca’s mid-twentieth-century pastoral still evinced a basic trust in the advances of modern science and their salutary effect on the environment, progress being an ambiguous but by no means mostly negative concept for the Hispana author. *The Ultraviolet Sky*, by contrast, shows a strongly adversarial perspective on science, an overdependence on rationalism as well as the supposedly resultant degradation of woman and nature. The principal literary image of science here is modern technological, institutionalized medicine, as described at the birth of the protagonist’s baby. A place emblematic of the larger “machine” world, the hospital is run by further specimens of the villain: “cop”-like hospital staff and “Dr.

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<sup>287</sup> An influential early work of ecofeminist scholarship in this context is *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* by science historian Carolyn Merchant (1980).

<sup>288</sup> I would further cite the stereotypical figure of the “mad scientist” as in Hawthorne’s “Rappaccini’s Daughter” (1844).

Miller.” He is the authoritarian, condescending male doctor who prefers women in the shape of the “‘dear’” or “‘girl’” (310, 311-12). The ecofeminist vituperation reaches its melodramatic apogee a few pages down when the medical treatment Rosa receives so as to delay birth is set in analogy to images of atomic testing and “death”:

She thought of all the women in the world giving birth at that moment. . . .  
Then she thought of the nuclear testing, and she wondered if men crouched behind their instruments and fortified structures, watching death, like little boys playing with firecrackers, while she, a woman, struggled with life between her legs . . .

And then she thought, with no nod to rationality, This medication feels like death. A test to see how long I can last. Then her rational mind answered her, Calm down, it’s for the baby, for her lungs. . . . Control, control, death, her other voice answered in return. This was the voice Rosa trusted, but she’d have to see where the rational would lead. (316)

Not only is Villanueva’s radical ecofeminist antisecularism as a whole troublesome, her alignment of women with the irrational is also highly irritating.<sup>289</sup> A second example of the science critique involves the feminized moon. Watching it one night—ironically through binoculars—, Rosa feels “strangely sad thinking of how men could now walk on the moon, as though everything were within reach, the mystery touchable” (15).<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> A radical feminist attack on science and in particular medical science is also voiced by feminist theoretician Mary Daly in her widely read 1978 book *Gyn/Ecology*. Cf. Garrard’s critical comments on this (*Ecocriticism* 24).

<sup>290</sup> A similar complaint appears in Villanueva’s poem “On Recognizing the Labor of Clarity” (*Poems*). Like several poems of hers, it is here ascribed to Rosa’s poet friend Sierra in an intertextual *mise en abyme* of the message in poetic form by the poet-novelist (170-72). Villanueva’s dim ecofeminist view of male science and its relation to environmental degradation is also emphasized in her early poem “to my brothers.” The poetic persona responds to Beat poet Gregory Corso’s sexist call “Be a Star-Screwdriver!”: “I am tired / of hearing of men’s far-fetched / yearnings to pop the cherry of / the universe . . . / . . . why must men / always yearn to create new universes / (having worn the last one / to a frazzle) . . .” (15). In what echoes the Kolodnian ecofeminist indictment of traditional Euro-American male fantasies about “the lay of the land,” the Mexican American writer questions the Euro-American male pastoral dream by exposing men’s perceived scientific arrogance and aggressiveness and the havoc they wreak in nature. I.e. the hubris of that half of humanity she accuses of having “taken refuge in their brain / and think[ing] the universe runs on sperm[,] / . . . always / trying to rocket themselves out of the earth’s / womb” (15). In my view, this critical ecofeminist depiction of the Beats as representative modern males is too reductionist especially in light of the countercultural stance of poets like Corso or Allen Ginsberg—his “Poem Rocket” is another intertext here (cf. Morales, “Terra” 137). After all, the counterculture shares pastoral ideas with ecofeminism, such as the hostility to science and technology. Interestingly, Villanueva’s 1996 poem “Messenger from the Stars” is a tribute to “the great poet” Ginsberg (51, 52), whom she met the year before his death.

Hallowed Christian symbols are also debunked in this ecofeminist novel, where the Christian religion and God are an important object of censure. Ultimate responsibility for the felt menace of ecological apocalypse is indeed blamed on the negative influence of a patriarchal and domineering monotheistic Christian religion with a transcendent deity. In a conversation with her friend Sierra, Rosa expounds her notion of God as a “[d]istant [and] threatening” male entity, a stern, if not cruel father at whom she was already “mad” as a girl in church (89). This is Villanueva’s ecofeminist variation on the mestizo’s spiritual dilemma and his recurring rejection of Christianity, which has been thematized over and over in Mexican American literature since the Chicano movement.<sup>291</sup> The protagonist continues in the same vein, with far greater concern for catchy language than for differentiation and logic in content: “. . . I think that’s why we’re threatening to blow ourselves up. That God guy has us in a bind. Too isolated, not enough joy. He needs a lover, that’s what I think.” Concurring with her friend’s ironic suggestion that “. . . God needs some pussy,” she concludes, “Maybe [then] this little, dinky planet would have a chance” (90). This iconoclastic assault on Christian religious mythology and its alleged androcentrism and anthropocentrism is an ethnic ecofeminist novelist’s conceptually simplified contribution to the lively contemporary debate on the relationship between Christianity and the impairment of the environment. Therein ecological troubles have often been imputed to the Judeo-Christian religious tradition, first and foremost by the American science historian Lynn White.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Cf., e.g., Guadalupe Valdés Fallis’s early essay “Metaphysical Anxiety and the Existence of God in Contemporary Chicano Fiction.” Also Lattin, “Quest” 626.

<sup>292</sup> White is the author of “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis” (1967). In the essay he argues that the Judeo-Christian inheritance is largely responsible for the current environmental deterioration as its worldview is based on human-over-nature dominance. Especially in its Western form, he contends, Christianity is “the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen” (9). To support his claim, White adduces, for example, the Christian myth of creation, specifically God’s commandment in Genesis that man dominate the earth and utilize it. Having later blessed science and technology in the scientific revolution, the Christian religion ultimately “bears a huge burden of guilt” for the present ecological quandary (12). “The Lynn White thesis” has been hailed as a classic of environmental scholarship and repeated by many, e.g. by Marx (“American Institutions and Ecological Ideals”). Nonetheless, there has also been a controversy over the validity of what is clearly a one-sided argument (cf. Buell, *Environmental* 488, n. 4). For a discussion of White, see also Mokhtar Ben Barka’s recent piece on religion and environmental concern in the U.S. As Barka notes, other groups of environmentalists actually cite Biblical precedents for the *good* treatment of earth. He mentions the emergence of Christian environmental ethics such as “Christian stewardship” among religious ecoactivists during the Reagan years (286-87). As regards the intellectual kinship between the ecofeminist and countercultural movements, it manifests itself also in the shared criticism of Christianity and its impact on the environment. In Gary Snyder’s words, “Our troubles began with the invention of male deities located off the planet” (qtd. in Albanese, *Nature* 174).

The effect of the “machine” on the lead character during her city life is accentuated by a series of images of hunted animals that are applied to her as part of the pastoral “Earth” imagery prevalent through Villanueva’s ecofeminist works. In another bed scene, for instance, Rosa confronts her lustful, bullying husband after a solitary night walk to the ocean. She identifies with a flopping, allegedly female fish she just saved from a bewildered Asian fisherman—he had left “her” to die on the pier (13-14). The woman is described as her husband’s “prey” (16); “hunt[ed]” and “trapped,” she expects him to “silently pounce on her, or a quiver of arrows to pierce her” as he wants to “kill her and eat her” (19, 139; 55; 56; 11, 175). Similarly, at the hospital she is being “haul[ed like] a side of beef” (310). This parallels the animal victim symbolism often employed in Mexican American writing, ecofeminist and other.<sup>293</sup> Besides hunting imagery, the aforementioned cluster of images related to a lack of “balance” and to “death” also appears in reference to Rosa’s own condition. Examples are the absence of “wholeness” from her life and its overall “chaos” (77, 125, 219); she feels “numb[ ]” and even “dead,” with “no vitality” as a woman and a painter (169; 159; 22). As these images emphasize, the protagonist undergoes a serious crisis—psychic, spiritual and artistic—at the outset of the book. The lack of unity in her world and within her self are further highlighted through the formal fragmentation of the narration, a technique used in many (post)modern and contemporary ethnic texts. To quote Rosa, “. . . I feel like the idiots of the world are going to blow us up and I’m losing some kind of basic faith, in myself, I suppose, but also the kind of faith that believes the Earth is round, and the sun will come up, and that all this shit is really, truly worth it” (136). The questing main character, who considers herself representative of the “feminine” (23), is not just conceived as an individual here, but also becomes exemplary. Rather than limit itself to negating those in power, *The Ultraviolet Sky* offers a counterhegemonic ecofeminist “garden” vision as well, as we will proceed to see.

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<sup>293</sup> E.g. in Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands*, which, like Villanueva’s novel, came out in the late 1980s. Animal victims represent women and Mexican Americans oppressed by the Euro-American (man) in the Texas border region in Anzaldúa’s ecofeminist poetry (esp. part two, ch. 1, titled “Más antes en los ranchos”). Anaya’s recurrent association of the Mexican American with an animal victim in his novels is another example. The literature by contemporary Mexican American and Canadian writers resembles each other in their penchant for drawing on such images, which apparently tend to suggest themselves to authors writing from a minority position. As to Canadian literature, Atwood has discussed and properly criticized such self-victimization and the “animal victim,” e.g. killed by U.S. hunters, as basic motifs symbolizing the domination of Canada as a nation. See her important scholarly work *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature* (1972) (35, 77-79).

### 2.3. Goddess Worship

An important early station of Rosa's search is her farm in Sonoma County, California. She lived there for six years with her son Sean, her then lover and some friends, after leaving San Francisco and her violent first husband. This farm experience serves as starting point for the ecopastoral ideal juxtaposed to the "machine," in direct or implied contrast to it. Within this arrangement, the "garden" receives as many encomiums as the latter is vilified. "It had been a life within a life," Rosa observes about her years on the farm in a mood of nostalgic reminiscence. "There she'd softened her harshest memories of her childhood's hunger. The days she and her grandmother had nothing to eat in the crowded, noisy city" (60). The polarity between nature and the city with her *barrio* girlhood is underscored through a number of food images in relation to the farm, its orchard and garden. Such is the case of the fresh milk of which her son could drink "as much as he'd wanted," whereas it was a "rare[ ]" treat handed out by charity when she was a girl (126). Nature's "abundance," as Rosa terms it (126), and the self-sufficiency of her life off the land are of course stock aspects of pastorality since classical times.<sup>294</sup> In Villanueva's autobiographically influenced poetry and fiction, the rural farm reappears as a setting and a site of pastoral edification of the questers.<sup>295</sup> This farm motif—which contrasts with the more traditional agricultural ideal in C. de Baca's (and Anaya's) work—is also a Mexican American representation of the long tradition of such utopian pastoral drop-out communities in U.S. cultural and literary history.

Most significant about the farm is that "[t]he abundance on the farm had revealed its secret to Rosa. The Earth was there—fertile, yielding, nurturing—and so many people had forgotten. They'd forgotten the Earth was under them—spinning, breathing, dreaming, sustaining them" (126). Even in that "horrifying" age, the narrator affirmed earlier, "what a beautiful planet it was. . . . World-wide, its people began to imagine this spinning globe . . . somewhere deeper than their dreams . . ."

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<sup>294</sup> In the *Eclogues* the shepherd Corydon sings of his "wealth of snowy milk. / A thousand lambs of mine roam the Sicilian hills; / I never have run short of fresh milk, summer or winter" (eclogue two) (4).

<sup>295</sup> Thus also in section twenty-three of the poem *Mother, May I?*, an expression of the city escapee's bliss in the California countryside (*Planet* 112-14). As the poet remarked to Binder, it is an important section for her that clearly speaks of "my bond with the earth" (202).

(17). In the wake of her crucial metaphysical experience on the farm—a “hierophany” or manifestation of the sacred in Mircea Eliade’s terms (cf. Carrasco 203)—, Rosa feels “as though someone had spun her around, and her view of the world was simply not the same” (60). This is a turn towards what may be called an environmental pastoral *Weltanschauung* closer to nature, which is founded on an animistic nature philosophy and religion.<sup>296</sup> Like, allegedly, people across the world, the protagonist has begun to “worship the Earth as a living being,” as it is once phrased, a “sacred” “Mother,” a “Goddess” (315; 331, 286). Hence her stay on the farm constitutes an important introductory rite of passage in her pastoral learning process.

The narrative’s ideal centers round a Mexican American variety of Euro-American ecofeminist goddess spirituality as a particular, fairly widespread form of nature religion in the contemporary U.S. It emerged especially in ecofeminist circles associated with the movement’s essentialist wing.<sup>297</sup> The followers of the goddess claim that the earliest form of human worship in the Stone Age was of a female divinity. It was later displaced by patriarchal forms of worship, and eventually Judeo-Christian monotheism (cf. Buell, *Environmental* 216; Conway and Garb 270). A version of the age-old, globally used metaphor of “Mother Earth” or “Mother Nature,” the myth of the ancient goddess or “Great Mother” has resurged today as an alternate, neopagan matriarchal deity believed to be immanent in nature (Buell, *Environmental* 214-15; Gaard and Murphy, Introduction 3). Like all of spiritualist ecofeminism with its woman-nature analogy, I should like to stress, this esoteric goddess movement cries out for critical commentary on its intellectual crudity. It has been rightly viewed as deeply questionable and politically counterproductive. After all, the goddess is, to cite ecocritic Murphy’s critical observation, “the most recent manifestation of the [patriarchal] Western tendency to render the planet in female

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<sup>296</sup> On animism, see the essay by Christopher Manes. Animism, he points out, continues to undergird many contemporary tribal societies, e.g. Native American cultures, just as it apparently did our own during the pre-Christian period (17-18). Herrera-Sobek explores animistic concepts in Villanueva’s *Bloodroot* (“Land” 228-33).

<sup>297</sup> Cf. Catherine Albanese, *Nature Religion in America: From the Algonkian Indians to the New Age* (1990), a seminal study (178-79). A follow-up volume appeared in 2002, *Reconsidering Nature Religion*. See also Michael York’s article on the contemporary emergence of nature religion as a distinct American spirituality. Buell too examines goddess theology in his book on the environmental imagination (200-01, 214-17); further cf. Grewe-Volpp, *Ökokritische* 57-59. A new publication in the field is Bron Taylor’s investigation of ecoreligions in the U.S. and other parts of the world, *Dark Green Religion* (2009).

gender terms” (*Literature* 59).<sup>298</sup> The motif of the “Earth” as goddess and of goddess reverence plays a great part in Villanueva’s writings, both fictional and poetic; it appears in multifarious forms from indigenous cultures around the world. The principal female godhead for Rosa in *The Ultraviolet Sky* is a Mexican American incarnation: Quetzalpetlatl. According to the heroine, she is the older, little-known sister of Quetzalcóatl, the Feathered Serpent god of Aztec mythology (17, 270, 300).<sup>299</sup> Fused, with characteristic ecofeminist eclecticism, from various cultural, philosophical and mythical traditions, the religion of “Feathered Serpent Woman” (88, 270) is the Mexican American construct that forms the heart of the “garden” project. The goddess’s creation is based on “balance”/“harmony” and especially “love”—both classic bucolic qualities. Quetzalpetlatl, we are told, is the “ever-loving” creatrix who “hold[s] the galaxies with a terrible love” (17). As Rosa intuits early on, a “love” reflecting the divine “love” for creation is the natural ““balance of power”” needed in human life (141-42). In her words again, with reference to her paintings: “herself and the Earth, the people, all of them, sharing the Earth in some kind of balance” (221). “Balance” and “love,” then, are the central constituents of the ecofeminist ideal Villanueva sets forth. This is what the protagonist is shown to understand in the course of her quest in nature, above all in the mountains.

Indigenous spirituality, such as Native and African American beliefs, is an important ingredient of contemporary Euro-American/Western ecofeminism and goddess worship (cf. Gaard and Murphy, Introduction 3; Norwood, *Made* 283). In the novel under consideration, the Native American element is obviously of decisive significance. Daydí-Tolson has uncritically attributed a concept like “balance” to the influence of Villanueva’s Yaqui grandmother (315). In my opinion, however, one of its main sources is the ecofeminist primitivism that is part of today’s Euro-American/Western New Age and environmentalist primitivism. Common to these

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<sup>298</sup> Besides Murphy’s ecocritical-ecofeminist critique, goddess feminism and its essentialisms are also jettisoned by U.S. biologist and feminist philosopher Donna Haraway in her famous “Manifesto for Cyborgs” (1985). As she writes at the end: “. . . I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess” (39).

<sup>299</sup> Modern goddess discourse has often focused on a specific avatar of the goddess: Gaia, the mythical Greek earth goddess. As propounded by the British engineer James Lovelock in his Gaia hypothesis of 1979 (*Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth*), the planet earth—Gaia—is a ““living”” female organism that is even endowed with a kind of ““intelligence.”” This holistic conception of earth was treated with due skepticism by scientists, but soon gained cult status among U.S. ecofeminists and New Agers, where goddess ideas had already arisen previously (cf. Buell, *Environmental* 200-01; 496-97, n. 68, 69). A clear influence of Lovelock’s Gaia and Gaia-related thought on Villanueva’s novel may be detected in the notion of “Earth” as a ““living”” being that possesses, as the narrator remarks, “great intelligence” (17).

groups is the romantic, nostalgic myth of the “Ecological Indian” (Shepard Krech). An idealization of the vanishing native by Euro-American society already manifests itself in James Fenimore Cooper’s Leatherstocking novels. A contemporary variant of this Noble Savage, the “Ecological Indian” is a primeval ecologist and natural conservationist who lives in perfect harmony with nature. He has been canonized to “ecological sainthood” as a role model for ecological behavior in recent decades.<sup>300</sup> This appropriation of the Native fosters notions of cultural essence as it revives old Euro-American categories of “naturalness.” Such cultural essentialism cannot only be found in contemporary environmental discourses about indigenes like Native Americans. It also occurs with respect to Mexican Americans; C. de Baca’s *Hispano* was an early instance. In *The Ultraviolet Sky* this stereotyped figure appears in a feminist interpretation: the goal is to be, as Rosa labels it, a “Native Person of the Earth” (247, 315). What we see here, in other words, is a glorifying pastoral portrait of the Native (woman) and her relationship to the earth.<sup>301</sup> “Primitives,” Marianna Torgovnick has aptly formulated it, have become “our Ventriloquist’s dummy” for whatever is lacking in our own world (9), here from an ecofeminist point of view.<sup>302</sup>

Aside from the Euro-American imprint, Villanueva’s primitivistic ecofeminism is also rooted in the enduring legacy of cultural nationalism and *indigenismo* of 1960s and 70s Chicano culture and literature. The work of the poet Alurista or that of Anaya are representative of it.<sup>303</sup> A distinctive feature of this type of cultural nationalism are the resuscitation of and often greatly exaggerated emphasis on the indigenous Mexican American inheritance. This goes along with a sometimes rather indiscriminate, idealizing cooptation of Native culture and myth, Aztec and Mesoamerican in particular. Sollors has described this phenomenon, which is not

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<sup>300</sup> See Christian Feest’s informative 2003 essay on “The Greening of the Red Man” (29; 13). In *The Ecological Indian* (1999) Krech shows that the mythological figure of the “Ecological Indian,” which has even been adopted among Native Americans, lacks historical foundation. For a critical examination of the “Ecological Indian,” cf. also Grewe-Volpp, *Ökokritische* 210-15.

<sup>301</sup> Marx has already noted the many similarities between the Noble Savage and the good shepherd of traditional pastoral (*Machine* 101).

<sup>302</sup> Torgovnick has studied the modern Western and U.S. fascination with “primitive” cultures in her monograph *Gone Primitive* (1990), from which I have quoted. She expands on this in *Primitive Passions* (1997). Important is also Philip Deloria’s work. In *Playing Indian* (1998) he traces the Euro-American practice, from colonial days to the present, of appropriating Native culture for their own ends. This includes the New Agers.

<sup>303</sup> E.g. Alurista’s first two collections of poetry: *Floriscanto en Aztlán* (1971) and *Nationchild Plumaraja, 1969-1972* (1972).

infrequent among U.S. ethnic minorities, as an “invention of ethnicity.”<sup>304</sup> Rosa is proud of being “brown” and a “mestiza” with a Yaqui lineage (83, 276). “[A] mixed-blood. That’s what a Mexican really is—a mestizo. We’re all mestizos,” the author has her affirm (247). For a pre-movement Hispana writer like C. de Baca, the ecopastoral myth of the Llano “garden” was “Spanish” in conception, with the Native American still presented as a threat to the early settlers. This long cultural tradition of Hispanicism has now been countered and overcompensated by an equally one-sided and overstated valorization of the Native portion of Mexican American identity.<sup>305</sup> Like numerous Mexican American women authors in recent decades, such as Anzaldúa or Castillo, Villanueva practices an indigenist form of feminist “revisionist mythmaking” (Alicia Ostriker qtd. in Madsen 185). In a Chicana ecofeminist reinterpretation of the indigenism of Chicano cultural nationalism, she is concerned with the creation of female myths and archetypes in her patriarchal culture. Quetzalpetlatl is thus a reworking of an ancient Aztec goddess for Villanueva’s ecofeminist pastoral purposes.<sup>306</sup> There is moreover an element of pan-

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<sup>304</sup> Cf. Sollors’s introduction (ix and passim) to his edited *The Invention of Ethnicity* (1989). On Mexico and things Mexican as a pastoral ideal in the culture and literature of Mexican Americans, see ch. I.4 herein.

<sup>305</sup> Many Chicano cultural nationalists tend to downplay the Mexican American’s Anglo roots. As J. Jorge Klor de Alva explains, Chicano cultural nationalist *indigenismo* has its origins in Mexico, in an intellectual current that centered on Mexican culture in the search for a national identity. (Exemplary are the writings of the poet and essayist Octavio Paz.) While the movement declined in Mexico in the early 1960s, it regained momentum among Chicano thinkers in the late 1960s and early 70s and contributed to the Chicano nationalist search for historical and cultural roots in an ancient Native past. This indigenism has never been so important—and exaggerated—in Mexico as it became among Chicanos (Klor de Alva 152). In connection with it, the concept of “mestizo identity” or “*mestizaje*” acquired key significance in Chicano/a thought since the 1960s. Their interpretation of this concept is based on ideas about the “mestizo” and “*mestizaje*” in the Americas put forward by the Mexican philosopher José Vasconcelos, especially in *La raza cósmica: Misión de la raza iberoamericana* (1925) (cf. Davis-Undiano 121-24). On *mestizaje* as a Latin American and Mexican concept, cf. also Bandau 209-11. A central Chicana text is Anzaldúa’s 1987 book. Drawing on Vasconcelos, she proposes her notion of a “new *mestiza* consciousness” in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands (ch. 7 and passim).

<sup>306</sup> As Rocard notes, the original Quetzalpetlatl of Aztec mythology is usually called Xochiquetzal; she is the goddess of love and beauty (“Journeys” 157; 161, n. 4). On the refashioning of pre-Columbian and other historical and mythical Mexican figures in Chicana feminist literature, cf. also chapter 3 of Rebolledo’s monograph. A well-informed recent study is *Blood Lines* by Sheila Marie Contreras (2008). It investigates Chicano/a literary indigenism and its ties with Mexican *indigenismo* and European/Euro-American modernist primitivism. Villanueva’s 1994 short story “Free Women” is read as illustrative of what Contreras calls a “contra-mythic” Chicana literary reassessment of previous Chicano/a indigenism (158-61). What she does not discuss is the prominent goddess theme in Villanueva’s writing, which seems to me to be situated very much *within* the context of Chicano/a indigenism. Villanueva’s romantic personal relationship to indigenous Mexico is plain in her comments on a trip she took in 1977. On Isla Mujeres with its goddess statues, she writes how she “felt a flash of recognition (as I had at the pyramids). The ancient cultures of Mexico spoke loudly to me, which translated into poetry” (“Villanueva” 317). *Indigenismo* is also a salient aspect of the work of the feminist Mexican poet and novelist Rosario Castellanos (cf. Borsò 273-74), who has influenced

indigenism here. It reflects an ideological heterogeneity that is also cultivated by other Mexican American and Native writers and intellectuals. The Aztec deity, of whom Rosa eventually catches a glimpse in a vision in the Sierra, has a “Mayan” face (330); not to forget that the woman herself is of Yaqui descent. Evidently, none of these indigenous cultures is even remotely related to the California landscape onto which the mythical patchwork goddess is projected in the novel.

In a pointed pastoral opposition, the cult of the Native goddess is posited against the denigrated Christian religion and its white, patriarchal god. Quetzalpetlatl is a benevolent, “loving” and “gentle” goddess immanent in the natural world, unlike the stern, unloving transcendent divinity of a monotheistic, human-centered religious tradition in whose name nature has allegedly been mistreated for two millennia. By means of an inversion of traditional religious symbols, the ecofeminist myth of the nature goddess—the religious creed of “Native Person of the Earth”<sup>307</sup>—is presented as the far superior religion. This is standard procedure in much Mexican American literature since the movement. While for C. de Baca the Catholic faith was still of utmost significance, contemporary culture reacts against the longstanding repression of indigenous practices by the Christian church.<sup>308</sup> Altogether, the fact that there is an important ecofeminist kernel to the Native-based “garden” model advanced in *The Ultraviolet Sky* again highlights a major point of my argument. For all Chicana indigenism, this Mexican American literary ideology too evinces close links with dominant U.S. thought and culture. We indeed perceive a yet stronger and more

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many Mexican American women writers. Villanueva has chosen some lines from one of her poems as an epigraph for *The Ultraviolet Sky*. Regarding the primitivistic revival of Aztec myth as an alternative to modern Western civilization, I might add that Villanueva acknowledges a debt to the writings of D. H. Lawrence (cf. Ordóñez, “Villanueva” 414). Perhaps she read his 1926 novel *The Plumed Serpent*.

<sup>307</sup> Villanueva herself professes it (cf. “Alma” 1).

<sup>308</sup> Beginning with the first Spanish missionaries in the Southwest, Christians tried for centuries to eradicate Native rituals and traditions (such as *curanderismo*) as “pagan” and “demonic” (cf. Mulford and Bruce-Novoa 465). The Catholic church remained an instrument of oppression and Americanization—e.g. mass in English—into the 1960s (cf. Thelen-Schaefer 197; 183). The resultant Mexican American religious estrangement is expressed by movement authors, e.g. in Acosta’s fictionalized life story *The Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo* (1972). At the termination of his quest for his “Chicano” identity, the I-narrator Acosta critically remarks about his people’s history of Spanish and later American conquest: “They destroyed our gods and made us bow down to a dead man who’s been strung up for 2000 years” (198). A Chicana feminist literary articulation of the conflict between the aboriginal religious heritage and Christian doctrine appears in Portillo Trambley’s *Trini* (1986). In this coming-of-age novel, native Mexican beliefs and gods are favored over Catholic ones in the person of the protagonist Trini, who grows up to be a “woman of the earth” in the mid-twentieth century. For scholarly explorations of the role of religion in the Mexican American community, its culture, literature and politics, see the essays in *Mexican American Religions*, eds. Gastón Espinosa and Mario García (2008).

immediate impact of the Euro-American context on Villanueva's ecofeminist pastoralism and nature ideal than in C. de Baca's Hispano vision. Hardly pondered in the novel, this U.S. kinship of Villanueva's ideas erodes the ethnically anchored "we-vs.-they" dualism maintained on the author's part.

The ecofeminist position contains an explicit environmentalist message in a moral, political sense. The call for reverence for an anthropomorphized "Earth" as a "living" "Goddess" embodies an ethical lesson as to the proper treatment of earth for its own sake. This ties in with the German ethnologist Hans Peter Duerr's observation that "people do not exploit a nature that speaks to them."<sup>309</sup> As in the passages quoted above, there is also a decidedly anthropocentric accentuation of the earth's "beaut[y]" as well as its "Mother"-like "nurturing" and "sustaining" qualities for human beings (17; 331; 126). In connection with this, throughout the narrative and above all in the mountains, Villanueva lays particular stress on nature's "balance" and its "love" and "gentleness" as ecological ideals to be reciprocated by humans in an endangered biosphere. In keeping with her personal statement that beyond San Francisco, the U.S. and Mexico "the earth is my home" (Interview with Binder 202), her book aims to teach an ecological, in some respects ecocentric vision of universal applicability. Since environmental sensitivity is bound up with gender here, woman's supposed primal unity with feminized nature translates not just into empathy with its subdued state. It also produces a heightened capacity for "love" and care for nature. The author celebrates the female capability to "mak[e] life" (281), which is underlined by Rosa's pregnancy and the birth of her daughter. Villanueva clearly subscribes to the absurd ecofeminist tenet that due to such factors as the capability of reproduction and the nurturant capacities engendered by the maternal role, women have a special affinity with the "Earth" itself.<sup>310</sup> In terms of the pastoral gender dichotomy in the text, the female relation to the natural world is not determined by reason or materialist considerations, as among men. On the contrary, it is defined by nonmaterial, ecofeminist concerns such as "instinct[ ]" (62),

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<sup>309</sup> Cf. *Traumzeit: Über die Grenze zwischen Wildnis und Zivilisation* (1978). Qtd. in Manes (16) from the English translation (*Dreamtime: Concerning the Boundary between Wilderness and Civilization*).

<sup>310</sup> On this ecofeminist notion, cf. Conway and Garb 269-70. The editors of the periodical *ReEvolution: A Journal of Ecofeminist Politics, the Arts and Technologies* have expressed it this way: "[T]he traditional values and practices associated with women—nurturance, caretaking, and attention to relationships and webs of connection—are those which are needed to heal the planet" (qtd. in Zapf, *Literatur* 38).

emotions, spirituality and the body.<sup>311</sup> These go hand in hand with an aesthetic value like “beauty” and, tied up with all of them, ethical and political interests of a green inflection. To take up Herrera-Sobek’s remarks on Villanueva’s poetry in *Bloodroot*, I find that her debut novel too proposes an ecofeminist “ethical system of caring” which constructs “moral modes of behavior” “to combat masculinist destruction of the universe” (cf. “Nature” 92). This idea of women’s harmonious, “loving” relationship with the earth is a version of the so-called “ethics of care.” The label denotes a type of environmental ethics that has been enunciated most influentially by ecofeminist philosophers and theologians (cf. Buell, *Writing* 269, n. 22; also Grewe-Volpp, *Ökokritische* 74-77). It participates in the evolution of environmental ethics in America. As Roderick Frazier Nash notes, in the 1960s and 70s the new ecology-oriented U.S. environmental movement began to define the issue of environmental protection increasingly in ethical rather than economic terms—which were still of greater importance in the traditional ranching culture depicted by C. de Baca. In the 1980s and 90s in particular, the idea that ethics should be extended beyond the human-to-human level to include our species’ relationship to nature, i.e. a call for respect for the existence or intrinsic rights of other species and of ecological processes, first gained many supporters. It is an ecocentric ethical argument that can be traced far back in America—e.g. to Thoreau—and that was furthered especially by Aldo Leopold and his aforementioned “land ethic” (cf. *Wilderness* 254; 389). In spiritual ecofeminism, as represented by Villanueva, the environmental ethical argument is not only grounded in modern environmentalism’s insight into the interconnectedness of all living things and natural processes but reinforced yet by the anthropomorphization and sacralization of “Earth.”<sup>312</sup> Here we get a primitivistic form of this ecofeminist ethical framework. “If we’re going to survive into the next

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<sup>311</sup> A Wordsworthian suspension of the “meddling intellect” in one’s encounter with nature is another element of the Romantic heritage in ecofeminism (qtd. from the poem “The Tables Turned” (129), which was published in the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798). Marx has pointed out the significance of intuitive or precognitive thought to new pastoralism at large (“Pastoralism” 58).

<sup>312</sup> For a detailed historical inquiry into environmental ethics, see Nash’s *The Rights of Nature* (1989). An ecocritical analysis of the ethics of nature in nineteenth- and twentieth-century New England women’s writing is the topic of the monograph by Sylvia Mayer. A young field of academic investigation interests itself in multicultural environmental ethics. An important book is J. Baird Callicott’s survey of ecological ethics around the world, *Earth’s Insights* (1994). It also deals with Native Americans. Cf. further William Slaymaker’s article on ethnic ecoethics in philosophical and literary texts, which briefly treats Mexican American environmental writing (309, 311-12), as well as Ybarra’s piece “Chicana/o Environmental Ethics,” both from 2008.

century,” Rosa once declares in a hortatory tone, “we’re all going to have to be Native People” (247).

As initiated with the protagonist’s remembered farm experience, Villanueva’s work represents an ethnic ecofeminist goddess philosophy for humankind and the planet as a new pastoral corrective to the male world. Parallel to the “machine,” it does so rhetorically through an array of “garden” images. They are melodramatically set off from the other side, which emphasizes their stated value as well as the other’s shortcomings. This “garden” imagery is as little original as its counterpart and itself subject to overmuch repetition. Central instances are images of “balance”/“harmony,” “love,” “gentleness” and “life” vis-à-vis the “chaos,” “hate,” “violence,” “destruction” and “death.” On the whole, this novel of purpose displays considerable missionary zeal also in trying to get across the pastoral ideal. Such an ecofeminist ideal has been pivotal to the author’s writing throughout her career, often with a special environmental focus on the “Earth.”<sup>313</sup> Whereas C. de Baca was interested in portraying the lost past in her pastoral, *The Ultraviolet Sky* strives to cast an ideal vision for the future.<sup>314</sup> The inadequacy of Villanueva’s ecofeminist ideas has been pointed out before. This is especially true of the application of mythically and biologically tied feminine “love” and “balance” to the extraliterary reality and politics of the female/ethnic/human and environmental condition in our day. The concept of “love” in particular is a blatant truism. It is as fraught with idealism and sentiment as the 1960s/70s countercultural slogan “Make love not war!” with which it resonates. In view of the book’s above-discussed critical statement with its pronounced social ecological accent, it is conspicuous of how little use its nature and goddess epistemology appears to be to the vast majority of the ethnic community addressed. Rosa herself finds out that colored Americans such as those with a “Hispanic surname” are rare in the California mountains (191; 276). A wilderness retreat and self-search like hers are out of reach for most of the economically often struggling Mexican American population, and its insights provide no practical solutions for a mainly urban existence. Villanueva’s wilderness model resembles Euro-American middle-class pastoralism in its insufficient regard for anthropocentric

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<sup>313</sup> This conception bears quite some resemblance to Anaya’s New Age-oriented idea of “love” in all of creation, to be analyzed below. Villanueva may have been influenced by her male colleague. As she told Binder in 1982, she “admire[s]” the work of Anaya (202).

<sup>314</sup> This already happens in the *Eclogues*. Eclogue four is set in a future time when the Golden Age of the rural past will be restored. Cf. Gifford, *Pastoral* 20.

issues of ethnic social justice. As mentioned earlier, such wilderness pastoralism has been taken to task by contemporary ethnic environmentalists and crosscultural ecocritics. I have shared this criticism from my own multicultural critical vantage point. In addition, Jill Ker Conway, Kenneth Keniston and Marx have well expressed the reservations that are obviously in place regarding the environmentalist value of ecopastoral notions like Villanueva's. "[I]t is," they observe in relation to primitivist environmentalism, "simply not clear to critics how simple reverence for nature or premodern rituals, even if they *did* characterize premodern and non-Western societies, can help us deal with contemporary problems such as global warming, acid rain, ozone depletion, and toxic chemicals" ("New" 15).<sup>315</sup>

The pastoral ideology propounded in the narrative is for the most part of rather smooth texture.<sup>316</sup> Notwithstanding, the author also gives evidence of a certain tug of war going on inside the ecofeminist "garden," in the mountains as well as before already. This is first illustrated through the heroine herself, who frequently shows mixed feelings about her radical decision to move to the Sierra and about life there. Thus she repeatedly voices her loneliness, fears and self-doubts over the whole enterprise, especially in view of her unplanned pregnancy and the premature baby (e.g. 159, 165-66, 194, 230). The "garden" is thereby expressly brought into question, and a note of skepticism may be heard. In a change of tone from earnestness to self-irony that occurs on a number of occasions in the book, Rosa sums up her rather grotesque situation in the cabin the first winter: "Thirty-five years old, pregnant, unemployed, separated from your husband, your son thinks you're nuts, and your closest friend [Sierra] wonders what you're doing," as she starts to laugh at her own reflection in the mirror (275; similarly 254-55). Ambiguity and ironic distance also result from textual stress on the virtually unanimously disapproving reaction of her family and friends, both male and female, to the woman's desire to live "*in the mountains,*" to quote Julio (106). It is condemned as

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<sup>315</sup> The scientific difficulties posed by environmentalists' reference to the "balance" and "harmony" of nature have been commented on above (cf. my note 12).

<sup>316</sup> Fluck's reflections on a utopian novel like Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* (1888) also apply to the Mexican American ecovision in *The Ultraviolet Sky*. Fluck notes utopian texts' inclination "das literarische 'Spielfeld' außerordentlich stark zu reglementieren. Nicht Exploration, d. h. ein Erzählmodus, der darauf angelegt ist, Unbekanntes und Unvorhergesehenes zutage zu fördern, ist daher das Ziel, sondern Besichtigung, d. h. die Vergegenwärtigung dessen, was im Systementwurf geplant ist" (*Imaginäre* 316). Such unequivocality and lack of tentativeness prejudice the literary value of the utopian novel (as well as its social use). On the social function as viewed by Fluck, cf. note 124 herein.

a “bizarre” idea by Sierra, while another female friend mocks her as a “Truth Seeker” (256; 137). Earlier on, her friend Rob ironically commented on her goddess faith, “You and these obscure religions” (109). Rosa’s “Native” ideal is also thrown into doubt when she learns that the actual Natives of the Sierra Nevada, the Maidu, “make it a point” to keep away from the mostly Euro-American hippies and New Agers in the area (251). What further relativizes the pastoral vision is that the reality of the “machine” outside is very present to the protagonist. As she affirms to her German friend Rolf at one point, “To not accept our common reality, as potentially destructive as it is, is to deny our awareness, our part in it, as a part of it” (67). There is no ignoring it even in the mountains, where reality will, to use Marx’s words about pastoral since antiquity, encroach from without as “a check against our susceptibility to idyllic fantasies” (*Machine* 23). The mountain idyll is continually disrupted by references to the world below in Rosa’s thoughts, conversations with others as well as other narrative elements. An instance of the latter is, via the technique of inserting letters in the text’s segments, Rolf’s reminder to Rosa that “if [nuclear] war were waged even you up there on your mountain wouldn’t be safe” (275). The examples cited disclose the cracks Villanueva has introduced in the text’s ideological structure. It is a subtextual level of meaning that flashes up underneath the simple two-part surface. It exemplifies—Marx again—how pastoral works “manage to qualify, or call into question, or bring irony to bear against the illusion of peace and harmony in a green pasture” (*Machine* 25). *The Ultraviolet Sky* shows a basic awareness that its ecopastoral system for the human and nonhuman world is merely an ideal—unfulfillable and futile. However, this subtext only makes sporadic appearances. In the final instance, the novel lapses into a self-indulgent sentimental escapism. Against better knowledge, the principal character clings to the pastoral hope, as we will see throughout. In this evasiveness the ambivalent quality of pastoral thinking manifests itself in Villanueva’s book: what Buell has termed American pastoral’s “troublesome dichotomy” (*Environmental* 50)—progression vs. retrogression.

Concerning characters symbolic of the “garden,” there is Rosa’s deceased Yaqui grandmother “Mamacita,” who immigrated to the U.S. from Mexico. In addition to being a “machine” victim, the sage old woman serves as the chief “garden” character. She is idealized into a nature figure even in the urban ghetto. The protagonist wistfully remembers her beloved grandmother: “Everywhere [she] lived, a box of cilantro, basil and oregano followed her—and flowers, how she’d loved

flowers” (126). Mamacita was once a practicing *curandera*—Villanueva’s specimen of this important Mexican American pastoral figure—, and she “hadn’t forgotten the Earth” in the new country (126).<sup>317</sup> Mamacita’s motherly “love” for the “Earth” is also rendered in the intensely emotional image of the “tender” Yaqui songs Rosa recalls her singing to the setting sun “as though it were her child about to go to sleep” (91). The old woman is depicted as a female embodiment of the Mexican American “Ecological Indian”—the “Native Person of the Earth.” Like the “Ecological Indian,” Mamacita is an object of exaltation as a kind of Mexican American pastoral nature idol. She resembles C. de Baca’s “Papá” in this. She gains mythical stature also as an archetypal Earth Mother figure.<sup>318</sup> Mamacita forms a contrast to the male types of U.S. society that debase nature, such as “them.” In analogy to C. de Baca’s Hispano story, Villanueva thus generates a “garden” myth that is just as biased in terms of gender and ethnicity as the castigated “machine.”

Mamacita also plays the role of a major guide for the heroine and, by implication, the reader in the memories and dreams Rosa has in the course of her ecopastoral quest. Besides teaching her to heed oneiric messages (58), the old woman is described as the first person to instill a traditional Mexican American “love” for the earth in her grandchild. In her capacity as a “garden” representative and mentor figure in the narrative, Mamacita is the author’s literary tribute to her own grandmother and highly esteemed ancestors.<sup>319</sup> The fictional Mamacita is also an ecofeminist addition to the long line of grandparents or grandparent figures in contemporary Mexican American literature, a character prefigured by “Papá.” In conformity with today’s works’ frequent use of quest/bildungsroman structures, these literary types commonly function as mentors teaching the community’s cultural heritage to the young (as, e.g., also in Native writing). A paradigmatic instance is

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<sup>317</sup> Though believing “them,” as U.S. society is referred to, she’d “come to believe she was poor” (126). Much like C. de Baca, Villanueva here takes up bucolic ideals of the simplicity and nonmaterialist, emotionally and spiritually enriching aspects of traditional rural culture, while criticizing U.S. materialism.

<sup>318</sup> Alejandro Morales has inspected the Earth Mother archetype and its function in the mythicization of the grandmother figure in *Poems* (“Terra”).

<sup>319</sup> As a writer, Villanueva actually considers herself a “Mamacita” by now (“Abundance” 54). She affirms that “[o]ur ancestors give us the courage to continue, and I believe we will continue . . . to survive, thrive. To evolve [as a species]. They give me the irrational courage to continue to write. To remember,” “to remember to love, all that yearns to be. Created” (“Abundance” 53; “Villanueva” 324).

Anaya's wise old *curandera* Ultima.<sup>320</sup> The character of "Mamacita" is a permanent fixture in Villanueva's literary cosmos: she returns with practically no variation whatsoever as a pastoral guide for the female protagonist throughout her writings, poetic as well as fictional.

## 2.4. The Mountain Garden

### 2.4.1. The Wilderness

The wilderness of the Sierra Nevada is the principal "garden" setting in the novel, the place where the main character gradually comprehends what the goddess is all about. As a pastoral space drawn from Villanueva's own life, the California mountains also figure elsewhere in her works. Rosa reenacts the classic American "pastoral impulse" to retreat from the dominant culture in search of a life in greater proximity to nature, as described by Marx in reference to Euro-American pastoral ("Pastoralism" 54, 55; Afterword 378). She gives up her teaching job, sells her house near San Francisco and moves away from her husband and the "machine" world up into the Sierra Nevada. As a "woman-escapee," which she calls herself elsewhere (41), she feels a strong need to "live by myself" in pursuit of her ecofeminist aspirations (61, 75, 78), and paint in what might be termed "a cabin of her own." She finds it in Lupine Meadows, an extremely remote village, in a dwelling nearly entirely hidden by the forest (9; 113, 165). Although she is critical of the regnant progress, we again notice splits in the pastoral ideal here. They are due to what I see as Rosa's double consciousness (Marx) as she mediates between the spheres. Even as she follows the

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<sup>320</sup> For a discussion of the role of the *abuelita* (the affectionate diminutive of "grandmother") in Mexican American women's poetry, cf. Rebolledo's article thus titled. Studying the work of Villanueva, Cervantes and Mora, among others, Rebolledo shows that the *abuelita* has an important guiding function in the female quest for identity as she transmits cultural traditions and other values for life (148-49 and passim). Prior to Anaya's *curandera*, a male old teacher figure appears in another Chicano movement classic, Miguel Méndez M.'s short story "Tata Casehua" (1968). The titular protagonist is a wise Sonoran desert Yaqui who instructs his young heir in the indigenous tradition. Written within the ambience of cultural nationalist indigenism, Méndez's narrative also voices what might be called ecopastoral protest against the *yori* ("white man") with his "machines" and "mechanized words," who has destroyed northwestern Mexico's native culture (53).

Thoreauvian, “quintessential pastoral injunction” to “Simplify, simplify” (Marx, “Future” 214; *Walden* 173), she does so without abjuring many amenities of the modern civilization she has fled—as Marx has argued for new pastoralism in general. Her cabin, for example, is perfectly outfitted, complete with heating, phone, refrigerator, stereo, high-intensity lamps for painting and San Francisco-bought wine and foods (e.g. 194, 222, 239). Moreover, to avoid “cabin fever,” she regularly “escape[s]” back into “town” for a little while, i.e. the nearby county seat Quincy (118; 257; 221).<sup>321</sup> Inextricable ambivalences like these are part of the waverings within the pastoral view of things.

Rosa’s withdrawal to the mountains is motivated by an ecofeminist wilderness ideal that is material to her goddess belief. Her initially quite naive romanticization of the wilds shows in her anticipatory reflections on Lupine Meadows:

It’d intrigued her, this invisible place where purple lupine must grow in dense, rich clusters. Lupine, the wolf. Were there wolves there? she’d wondered, seeing a running wolf in her mind’s eye, strong, thin muzzle to the ground. Bears, mountain lions, rattlesnakes, coyotes, snow and ice—these would be there and she’d never lived within proximity to any of them. (9)

Within the “garden” the mountain setting is “wilder” than the woman’s country farm or the backyard garden of her suburban house, which are previous, traditional middle-landscape stations of her quest. To get away from Julio, she liked to spend summer nights in the garden, in a “small wild spot” where the grass “felt better than any bed ever could” (10). Her husband, however, intruded into the idyll (11). This is an ecofeminist type of the sudden entrance of the “machine” into the “garden,” as Marx has called this characteristic American literary pastoral episode represented by the Hawthornian *Sleepy Hollow* experience (cf. note 80 herein).<sup>322</sup> Now not even the rural landscape can satisfy the ecofeminist seeker any longer. As she muses in an inner monologue on her move away from San Francisco while passing through the agricultural central valley of California: “Cows graze, black, against the shock of green here, the dry, dead grasses there. Tame horses stand still. Nothing really runs.

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<sup>321</sup> It is a pull towards civilization that not even the crankiest hermits like Thoreau—“in homeopathic doses” (*Walden* 228)—or Abbey could entirely resist. A dual new pastoral stance is also evinced by California poet Gary Snyder. His vision for the planet, as stated in one of the 1974 *Turtle Island*’s prose pieces (“Four Changes”), does not involve a rejection of civilization. Rather, his ideal is “[c]omputer technicians who run the plant part of the year and walk along with the Elk in their migrations during the rest” (100) (cf. also Nash, *Wilderness* 246-47).

<sup>322</sup> Besides, Rosa was “disappointed” because the stars were always watered down with “too much city glare” in her backyard (11).

Nothing seems to be filled with what will not let me rest until I come to it” (159). In this excerpt the novelist uses a succession of images of domestication, lack of motion and “dry”/“dead[ness]” in portraying the rural setting. It serves as a symbolic reflection of the protagonist/nature’s state of domination. These images are sharply distinct from those of the “running wolf” and other wild animals as well as the “dense, rich” growth of wild plants in the mountains, in her mental picture quoted before. The separation of the sexes is also reinforced in the wilderness. An ecofeminist of Rosa’s make is indeed more “afraid” of humans, particularly men, than of the Sierra’s (sparse) wild animal population (335; 87). She feels “safer” up there than back in San Francisco, “safer than I’ve ever felt anywhere” (339). In one of its immediate uses to the woman, the mountain wilderness with its “visually exhilarating” peaks is idealized as an ecofeminist sanctuary: a place of comfort, happiness and “freedom” (178; 340) away from the city, Julio and all men. Nature becomes a paradisiacal haven, as it already has for the precontemporary Hispana woman C. de Baca. This haven took a very different shape there, to be sure, but both forms are traceable to the ancient pastoral dream of nature.

The wolf Rosa mentions is a major image in the gendered wilderness concept. This long-extinct wild animal (332) figuratively represents her condition and development in the mountains as the action progresses.<sup>323</sup> The image of the wolf, which repeats itself in Villanueva’s writing, is an important ecofeminist symbol. It also appears as a literary motif in the Beat poetess Diane di Prima’s epic poem *Loba* (first publ. in 1978), whose focal figure is the mythical wolf goddess (*loba* being Spanish for “she-wolf”).<sup>324</sup> As portrayed in *The Ultraviolet Sky*, Rosa’s mountain

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<sup>323</sup> The animal stands for what is taken to be her instinctual, “wild” inner nature repressed in the civilized world, where Julio wants his wife to be as tame as a “nice, obedient pet poodle” (61). The woman feels a primitivistic desire to reassert the “wolf inside of her,” which has a lone, endless “howl,” in the mountains (e.g. 98-99, 111, 138, 158, 164, 165). Once she is there, it falls silent: “as though I’ve set her free,” Rosa thinks, “As though she set me free” (205). She increasingly recovers her wolf nature in the wilderness (e.g. 180-81). Part of the text’s extensive nature and animal imagery, this whole symbolism of the wolf for the protagonist’s evolvment in *Lupine Meadows* is itself overdrawn.

<sup>324</sup> Echoing the Freudian notion of the repression of natural human instincts by modern civilization and of man’s greater happiness in an uncivilized state (*Civilization and Its Discontents* (trans. 1930)), Villanueva’s ecofeminist image of the inner wolf relates especially to the work of the contemporary Mexican American Jungian psychoanalyst, poet and story collector Clarissa Pinkola Estés. Her bestselling 1992 book *Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype* focuses on, as she puts it in the introduction, the “wild and innate instinctual Self” supposedly present within every woman. Estés believes “Wild Woman” to be as “endangered [a] species” as “[w]ildlife” (5; 1). The wolf in Villanueva also ties in with the ideas expounded in a prominent early work of ecofeminist thought, *Woman and Nature: The Roaring inside Her* by Susan Griffin (1978). As for Villanueva’s other writing, there is, e.g., her poem “Wolf at the Door;” it opens

“garden” is a kind of woman’s “wild zone,” to use Chicana critic Cordelia Chávez Candelaria’s well-known phrase, and a literal one at that.<sup>325</sup>

The nostalgic glorification of wild(er)ness by Villanueva belongs to the enormous contemporary American and Western revaluation and idealization of the dwindling wilderness, as well as, in some quarters, of being “wild.”<sup>326</sup> As Nash notes, the positive reconsideration of the forest—once the Puritans’ “howling wilderness” in the American imagination—and unspoilt nature as a place of escape and of potential spiritual and moral regeneration and redemption set in with the Romantics in the age of industrialization. In the U.S. it gained special momentum with the inception of the ecologically focused environmental movement in the 1960s. Another driving factor was the countercultural search for an alternative to established society in the wilds (cf. *Wilderness* 251-55).<sup>327</sup> In Villanueva’s novel the latter is represented by the mainly white hippies with which California’s mountains are peopled. Ecocritic Love has properly argued for a revision of the Marxian American pastoral setting in light of the “new pastoral” in U.S. literature, especially western, in times of environmental decline. He writes, “[w]ild nature has replaced the traditional middle state of the garden and the rural landscape as the locus of stability and value, the seat of instruction” (“*Arcadia*” 203).<sup>328</sup> This is precisely what happens in Villanueva. The pastoral space of C. de Baca’s ranching memoir has been replaced with the Sierra Nevada. As do many contemporary pastoralists in opposition to techno-urban

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*Desire*, specifically the section titled “Howling.” In the poem a woman with “wild” hair and a she-wolf that has slipped into a supermarket smelling of “boredom” and “fear” “howl[ ]” over the state of the world they live in (3-4). This is a clear allusion to Ginsberg’s *Howl and Other Poems* (1956), in particular “A Supermarket in California.” On Villanueva’s view of Ginsberg, see also note 290 above. A stronger interest in a rehabilitation of the wolf as an actual creature rather than turning it once again into little more than an ideological symbol, as ecofeminism does, is evident in the celebrated nonfictional *Of Wolves and Men* by nature writer Barry Lopez (1978).

<sup>325</sup> Candelaria draws on the anthropologists Edwin and Shirley Ardener’s description as a “wild zone” of the separate political and cultural space that women inhabit in the societies studied. She suggests the phrase as a metaphor for reading Mexican American women’s experience in the U.S. as depicted in their literature (21; 24).

<sup>326</sup> In the 1980s only about two percent of the contiguous forty-eight United States remained wild (cf. Nash, *Wilderness* 248).

<sup>327</sup> Nash’s *Wilderness and the American Mind* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1967) is a pivotal exploration of America’s changing attitudes towards wilderness. An important German-authored literary study is by Ursula Brumm, *Geschichte und Wildnis in der amerikanischen Literatur* (1980). Brumm scrutinizes the eminent role of wild nature in American writers’ engagement with the past in works from 1620 to 1940. On the trope of wilderness in the discursive construction of America, see also Gersdorf’s monograph 157-72. A wider perspective—from prehistory to the age of ecology—is furnished by Max Oelschlaeger in *The Idea of Wilderness*. For a history of forests in the cultural imagination of the West, cf. further Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests* (1992). The book is the opening volume of a trilogy which encompasses also a cultural and literary history of gardens (*Gardens* (2008)).

<sup>328</sup> Cf. also my observations on Marx’s middle landscape and its redefinition by today’s environmental critics in chapter I.4.

society, Rosa believes in a new, wild *locus amoenus*. In her case, it is an ecofeminist one. It provides her with an ecological lesson that nature outside the Plumas National Forest, where she lives, seems no longer able to impart. However we may evaluate this wilderness lesson ideologically—particularly in an ethnic text like the one in hand—, from a literary-historical viewpoint it is essential to call attention to one fact: the evolvment of the pastoral ideal and its location towards wilderness in American and Mexican American culture and literature in our time. It is an evolution encapsulated in Villanueva's pastoral narrative in the plot's movement to a mountain setting.

It is an ethnic ecofeminist wilderness pastoralism that is being propagated here. Sierra once asks in a tone of defiance regarding the “eternal spiritual journey” in the mountains, “can't we spics do it too?” (79) On a camping trip to the Eel River, she jokingly addresses Rosa as “Davy Crockett” (92), the legendary American frontier hero. And Sean, albeit disapprovingly, later compares his mother's withdrawal to the Sierra to “moving to the Yukon” (120). This may be read as an intertextual reference to the “call of the wild” in Jack London's Alaskan writings. Colored Americans are seldom found in the mountains of California (276), and an individualistic wilderness retreat like Rosa's is certainly not the most common way of cultivating one's bond with the land in a culture as appreciative of the value of community and collectivism as the Mexican American one (on the latter, cf. also Perles-Rochel, “Autoexilio” 277). *The Ultraviolet Sky*, on the other hand, places itself squarely and explicitly within the U.S. cultural and literary tradition of pastoral. Specifically, it locates itself within an important strand of this history that already predates the contemporary vogue of wilderness: the taste for solitary backcountry living away from society in the wild. In literature, both fictional and nonfictional, this motif has been exploited by distinguished male pastoralists such as Thoreau, Muir, London, Faulkner or Abbey. Alma Luz Villanueva now adds a Chicana feminist perspective to American wilderness pastoral. C. de Baca integrated the Hispano into U.S. western history. Her literary successor writes the ethnic woman into wild nature, where she has been marginalized by tradition. Villanueva is thus also a Mexican American sister to contemporary Euro-American women writers of

wilderness nonfiction like Annie Dillard.<sup>329</sup> Villanueva's focus on an ethnic wilderness pastoralism in her first novelistic work presents an unusual, significant step in the Mexican American novel of the 1980s, apparently taken in an attempt to prove to the world of letters that "spics can do it too." This Chicana ecofeminist reframing of the wilderness convention of "nature's nation" again illustrates the negotiation of the pastoral trope by Mexican American authors. It highlights what Markus Heide aptly describes as "die paradoxe Gleichzeitigkeit von Abgrenzung und Grenzüberschreitung" in Mexican American literature (1).<sup>330</sup> In its cultural boundary crossing, Villanueva's book is a transcultural amalgam, with a pastoral bildungsroman story relocated to the wilds.

While she is at it, the ecofeminist author seeks to supplant not only a Euro-American pastoral archetype like the frontiersman Davy Crockett with female "garden" characters. She goes on to lash out against the male inhabitants of Lupine Meadows: Euro-American settlers and a group of cowboys at a guest ranch. The cowboys are contemporary personifications of the mythical Euro-American figure already criticized in C. de Baca's Plains portrait. Settlers and cowboys embody the white wilderness ideal in the Sierra (287). Villanueva reviles most of them as mountain types of the Euro-American man who is a racist tyrant over women and nature. Lupine Meadows is, in the protagonist's scathing words, a "'White Person's Paradise kind of trip,'" resembling in its "'White Settler number'" the "'old West'" (290; 260, similarly 287).<sup>331</sup> On the ranch Rosa encounters some "'real cowboy types'" (198; 276). They are represented by Jake, whom she satirizes, with heavy sarcasm, as the "'head macho wrangler, alias John Wayne,'" a "'certified he-man'" (212; 202). He treats his cowgirl just as badly as his horse (213-15). Meanwhile, the Mexican American pastoral heroine up the mountain is busy searching for her own, ecofeminist vision in the wilderness, contesting the grand story. I will show this in the following.

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<sup>329</sup> Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1974) is the Pulitzer Prize-winning account of her life in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. A succinct introduction to American women's writing—primarily nonfictional—about the wilderness may be found in the essay by JoAnn Myer Valenti.

<sup>330</sup> This is a central finding of Heide's study of the enactment of cultural contact in Mexican American narrative literature.

<sup>331</sup> It is a "'[v]ery conservative'" place and area, whose inhabitants profoundly resent any kind of "anti-American" activity (287). In depicting various strands of contemporary Euro-American pastoralism in the California mountains—settlers and cowboys besides hippies and New Agers—, Villanueva gives fictional expression to a point I have made earlier. Namely that, today as historically, U.S. pastoralism is certainly not always left-leaning in political stance.

### 2.4.2. Protracted Questing

In close contact with mountain nature, the woman soon begins to have special physical and metaphysical experiences. A divine “feminine presence” makes itself felt, for instance, in a remote lake “alive with . . . [t]he Goddess’s magic,” where Rosa and some friends venerate the “Earth” in some ecofeminist ritual of moon worship (367; 351). The raw, elemental mountain scenery of “[l]ight and trees and stone. Always stone—and the sound of water” (178) is described as particularly conducive to such spiritual experiences. The stones initially do not “speak” to her yet, but then she discovers that the red rock appears to “bleed[ ].” “If it does,” she muses, “we begin to understand each other” (159).<sup>332</sup> A major aesthetic procedure in the text consists in demonstrating the ecopastoral message of “balance” and “love” in the form of a whole series of similar experiences of learning and insight in the course of the protagonist’s quest in nature and the mountains. As begun with the farm, the function of this is obviously emphasis.

An important scene in this regard is a passage from Rosa’s first day alone in the cabin. With the first snow in the early fall, Villanueva writes,

[e]ach fence post had a neat, white dollop perched so perfectly that it seemed someone with an absolute eye for beauty had created the scene before her. . . . Rosa looked at the perfect beauty—yes, it was perfect—surrounding her, and she knew everything had its place. She was exactly where she had to be, as chaotic as it might seem to someone else. Downed wood, growing trees, and grown trees—dead things and living things—made up this composition of beauty. Wasn’t this chaos and absolute order: beauty? (218-19)

With the air “assault[ing] her like a dose of consciousness” in this fleeting moment between car and cabin, the pregnant woman suddenly perceives the “endless harmony” of the “Earth,” as it is phrased a bit further down (218; 232). The creation’s holistic “balance” is conceived as being based on a cycle of “life,” “death” and “[reb]irth” (232), which makes for the “perfect beauty” of it all. Taught by wild nature, this ecological ideal is applied to Rosa herself and her life’s “chaos” as part of the great “harmony” of nature (218-19). The extended quoted extract also points up the artistic failings that mark the depiction of the “garden” all through the novel

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<sup>332</sup> Blood and especially menstrual blood figure prominently in Villanueva’s works as an ecofeminist symbol of female nature. Thus also in the title poem of the collection *Bloodroot*.

and especially in the mountain section. The author gives herself over to passionate emotionalism. This includes a linguistic overdose, in scenes like the snow scene, of pastoral images of “harmony,” “perfect[ion]” and “beauty.”<sup>333</sup> Throughout, this prose also insists too much on certain emotions nature tends to inspire in Rosa and other characters. Examples are their “wonder” and “joy” at it (e.g. 217), as opposed to the “sorrow”/“grief,” “fear” and “anger” associated with the world of the “machine.” In the snow scene as much as elsewhere, Villanueva sings the praises of nature also in other highly expressive words.<sup>334</sup> Overall, her raptures over nature’s and the entire world’s ideal state are cloying and sledgehammer-like in their rhetorical structure. Let me underline here that an accentuation of emotion and sentiment is an inherent weakness of the pastoralist philosophy of ecofeminism in its linkage of woman and feeling; it is not just a narrative tool the writer uses to render the two realms of pastoral. The landscape of the Californian Sierra Nevada is indubitably beautiful. Villanueva’s ecofeminist weltering in emotions, though, in portraying her “favorite place in the world” (“Abundance” 47-48) does little to make her literary rendition—to take up Rosa’s words—a “composition of beauty.”

During her sojourn in the wilderness, Rosa also has to confront the, from a human point of view, less agreeable, adverse aspects of nature. “Desolation,” danger and “death” are presented as an integral part of it. The long winter with its snow and cold again shows this. The snowy scenery is “harsh” and “desolate” in its “beauty,” as she first observes shortly after the above snow scene (284; 220). Having at first been rather starry-eyed in her ecofeminist view of the wilderness, she now recognizes that “this beauty would kill me if I didn’t take care,” and her laughter seems “frail” in the wide landscape (235, 220-21).<sup>335</sup> These instances underscore the sublime character of

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<sup>333</sup> This may lead to passages that involuntarily overstep the mark towards the ludicrous and self-parodic, e.g. when the protagonist gets carried away with how “[p]eeing felt so wonderful sometimes, if not perfect . . .” (38).

<sup>334</sup> Such superlatives and intensifiers are “everything,” “exactly,” “endless” or—a special favorite with Villanueva—“absolute(ly)” (e.g. again in reference to the snow’s “beauty” (246)). As in censuring the “machine,” she further likes to resort to the technique of emphatic capitals, such as the wintry landscape’s “BEAUTIFUL,” “EXQUISITE” appearance (230; 219). It is a device that itself quickly stales through overuse in the text. The narrator actually makes occasional attempts at deflating all the pathos by means of an anticlimactic tonal device. Immediately after the description of Rosa’s snow illumination, for instance, she adds that “[h]er stomach complained loudly . . .” (219). Such attempts deserve mention, yet do not succeed in redeeming the overall stylistic excess.

<sup>335</sup> The cold threatens also the survival of her prematurely born daughter Luzia: suffused with “fear,” she takes her up into the wintry Sierra with its “implacable grip” (324). Another image that symbolizes the mountains’ awe-inspiring “power[ ]” is a snowstorm in the early spring, which is described as “terribly beautiful” in one of the formulaic phrases applied to natural forces like the snow

the wild mountain scenery as perceived by the protagonist. From the beginning her experiences with it are also defined by negative feelings such as “fear” and even “terror.” This is crucial to the lesson of “harmony” Rosa is learning from nature also for her own often difficult life with the “machine” (e.g. 232). In its numerous passages of nature representation, *The Ultraviolet Sky* depicts the mountains and their seasons and weather in all their mighty impact. Villanueva too turns the “Earth” into a major nonhuman character alongside the human protagonist in her environmental pastoral of the Sierra Nevada. The land becomes an actor in its own right, rather than being merely a literary stage for the human characters’ nature experiences. It is drawn as autonomous and omnipresent in the mountain section and its plot. As we have already seen with *We Fed Them Cactus*, this is an important technique for relaying ecological ideas in literature (Grewe-Volpp). It is particularly popular in wilderness nature writing and also utilized in a wilderness novel like this.<sup>336</sup> The presentation of the earth as a protagonist serves to stress the ecofeminist notion of ecological “harmony” and “balance” in humanity’s relationship to the natural world. Adaptation to nature, its rhythms and forces is especially vital, Rosa discerns, because humans are just a tiny, interdependent component of an environment largely outside of their control. As she puts it in a letter to Rolf, nature “calls all the shots” in the Sierra, there being “more forest than people” (219). It is a landscape, she reflected earlier, in which “everything [is] muted and dwarfed by the presence of the mountains, and the endless, seemingly endless, forest” (164).<sup>337</sup>

A key episode illustrative of the goal of the heroine’s search tells of her climb up the peak behind her cabin in the summer (345-48). As the setting emphasizes, this detailed episode some thirty pages before the end represents the high point of the

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(328; similarly 324). Rosa watches as the storm “ben[ds] the tallest trees toward the ground like toothpicks” (328).

<sup>336</sup> As in C. de Baca, it is precisely because nature plays such a momentous role for Villanueva that it evinces the aesthetic problems previously discussed in detail.

<sup>337</sup> Villanueva already expressed the interrelatedness of human beings and nature in her early poem “i dreamt.” Its speaker dreams of bean sprouts growing down her leg and wakes up “with dirt in / my mouth,” realizing that “we are / being sprouts / intimately connected (perhaps / more than we care or dare / to know) / to the earth . . .” (29).—Marx’s second defining episode in American pastoral narrative is the pastoral figure’s “thrilling, tonic, yet often terrifying encounter with wildness.” Wild nature reveals itself as intractable or even hostile, and the centrifugal pastoral impulse is thereby arrested, Marx says (Afterword 378). In *The Ultraviolet Sky*, by contrast, nature’s antagonistic traits, albeit terrifying, are expressly treated as part of the great ecopastoral harmony of the wilds. Especially in a contemporary wilderness narrative like Villanueva’s, Marx’s second episode does not apply very well. As I have noted before, Marx, when formulating his theory of American pastoralism, was not so oriented towards wilderness yet as are today’s environmental pastoralists. Georg Guillemin detects a similar divergence from Marxian concepts in his ecopastoral reading of the protagonist’s wilderness experience in Cormac McCarthy’s novel *The Orchard Keeper* (1965) (“Desolation” 54).

quest story and the novel as a whole. When she reaches the summit, Rosa climbs even further up on a rock. She has removed all her clothes and is “aware of the contact she felt with everything: the earth, the wind, the sun, the scratchy hardness of the giant stone” (346). Staring out at the “vastness” of the landscape of peaks around her until she feels “full of that horizon,” she dramatically screams and weeps in mourning for her recently murdered friend Rob (346). Rosa realizes that “[t]he sun was warm wherever it touched her, and the vastness was not empty. It was eternal. As eternal as transformation. And whatever she’d become, or whatever Rob had become, was gathered by her longing. She accepted that. That’s all she had, and she knew it” (346-47). In somatic and spiritual union with nature, she experiences a culminating moment of mystical identification with the earth and the universe. It is a “numinous vision of landscape” akin to C. de Baca’s metaphysical moments on the Plains, to use Marx’s denomination for the third episode of the American pastoral protagonist’s journey (cf. Afterword 378). At the very top of the mountain—“as though she’d never seen so far” (346)—, this is Rosa’s ultimate insight into the essential “harmony” and unity of the cosmos which encompass herself and the human sphere, as prepared in a scene like the snow vision. There may be “chaos,” “violence” and “wars” all over the globe, yet, she already intuits before, “the Earth’s natural sense of peace,” a “harmony of the dying and the living,” will always become “evident” from points far away, such as the mountain top (117).<sup>338</sup> On the summit the woman has thus attained greater “acceptance”—itself a key word in connection with her development—of all the “pain,” the losses and the change in her personal life and beyond (346). As to the belief that the natural and cosmic order is founded on a cyclical process of “transformation” rather than “death,” Rosa explained it to a friend not long before her excursion: “‘You know, E equals MC squared. Like my friend, Rob, believes that the sun will never die. Only matter changing. I think he’s right’” (337). Put differently, she conceives of the universe as one great interconnected, dynamic whole “eternal[ly]” engaged in a “transformation” of matter and energy. Being explicitly related to the Einsteinian understanding of matter as a special state or condition of energy (special theory of relativity (1905)), this conception of the “harmony” of the universe reduces exceedingly complex concepts of modern physics to fitting ecofeminist intentions. As such, it represents a not uncommon ecofeminist

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<sup>338</sup> Or up close, as in her dive to the bottom of a whirlpool in the Eel River (117; 83), which is another experience of pastoral illumination early in the story.

practice.<sup>339</sup> In Villanueva's works a perception like Rosa's of the "harmony" of the "Earth" and the cosmos—a "TODO [all] feeling"—recurs over and over as a plot element in her usually female pastoral characters' experiences of communion with nature.<sup>340</sup>

In the summit episode, there are also echoes of the universal mythical symbolism that underlies the protagonist's pastoral journey. Thus Villanueva introduces a fallen, once "living" tree at the top, next to which she has her vision and buries the gun (346). It is a version of the archetypal "Tree of Life" or "Cosmic Tree" located at the "navel of the earth," the "*axis mundi*." This is where one supposedly gains access to the sacred in a hierophanic experience, as in the myths examined by Eliade.<sup>341</sup> Besides, mountains have been primal sites of spiritual enlightenment for seekers and

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<sup>339</sup> Ecofeminism, Norwood points out, has, just like a particular wing of deep ecology (and parts of the New Age movement), been greatly attracted to the changed worldview provided by quantum physics, especially as described by popular interpreters such as Fritjof Capra in *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* (1975). Ecofeminists have been taken with Capra's assertion that "quantum theory forces us to see the universe not as a collection of physical objects, but rather as a complicated web of relations between the various parts of a unified whole," and notably with his suggestion that the problem is an overemphasis on masculine forms of thinking about the world. They have interpreted the new physics as offering a view of nature that blurs the boundaries between humans and animals, self and other, and reason and emotion (cf. Norwood, *Made* 269-70; 327, n. 25, 26). In the words of Charlene Spretnak, for example, who played an important role in the emergence of green politics in the U.S. in the early 1980s, "all is One, all forms of existence are comprised of one continuous dance of matter/energy arising and falling away, arising and falling away" (qtd. in Albanese, *Nature* 174). This ecofeminist infatuation with "the quantum talk of interconnectedness" (Albanese, *Nature* 177), which is clearly reflected in *The Ultraviolet Sky*, may be partly ascribed to the justified concern that the dominant culture will view ecofeminism merely as a spiritualistic women's back-to-nature movement, as Norwood goes on to argue (270). For this reason many ecofeminists stress their links with selected male domains, physics being an especially useful foil in this effort. "Like ecology," Norwood writes, "quantum physics, as described by an interpreter like Capra, questions the positivist, hierarchical image of the world from within male culture and incidentally validates from outside female culture the resistance of ecofeminism to mechanistic worldviews" (270). Concerning ecofeminist protest against atomic energy, as expressed vocally in Villanueva's novel, it is ironic that Einstein's insight into the relation between matter and energy was the most important prerequisite for achieving nuclear fission and thus the creation of atomic weapons. One might add that Native Americans have also invoked the Einstein analogy. Paula Gunn Allen, e.g., in her book *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (1986, 1992), claims that the closest analogy in Western thought to the Native worldview, which does not draw a hard and fast line between the material and the spiritual, is the Einsteinian concept of matter and energy. Although, she self-confidently concludes, even Einstein's ideas "fall[ ] short" of the Native understanding (246-47).

<sup>340</sup> The quotation is from the short story "El Alma/The Soul, Two" (147). Atop Rosa's mountain the earth's "harmony" and power of "transformation" are given a practical demonstration in an ensuing scene. In this greatly overwritten passage, the woman symbolically frees herself from the violent and killing forces of the "machine" by burying the German gun her father-in-law brought back from World War II, which Julio had pressed on her for self-defense in the wilderness (185-86, 347).

<sup>341</sup> For a comprehensive study of such sacred places, cf. Eliade's *Patterns in Comparative Religions*. The classic motif of the hero's mythical journey of separation, initiation and return, described by Joseph Campbell in his seminal work *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), has also been identified in Mexican American women's writing. See Salazar Parr and Geneviève Ramírez, "The Female Hero in Chicano Literature."

prophets around the world and throughout the ages, and so Rosa's mountain is a mythical emblem of the center of the universe and the zone of the sacred. As she expresses it, her remote peak of the Sierra Nevada, from which she will apprehend the universe, is really "the middle of somewhere" rather than "the middle of nowhere," to cite an earlier dialogue with her son (196).<sup>342</sup> In *The Ultraviolet Sky* the mountain is the seat of the goddess.<sup>343</sup> In the figuratively fraught episode of the summit climb, the presence of the goddess, who is part eagle, part snake, is symbolized by corresponding animal images. For one, the novelist uses a live eagle that appears to point the way up the mountain and which Rosa "[a]utomatically" follows (345). Early on there was already an oneiric eagle serving as her "dream animal": a sort of totem animal whose "command" led her to the mountains in the first place, and which she later recognized as a symbol of Quetzalpetlatl (269, 116). On the way to the top, "Feathered Serpent Woman" is also represented by a live rattlesnake (345-46). There is in fact a whole pattern of elaborately crafted symbolism of eagles and snakes—real, oneiric and other—which is sustained through the narrative to enhance the goddess idea.

Part of the overstated bird of prey imagery are also the various hawks that figure in the book. This is the case in another pivotal episode of comprehension during Rosa's formational process. Not long after the trip to the mountain top, she discovers a stunned hawk in front of her cabin. Though "afraid" of the dangerous bird, the ecofeminist heroine picks it up, brings it "close to her abdomen" and talks to it in a "soothing voice" (368; 366-67)—as a mother would with her baby. This act is understandably met with utter incomprehension by the men in her company; she performs it, she will later say, because of the hawk's "love" (368). As in

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<sup>342</sup> Cf. Belden Lane on the sacralization of mountains in his *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes* (1998). Lane is also the author of the aforementioned *Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality*. It is interesting to consider Villanueva's remarks on the significance of her own years in the Sierra. She has referred to the mountain, especially the peak behind her cabin, as a "[w]ondrous, terrible" place where "death and life met, daily," which allowed her "spiritual antennae" "to fully sprout" and presented her with the "key to the universe." This is the "power of the mountain," "in the Native sense of sacred presence," as she asserts in accordance with her primitivist pastoral epistemology (cf. "Villanueva" 318-20).

<sup>343</sup> Her presence in the Sierra is already depicted in a painting Rosa finished in the spring (see ch. 2.4.4). In that period she is granted a mystical vision of the goddess: she sees Quetzalpetlatl's face made of snow, rock and tree limbs outside her window (330). Villanueva finally has her protagonist find her Aztec deity with the Mayan features in the California mountains; it is a scene sprinkled with one of Rosa's numerous tear-flows, this time for "joy" (331).

Villanueva's poem "The Balance" (*Life Span*),<sup>344</sup> the hawk stands for, pars pro toto, the ecofeminist view of wild nature's "balance" and the divine "love" driving all of the "Earth's" creation. What Villanueva's pastoralists, both poetic and fictional, are shown to grasp thanks to the hawk is this: Their response to nature, even if it be as frightening as the hawk, should always balance "fear" and "terror" not only with feelings of "wonder" and "joy" but also and especially with "love." By extension, this goes also for the world of humans (e.g. 367), as Rosa will have fully understood by the end. It is the goddess's single most important lesson for the woman.<sup>345</sup> "Love" is stressed in the text as a "garden" concept countering the "hate" Rosa connects with the ruling order. In the hawk episode—a particularly blatant instance of ecofeminist pastoral kitsch—, her special respect and "love" for nature convey precepts of feminine care for the earth and its creatures.<sup>346</sup>

The preceding examination of the episodes of the snow, the climb and the hawk as well as other scenes has shown that Villanueva not only overdoes her nature description within individual "garden" scenes but also the staging of the quest plot as a whole. She structures her novel through a chain of related cognitive-illuminational experiences in nature and above all the mountains. Over the span of an almost four-hundred-page-long search, and with particular insistence on the final thirty or so pages, the lead character is practically made to move from one such experience to the next. The moral undergoes constant paraphrasing or, at best, slight modification with some facet added, such as the special emphasis on its universal dimension on the summit. In its efforts to drive the message home to the audience, *The Ultraviolet Sky's* pastoral quest story therefore proves rather tedious and obtrusive. Arguably,

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<sup>344</sup> The poetic speaker, who has herself picked up a stunned hawk by her mountain cabin, observes: "I held you, hawk— / you speak to me of / nothing less than life— / nothing less than death . . ." She is aware of its "fierce love" and closes, "I held you, wild love, / in my hands, with / a terror and a wonder" (68). "The Balance" is one of the many poems about the individual's intimate communication with nature in a collection written in the seclusion of the Sierra Nevada (cf. Dayd-Tolson 316). According to the author, the poem is an accurate expression of the meaning of her own mountain retreat to her ("Villanueva" 319). The "love" supposedly learnt from the natural world has come to be central to her pastoral philosophy precisely since the mid-1980s *Life Span*.

<sup>345</sup> It has also been implied by the rattlesnake Rosa comes across on her hike up the mountain. While she has been "repulsed" and even "terri[fied]" by snakes since childhood (337; 269, 270), she now forces herself not to run from the huge reptile: "It was beautiful, Rosa thought, involuntarily . . ." (346). This passage reminds one of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's spellbound Ancient Mariner. He is redeemed when he suddenly recognizes the beauty of the watersnakes as God's creatures and, in a gush of love, blesses them (246). In the Mexican American work, snakes like the rattler, which symbolize the goddess along with eagles and hawks, are themselves important animal synecdoches of the perceived "balance" and "beauty" of the earth, as well as of the need for "love" on man's part.

<sup>346</sup> The same may be said about an antecedent episode in which she demonstrates "gentl[eness]" with an unruly horse maltreated by Jake the cowboy (213-14).

the dominance of the cultural purpose even leads to an unintended disruption of the aesthetic/fictional illusion in this illusionistic work of ethnic feminist literature. A contrived, artificial set-up of the plot as in Villanueva has a tendency to do this, Werner Wolf explains, for it violates the principle of “*celare artem*.”<sup>347</sup> This impression of contrivedness is further deepened by the role of the omniscient narrative voice. The narrator, who acts as the author’s mouthpiece, is apt to intervene by launching occasionally crudely teachy outside comments on the protagonist’s current state of evolution. An illustration is the recurrence of sentences of the type “Rosa couldn’t even ask this question [of survival] yet. . . . [This] Rosa felt, but still she couldn’t say it. Say it in words” (17; similarly 98). Thus aesthetic tensions in the text and within the education story are also due to Villanueva’s heavy-handed treatment of narrative voice in her debut novel. The passages in which it occurs once again highlight what Ickstadt, in reference to Tillie Olsen’s authorially intrusive novel *Yonnonidio* (publ. in 1974), has described as “Bruchstellen zwischen rivalisierenden Textfunktionen” (cf. *Roman* 103, also “Pluralist” 269).

### 2.4.3. The Body and Sexuality

A salient feature of *The Ultraviolet Sky*’s “garden” ideology remains to be studied. Female physicality and an erotic, sexual element are of great consequence to the writer’s brand of ecofeminism. In her protagonist’s protracted quest for identity and the “Earth’s” nature ideal, the body and sexuality play a large part in what is a sexually focused thread of the main quest plot. In this way Villanueva counterweighs the oppressive conduct Rosa suffers from her husband and men in the city also in sexual terms. An important early way station in this respect is an episode of cognizance set by the ocean not far from the woman’s suburban home. She has always felt a peculiar pastoral connection to the (feminized) Pacific Ocean: “something always dragged her to the ocean,” remarks the narrator (12).<sup>348</sup> Taking a

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<sup>347</sup> See Wolf’s pieces on “Ästhetische Illusion,” “Illusionsbildung” and “Illusionsdurchbrechung.” Also cf. his monographic study *Ästhetische Illusion und Illusionsdurchbrechung in der Erzählkunst* (1993).

<sup>348</sup> The sea is another place of bucolic withdrawal that comes up throughout the author’s writings. As mentioned in my introduction, Villanueva—who affirms to “love [the Pacific] like my own tidal

walk on the beach on a day of low tide, Rosa finds a shallow little cave exposed on the cliff. The ocean “look[s] undressed” (39), and she is allowed to see a “rare, rare miracle”:

Large, pink anemones like open, exposed vaginas waved in the tide, and Rosa stuck her finger in for the usual, terrible thrill of their closing. Some of them were at least eight inches across and pussy-pink, their tentacles rising to transparency. They aroused her, definitely. Their delicacy depended on the tide, the hidden nature of their growth like the innermost labia, the menstrual flow—the woman in woman. (40)

In the rhythmic, wavy motion of the relatively long, hypotactic sentences and through a special sound effect like alliteration (e.g. “tentacles rising to transparency”), Villanueva acoustically expresses the visual image of the waving sea anemones by means of the device of phanopoeia. Subsequent to the (homo)erotic description of the anemones, Rosa climbs into the grotto. Eventually, she masturbates, “blending her body with the sea until the union was complete. A complete orgasm. A complete acceptance. Self-love without guilt. Peace, liquid peace through her body . . .,” while the wind is “caress[ing]” her face (41-42). In these scenes by the ocean, the celebration of the feminine “body,” both marine and human, highlights the narcissistic notion of radical ecofeminism that there is an important corporeal and erotic side to female “nature.” The ecopastoral ideal of Rosa’s “harmonious” and “complete,” “loving” relation to the world of nature therefore includes also an “acceptance” of her own body and sexual instincts, as she gradually comprehends. Since sexuality is, in the author’s opinion, ““woman’s center of spirituality,”” nature is, here as in other works, represented as the place where body and soul may be united to a whole.<sup>349</sup>

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blood” (“Villanueva” 301)—spent a happy, determinative period of her girlhood in Bolinas on the California coast after her grandmother’s death. “I loved the silence, peace, and sense of safety,” she would later write, “[t]he feeling of constant danger and lurking men, in the streets, was absent.” She also emphasizes her reluctance to return to San Francisco: “I hated the bright lights of the [Golden Gate B]ridge, the city in the distance, the noise of cars all around me” (311; 312). A fictionalized rendering of this early pastoral experience by the ocean may be found in part one of *Luna’s California Poppies*.

<sup>349</sup> Ordóñez points out in her feminist study of *Life Span* (62, 64) that Villanueva explores the unity of female body/sexuality and spirit not only in these nature-oriented poems. The issue is also addressed, in essayistic form, in her M.A. thesis “Women’s Spirituality and Sexuality in Contemporary Women’s Literature,” from which the quote has been taken. It is in the grotto’s ocean idyll—in a florid metaphor Rosa calls it “Quetzalpetlatl’s Sea Throne”—that she catches a first major glimpse of the goddess’s message since she began to worship her on the farm (40). Note again the mythical substructure in which the cave as an opening in the earth is a universal symbol of the realm of the

The prominence of the sexual element in the book's "garden" vision is influenced by two major factors. In the first place, a reclamation of the body and what is obscurely and problematically termed an "erotic relationship with the earth" are weighty concerns for the spiritual kind of mainstream ecofeminism the novelist adheres to.<sup>350</sup> Second, there is again a specifically Chicana feminist dimension in this pastoral set of ideas. Rosa's autoeroticism and the sexual freedom she finds in nature should also be regarded in relation to the traditional Mexican-Catholic macho culture. There, she acerbically observes, "'men have moments of freedom, release, [while] women count the tortillas and the children'" (243). The narrative strives to collapse masculine stereotypes of women and taboos of the female body and eros. As Ellen McCracken points out, the portrayal of female masturbation in Mexican American women's literature constitutes, along with lesbianism, "one of the most serious affronts to patriarchal authority."<sup>351</sup> Through the equation of women with nature, however, Villanueva rather confirms preconceived notions about the feminine body and sexuality. The intended defiance of these notions, which recurs in Villanueva's writing, is an important motif in the Chicana literary and cultural production at large. Also elsewhere in this (eco)feminist literature, wild nature, in particular the desert, has been associated with a sensual woman and female sexual release.<sup>352</sup> In any case, *The Ultraviolet Sky's* Chicana ecofeminist sexual explicitness and graphic depiction of acts of masturbation in nature has little in common with

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sacred (cf. González-T., "Universal" 141). In depicting the mystical insight in the grotto of sea anemones, Villanueva uses the metaphor of a "garland of . . . flowers"—roses actually (40; 37-38). Her recurring flower symbolism, which encompasses Rosa's given name (103), may be seen as expressive of a sentimental, naive ecofeminist trust in "flower power," in the fashion of the counterculture that coined this slogan (Ginsberg).

<sup>350</sup> On the latter, see Carr, Introduction 17. The American ecofeminist shaman and goddess worshipper Starhawk (Miriam Samos) argues for such an "'erotic relationship with the earth,'" in the belief that human sexuality mirrors a prior sexuality of the earth. Writing near a lake in California's Sierra Nevada, she has described cracks in the rock as "suggest[ive] of vaginas and their stony, clitoral protrusions" (qtd. in Albanese, *Nature* 182). Interestingly, in southwestern Native American literature the wilderness often appears as a spirit being with a clearly sexual aura, either male or female. Through humans' sexual comings-together with such spirit beings, knowledge is believed to be ritually transferred from the spirit world to the human sphere to ensure balance and harmony. Cf. Patricia Clark Smith and Allen's essay, which focuses on the encounter with the land in women writers such as Silko (177-78).

<sup>351</sup> The critic also refers to the beach episode in *The Ultraviolet Sky*. See her book on *New Latina Narrative* (1999) (152-53).

<sup>352</sup> Mora's poetry on the southwestern desert is a case in point, e.g. the poem "Unrefined" (*Chants* (1984)). It declares that the desert, with "[h]er unveiled lust fascinat[ing] the sun," is "no lady" (8). The female body and sexuality has been a much-studied topic in Chicana literary and cultural scholarship. The representation of women's sexuality by Villanueva and other contemporary Mexican American women writers is analyzed in Maier's monograph and in the 2002 piece by Elizabeth Conrood Martínez (on Villanueva's short story "The Ripening" (1984)). Cf. further a forthcoming European volume edited by Astrid Fellner, *Body Signs: The Body in Latino/a Culture*.

traditional (male) American literary pastoralism like Thoreau's. As, e.g., evident in *Walden*, the Transcendentalist conception of nature ignores the body—a legacy of the Puritans (cf. Zapf, “Romantik” 142; 110). Making the raced, gendered and sexed body explicit in American writing on nature is, as Gretchen Legler has noted, a “radical move.”<sup>353</sup> It is a rebellious move we see the Mexican American Villanueva make here, which further undermines narrative conventions of pastoral, American and Western. Marx has referred to sensual and erotic pleasure as a feature of the new pastoralism (“Pastoralism” 58). In the history of pastoral, Edward Ruhe underlines, sex is, for all the juvenile infatuations of the shepherds, all but invisible (118).

Following the beach episode as a significant early station, the story of the protagonist's sexual pastoral quest gathers impetus in the wilderness of the mountains.<sup>354</sup> The next step is consequently a human lover. He makes his appearance in the person of Forrest McBride, a young neighbor of Rosa's with whom she has a brief affair after climbing the mountain towards the close of the novel. He is one of Villanueva's few good males, i.e. typically non-Mexican American men who do not repress their “feminine” side and who are characterized as “gentle” (e.g. 278). They are Julio's opposites in many regards. Forrest performs in the part of the “wild man” in the mountain “garden.”<sup>355</sup> Rosa, it is shown, has gained the ability to return the man's “love” despite her “fear” of being hurt (368). She finds “balance” and equality with him, a “feeling of culmination . . . Not as a couple, but as a precious, separate knowledge” (367). This sylvan liaison represents her ultimate emancipation from her husband in her sexual search in nature. The Mexican American ecofeminist desire for sexual freedom—up to now enjoyed only in the form of autoeroticism—and “wild[ness]” (358, 361) is temporarily satisfied with Forrest.<sup>356</sup> He is, in sum,

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<sup>353</sup> Cf. her essay “Body Politics in American Nature Writing” (1998) (72-73), where she looks at the ways in which contemporary Euro-, Native and African American women poets write nature from the specificity of their raced, gendered and sexed bodies. In a previous article, Legler examined the “erotic landscape” in the work of the essayist and poet Gretel Ehrlich—in her view a “postmodern pastoral.”

<sup>354</sup> On the hike up the peak, for instance, prior to shedding all her clothes, Rosa exposes her breasts to the sun and the wind. In one of the text's superlative phrases for nature, they too are “absolutely beautiful” here (345). The following night, spent at the top, she again engages in masturbation (348). Both acts express, for Villanueva, a state of pastoral “harmony” and “love” vis-à-vis the woman's own body and libido in the wilds.

<sup>355</sup> In keeping with the heavy symbolism of his name, he is an “elf”-like, “wild”-haired man who prefers his lupine-filled tree house-type of dwelling in the woods to a “civilized” life with his wife and baby down in the Bay area (182, 298, 178; 358; 362).

<sup>356</sup> Rosa likes to pose as “La Gran Puta” (244, 257) in a challenging reinterpretation of the derogatory epithet “whore[ ],” which her patriarchal culture applies to women who have affairs (243). She thereby asserts herself against a cultural tradition whose representatives disapprove of her

another character conceived to serve the pastoral heroine's objective. Really, the nonconformist young man, who even plays guitar for Rosa (343, 359), is little more than a clichéd women's fantasy taken straight out of the abyss of triviality of some TV soap opera or "chick flick" cast.

#### 2.4.4. Rosa's Artistic Quest and the Role of Her Paintings

Within the ecofeminist quest plot, Villanueva attaches central significance to a layer concerned with the main character's artistic search as a painter in crisis. Nature and the mountain wilderness provide great artistic inspiration and stimulation for her. In what is also a Mexican American *Künstlerroman*, the author thereby represents the theme in an additional plot line as well as, at a further remove, within Rosa's many paintings. At a hypodiegetic level, these ekphrastically described pictures may be interpreted as intermedial *mises en abyme*. An important function they fulfill is that of a semantic plunge into the abyss in order to place added visual accent on the abstract statement.<sup>357</sup>

The time Rosa spent on the farm was also fruitful in an artistic sense. Not only her view of the world changed in nature, we are told, she also began to paint "in a completely unknown way," and her maturing art started to sell (60). Her paintings "began to mirror the Earth, the whole Earth, as she saw it," as "something distinct and alive" (126; 66). One of her major works since those early days is a programmatic ecofeminist painting just finished at the outset of the book's long flashback. As described by the artist, it depicts a view of "Earth" from space, with the continents in the shape of "a woman's body nursing her child" (29). This picture symbolizes the earth's overall "harmony" and its alleged motherly "love" and

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younger lover (e.g. 360) and of any woman who, in Rosa's provocative phrasing, "fucked who she wanted to . . . because she liked to fuck. Maybe she loved her body. Maybe she loved being a woman" (363). Again, rather than deconstruct stereotypes, Villanueva arguably caters to the old white male idea of colored woman as a willing exotic lover. Being "bad" (24, 89), an unconventional, even loose woman, is also a favored motif with other Chicana feminist authors in their attacks against patriarchy. Exemplary is Cisneros's poetry in the collections *My Wicked, Wicked Ways* (1987) and *Loose Woman* (1994). Cf. also Rebolledo's chapter on "*Mujeres andariegas: Good Girls and Bad*" in her book on Mexican American women's literature.

<sup>357</sup> See Wolf on *mise en abyme* through literary ekphrasis of a painting at a lower diegetic level ("*Mise*" 461; "Formen" 60, n. 32). John Hollander has proposed the term "notional" (i.e. imaginary) ekphrasis for descriptions of fictitious works of art (cf. Wagner 137).

nurturance.<sup>358</sup> The painting also illustrates the principal motivation, really the *raison d'être*, of Rosa's art. It is an art, she tells Rolf, that is "centered on . . . feminine themes with a, hopefully, universal message" (29). It is suggested to be the artist's job to "imagine . . . into being" the earth's "beauty" and "harmony" (117), and, as Rosa's painter friend Erica remarks, to thus remind the world of the need to "love" (142). So as in Villanueva's pastoral writings, an ecofeminist political concept of art is being proposed here.<sup>359</sup>

The "Earth" painting and the ensuing pictorial works turn out to be as hyperbolized in content, imagery, style and—being painted in every color of the spectrum (47)—color as the novel of which they are part. As it were, the reader's distance towards ecofeminist ideas is itself placed *en abyme* by this string of corny, kitschy pieces of art. The centrality of plot elements like Rosa's painting process and the works produced may also be read as an implicit metatextual and metareflexive commentary. It is, in my view, a commentary on art in general, including writing, the artistic/writing process as well as the relation between art/writing and politics on the part of the ecofeminist author. To speak with Wolf, "Reflexionen der Kunst in der Kunst werden . . . oft zu Reflexionen über Kunst und damit Zusammenhängendem" ("Formen" 78). Thus the protagonist's paintings are more than just thematic *mises en abyme* of the text's ideology. As an art form, they are also formal *mises en abyme* of the novel as art form.<sup>360</sup> *The Ultraviolet Sky* here shows a characteristic trait of postmodern narration. As Ickstadt observes, beyond referentiality and practicality the postmodern interest in the self-referential, self-reflexive aspect of art has grown in the contemporary U.S. ethnic novel (*Roman* 187).<sup>361</sup>

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<sup>358</sup> Rosa's intense artistic interest in in-space views of earth (30)—she finds its "natural" "harmony" and "peace" particularly obvious from a point as far away as space (117)—points to the writer's familiarity with the landmark photographs of earth from space that the Apollo astronauts took in the late 1960s and early 70s. According to the ecologist Daniel Botkin, "Perhaps more than any other single image or any single event these photographs of the Earth have done more to change our consciousness about the character of life, the factors that sustain it, and our role in the biosphere and our power over life. Those images from space have radically altered our myths about nature" (qtd. in Scheese 32).

<sup>359</sup> Expectably, the irksome gender distinction also extends to visual art/artistic production and its ecological commitment. Unlike the protagonist, the young sculptor Rolf does not see himself "reflected in nature" (275). On the contrary, he chooses to ignore the ecological/nuclear issue in life as well as in his art (66, 30).

<sup>360</sup> Wolf discusses the potentially metatextual, metareflexive function of *mise en abyme* in "Mise" (461) and "Formen" (78).

<sup>361</sup> Besides ekphrasis of works of visual art, Villanueva also introduces hypodiegetic descriptions of other art forms, such as music and dance, on a number of occasions. They too serve as intermedial *mises en abyme* of the ideal of "harmony" and of the special power ascribed to art in creating it. This again points up the book's implicitly metareflexive dimension. An example is the Peruvian flute

An ecopastoral painting project of major importance through much of the narrative is the so-called rainbow series, which is largely painted in the Sierra. Analogous to her deepening (meta)physical understanding of the earth during her reclusion, Rosa's paintings too are gradually developing thanks to the influence of wild nature (e.g. 117, 212).<sup>362</sup> The lilac sky painting is at the center of the woman's artistic quest in the book whose title it furnishes. Begun back in the city, it is her most significant work of art, and responsible for particular textual (over)emphasis. It depicts a black lace shawl suspended in a lilac sky (23). The image of the shawl represents Quetzalpetlatl's "feminine shawl," which Rosa imagines as "holding the stars. Really, holding everything" (300). It "comforts" the "Earth" as symbolized by the sky (23, 220). In a variation on the rainbow symbol from the other paintings, the shawl again gives expression to the equilibratory, affectionate qualities attributed to the goddess.<sup>363</sup> The focal image of the painting is the sky, whose color is meant to capture the color of the sky at sunrise or sunset: "the color of beginnings and endings, of opposites merged momentarily" (23). This sky will reveal itself as yet another—the ultimate—pictorial mirror of the novel's dominant concepts. From the first the lilac sky appears to be subject to continuous spectral fluctuations (68, 127). Becoming virtually "obsessed" with catching the elusive right shade, Rosa reworks it over and over (e.g. 25, 43, 117). She feels that a certain "conversation" has begun between her and the sky: it seems to be trying to "tell[ her] something" (68; 140, 225). Up in her mountain studio, she is making progress in this painting due to the

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music Rosa listens to while pondering the state of the world one morning. Through the music her "sorrow" is offset by "joy" in a "harmony of wholeness" (58).

<sup>362</sup> Aesthetically excruciating, the series opens with a picture of a rainbow circling the "Earth" from a spot in southern Mexico. The next painting portrays the earth with its rainbow in magnified form (47; 64). The third and final work shows a naked Quetzalpetlatl kneeling in a desert landscape ringed with mountains, the Sierra Madre del Sur. She is the "weaver" of the rainbow around the earth, whose face the painter finally sees in a vision (305-06, 308; 333). This third painting points to the goddess's presence in the California mountains: Rosa draws a parallel between the picture and her own mountains to the north (306). The series of the goddess with the rainbow again reflects the ecofeminist message connected with the creatrix. When it is completed, Rosa recognizes that "[w]ithout the rainbow, without that protection, there would be no life" (333-34). What is represented in this sequence with its progressively enlarged depictions might be considered a version of a special type of *mise en abyme*, the *mise en abyme* into infinity.

<sup>363</sup> This is further stressed through the "weblike" rose design Rosa has chosen for the shawl (23, 221). As with the weaving goddess in the rainbow series, the "web" is an important symbol for ecofeminists. Carrying both feminist and ecological meaning, it is seen as conjoining woman's creative art as a "weaver" with a symbol of nature's interconnectedness (cf. Norwood, *Made* 274). This symbolism appears in *Reweaving the World*, an influential anthology of ecofeminist writings edited by Irene Diamond and Gloria Feman Orenstein in 1990. Norwood mentions also the nonviolent protests at military installations and nuclear power plants British and U.S. ecofeminists staged during the 1980s, weaving webs around and through their metal gates (*Made* 274).

closeness of nature and the physical sky (e.g. 114, 177). Still, while the shawl and other details are increasingly taking shape in the painted sky (225; 347, 350), she continues to be dissatisfied with its shade of lilac, as is repeatedly emphasized (222, 225, 306, 350, 370). In fact, the sky piece and Rosa's other important works are all being painted at a snail's pace. The artistic quest story thus contributes considerably to the book's long-winded character, which has already been faulted with relation to the principal quest plot.<sup>364</sup>

Right before the close of the text, Rosa experiences a final moment of illumination in which she at last grasps the full meaning of the lilac sky, sitting on her porch with a view of the clearing through the trees into the valley. Rolf has sent her a brief poem entitled "The Sky."<sup>365</sup> It suggests that "the ultra violet / shadow" is again and again "purged / clean of its sorrow" (378). When she reads it for the third time,

[t]he words, 'the ultra violet shadow,' struck her dumb. That's the color of the lilac sky. That's why I can't *see* it. I'll never be able to see it. I can only witness what it does. The way it births us, the way it kills us, came to Rosa's mind. Yes, the way it births us, the way it kills us, *the ultraviolet light*, like love.

'Like Germany killed me, and a German birthed me,' Rosa said to whomever was listening. 'Like love. Like the ultraviolet sky that I fear so much, that I love so much. God-fucking-damnit!'

She wept, but the clearing that held the early morning light—that sacred light of earth and sky—remained eternal. There is no inherent evil in the universe, an exultant voice told her. A voice that rose from the center of her being. From her soul. Only humans *create* it, if they so choose.

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<sup>364</sup> Especially in view of the exaggerated accumulation of *mise-en-abyme* effects through Rosa's paintings, one might argue that an undesired breach of the fictional illusion also occurs on the artistic plot level (cf. Wolf on the anti-illusionistic potential of *mise en abyme* in "Mise" 461, *Illusion* 292-305). This effect is enhanced by the insertion of various other ecofeminist pictorial *mises en abyme*—works by Rosa and others—, which are scattered throughout the text. E.g. the hokey greetings card Rob sends to Rosa: it has a painting of a woman standing in a starlit snowy landscape with something bloody in her hands (305). This may be read as a *mise en abyme* "*révélatrice*" of the central character, anticipating the ancient indigenous folk ritual of burying the placenta after birth which she performs a little later (328) (on this form of *mise en abyme*, in which elements of the main action are anticipated or retrospectively revealed, see Jean Ricardou). Early on there is also a miniature reflection, *en abyme*, of the woman's incipient rebellion in the shape of the eccentric wild rose tattoo she gets on her abdomen over her womb (101-04).

<sup>365</sup> This piece—in fact written by Villanueva's second husband Wilfredo Q. Castaño, a poet and photographer—is another poetic *mise en abyme* (*révélatrice*).

'E equals MC squared,' Rosa murmured, softly. (378)

What the pastoral artist-philosopher—once more awash with tears—realizes now is that her “flawed,” “imperfect[ ]” artistic creation (306) that she “fear[s]” and “love[s]” is a symbol of the human world at large with its many “flaws,” its “kill[ing]” forces and self-created “evil.” This seems to include an oblique reference to environmental destruction in the form of ozone layer depletion as part of human “evil.” With the help of the poem, Rosa has also come to see that her pictorial sky is dynamic. Ever-changing in shade like the physical sky she has been inspired by (68), her sky’s color is ultraviolet rather than lilac, i.e. a color *beyond* any lilac she may ever hope to capture in paint or even see. The lilac sky is, in short, symbolic of the cyclical “harmony” ascribed to the universe. This is exactly why Rosa can finally “accept” her sky’s shade of violet (222; 68), as she has learned to “accept” herself and human life as part of a divine creation in her cosmic vision atop the peak that summer. Most important, the reason why everything appears to be in “harmony” here is the goddess Quetzalpetlatl’s all-encompassing “love” for the “imperfect” human component of her otherwise “perfectly beautiful” creation. “[B]ecause she loves the flaw in the ultraviolet sky, and weaves her rainbow for us, endlessly,” Rosa states at the end (379).<sup>366</sup> In Madsen’s words, this “love,” “the power of feminine love to create life” and forgive its “flaws,” is “the vision that Rosa has sought” all through her quest (188; 182). The “Earth’s” “love,” Villanueva is stressing, ought to be matched by humans. To quote the treacly conclusion to this passage, “It was like saying I love you to all creation, for whatever it was worth. *And it was worth it*, [Rosa] knew” (378-79). This echoes her original motive for retreating to the mountains in search of this faith. The painted sky has turned out to be the foremost ecofeminist textual symbol in this key episode near the end. At long last, the artist’s picture may be declared finished.<sup>367</sup>

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<sup>366</sup> The final conflation of the two central paintings in this statement affirms the ecofeminist pastoral idea: As symbolized by the shawl and rainbow, the goddess will always keep the earth and the universe in “balance” through her “love.”

<sup>367</sup> The image of the physical sky is put to a similar use as an emblem of the fullness of human existence in a recent poem of Villanueva’s itself titled “The Sky” (*Vida*). There a mother tells her teenage son, who is “testing [his] wings”: “‘See that sky? / It’s only life, so / wide and enticing. / Blame no one. / Thank every one. / For their part. / In your awakening. / How you woke up. / And love the sky,’” with all its “terror” and “wonder” (119, 120).

### 2.4.5. Identity Found

Topped off with her final vision in front of the cabin, the protagonist's ecopastoral quest in nature seems completed. It is in her passage through different California landscapes forming "garden" settings and way stations—from the farm and the ocean coast to the Sierra Nevada wilderness as main locus—that the young urbanite has slowly understood the goddess "Earth's" ecofeminist teachings. This, we have observed, includes her sexual search as well as the artistic quest as additional areas of improvement and growth. By the end Rosa appears to have attained a mature identity as a woman and a painter. The narrator expresses it thus on the occasion of her visits to some family and friends in the Bay area: "though the sun had remained constant, the seasons had changed on Earth, and, just as implacably, within Rosa" (371). In terms of the text's pastoral imagery, her "balance" and "wholeness" have been restored in the mountains.<sup>368</sup> Rosa's story terminates in November of her second fall in the Sierra. Though she is, according to herself, "[not] done living in Lupine Meadows" yet and staying for another winter (369), she seems ready to return from the woods to the world below with her newly learnt message.<sup>369</sup> This corresponds to the third and final stage of the quest structure Marx has identified in traditional American pastoral (cf. "Pastoralism" 56).<sup>370</sup>

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<sup>368</sup> This is prefigured in a dream where, in the "battle within herself," a state of equilibrium is symbolically enacted in momentarily "blend[ing]" walls of color (209). The "garden" image of "life" gives further emphasis to this process of regeneration. In contrast to her condition upon first coming to the mountains, Rosa has been gradually "revived" in the wilderness and begun to feel herself "especially alive" (165; 169; 244; 235). When she makes love to herself during her night on the summit next to the fallen tree, she even experiences a kind of spiritual rebirth as a human being in the womblike darkness. A "*regressus ad uterum*"-type rite of passage in Eliade's sense (cf. *Birth and Rebirth*), this scene represents the primitivistic culmination of her ecofeminist withdrawal and immersion in the primordial wilderness, with her cabin a felt "million years away" (348). Examples such as these are central to the imagery of "renewal, birth" (85) used with regard to the woman's development in the mountains. Her evolution and the "garden" as a whole are also constantly associated with similarly trite symbolism of "light" and "clarity" (e.g. 169, 177, 228, 273, 330). This is also expressed by the image of a "woman of clarity" applied to Rosa; it is from "Sierra's" poem "On Recognizing the Labor of Clarity" (172; 207).

<sup>369</sup> The novel's final scene is set in the forest behind the cabin. There the woman utters a one-note song: "It is longing. It is praise. It is hers," the text closes (379). Her spiritual expansion as bearer of a new "song" is highlighted syntactically by the end position of the personal pronoun "hers" and typographically by the use of larger print in the last lines.

<sup>370</sup> To draw an obvious parallel across the borders of U.S. writing, Rosa is reminiscent of the heroine of Atwood's ecofeminist pastoral novel *Surfacing* (1972). She emerges from the northern Quebec wilderness as a spiritually reborn "natural woman" to return to a patriarchal, Americanized Canadian society (184). In her short story "*Bien Pretty*" (*Woman Hollering Creek* (1991)), Cisneros has ironized the Chicana artistic search as depicted by Villanueva. Cisneros remarked in an interview that as a "New Age, born-again Chicana" her artist protagonist Lupe Arredondo is a satire on Chicana artists. This, Cisneros says, includes herself as well as two recent, in her opinion romanticizing portrayals of

In summary, the “garden” ideal constructed as a Mexican American ecofeminist countermodel to the masculinist supremacy over women, the weak and the earth represents, in the first instance, a personal vision for Rosa. Over the course of her pastoral journey, she has assimilated the concepts of “balance”/“harmony” and “love” in relation to nature and the universe, herself and all of human life. She owes this also to the tutelage of the central human teacher, her grandmother Mamacita. In a scene towards the end, Rosa is thinking about a dream in which the old woman visited her for the first time since her death twenty-two years back. “Only love isn’t temporary, the words [now] came like an answer” to her, the narrator affirms (376). This is presented as Mamacita’s most important piece of feminine wisdom for her granddaughter, complementing the “Earth’s” lessons.<sup>371</sup> Rosa’s new understanding, it is shown, also leads to greater “balance,” “gentleness” and “love,” as well as an “acceptance” of change, in her relations with family and friends, notably with her husband after the affair with Forrest (e.g. 322, 353, 364, 370-71).<sup>372</sup> An “integration of opposites” has been the novelist’s principal theme. Beyond Rosa’s own quest for knowledge, the pastoral idea has been directed to women, Mexican American and other, as much as people everywhere. *The Ultraviolet Sky* indeed has what Ickstadt has termed the “therapeutic function” of a contemporary ethnic/gender-oriented novel for the readership (cf. “Pluralist” 270-71, *Roman* 182-83). This is accentuated by Villanueva’s use of the platitudinous metaphor of “a healing [beginning] deep within [Rosa’s] mind” during her mountain retreat (325). With only slight exaggeration, the text might in this respect be said to serve as a sort of step-by-step

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Chicana artists in *The Ultraviolet Sky* and in Castillo’s novel *Sapogonia* (1990) (Interview 53; cf. also Calderón, *Narratives* 206; 249, n. 49).

<sup>371</sup> The old woman’s function for the principal character is underscored by her telling name “Luz”—“Light,” as it is spelled out in the text (143). It further adds to the overall symbolism of “light.” As for the female lesson of “love,” there is also a literary reference to the perceived significance of keeping the “willingness to love” in life. Rosa quotes this from the novel she is reading, Ursula K. Le Guin’s *Tenth Millennium: The Beginning Place* (1979) (371).

<sup>372</sup> The author structurally emphasizes this by breaking the chronology of the story early on. The book opens with a fragment from a point near the end (7-9)—where this important episode is again briefly mentioned and the frame thus closed (375)—which foreshadows the altered, more harmonious relationship between Rosa and Julio (9, 375). Rosa and Julio become lovers again, but “only temporar[ily],” the narrator stresses (375). Villanueva eschews a neat narrative closure to her novel in the form of a restoration of harmony ever after, as would be characteristic of a simple work of melodrama. There is, on the contrary, no lasting marital or extramarital idyll for the protagonist, for all of nature’s wonderful lessons.

instruction manual of self-help on the way towards (female) happiness in the guise of a work of fiction.<sup>373</sup>

As a symbolic figure, the protagonist has been turned into a “wild” mountain woman-Earth Mother. She is even associated with the goddess Quetzalpetlatl herself.<sup>374</sup> An “almost mythical universal force of procreation and love for all creatures”—Daydí-Tolson’s words on Villanueva’s female characters also fit this book (313)—, Rosa is also the heiress of her grandmother. Matrilineal transmission of a feminine tradition repeats itself among the author’s women protagonists in her fictional and poetic formation stories.<sup>375</sup> As a mountain woman, Rosa is also an ethnic feminist pastoral response to Euro-American woodsmen like the cowboys. She is a kind of Mexican American Eve facing the American Adam in the wilderness.<sup>376</sup> As a wilderness novel, *The Ultraviolet Sky* also represents the specific pastoral tradition, Euro-American and other, of narrating a literary search for spiritual elucidation by mountain peaks. In a Euro-American context, explicit mention is made of a contemporary work of nature writing: Peter Matthiessen’s illuminational trek to the Tibetan Himalaya in quest of the snow leopard, related in *The Snow Leopard* (1978). Rosa borrows the book from Lupine Meadows’ lending library (265). Villanueva’s novelistic elaboration of this pastoral motif naturally brings to mind John Muir. He celebrated California’s Sierra Nevada in his own Transcendentalism-influenced nonfiction almost a century earlier—first in *The Mountains of California* (1894).<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>373</sup> With reference to Mexican American women’s literature, the idea of writers as “healers” has also been articulated by Mora. See the essay “Poet as *curandera*,” published in her 1993 collection *Nepantla*. In a wider literary context, Villanueva’s book also recalls the Romantic John Keats’s notion of the poet as a “physician to all men,” as expressed in his unfinished poem *The Fall of Hyperion* (1819). The piece reflects Keats’s belief in the social role of the poet and the function of his art as providing pastoral insights to the audience (cf. Gifford, *Pastoral* 92-93). Concerning the all-inclusive, “user-friendly” ideal of “balance” and “love” in *The Ultraviolet Sky*, it is further applied to the conflicts between ethnic groups in U.S. society. Thus we get the image of a “fear[less]” “dance of opposites” between an African American man and a white woman Rosa witnesses in a Bay area park (371).

<sup>374</sup> Such deification occurs, e.g., in connection with the third rainbow painting and its representation of the naked, kneeling goddess in a mountain scenery. This anticipates Rosa’s own kneeling naked at the mountain top when burying the gun (347).

<sup>375</sup> As for the infant Luzia, she is introduced as a “garden” woman and Mamacita reincarnate for the future. Even prior to birth, the poor baby is declared to be a “Native Person of the Earth” by her mother (232; 247). Bearing her great-grandmother’s name (321), Luzia represents Rosa’s “confidence” in the “surviv[al]” of the planet into the next century (280; 247).

<sup>376</sup> R. W. B. Lewis’s *The American Adam* (1955) is part of the “myth and symbol” school of American studies.

<sup>377</sup> Besides the works of Native American writers—Silko’s *Ceremony* (1977) is just one example—, highlands also recur as places of revelation in Mexican American literature. For instance in *Heart of*

We have further seen that in what is called the heroine's "'stand for global life'" (162, 163) the text also hopes to help save the planet. Rosa has had numerous ecological experiences and insights in nature and the wilderness of the Sierra. They range from her veneration of the earth as a Native goddess to her progressive realization of the necessity for "balance," underlined by the human dependence on nature in the mountains. She has also grown conscious of the need for "love," as conveyed in the episode of the hawk. Through these experiences of hers, Villanueva has promoted an ecofeminist ethics predicated on respect and care for nature.<sup>378</sup>

Throughout my reading I have indicated that the novel's ethnic ecological feminist figuration of pastoral critique and praise is far from accomplished. In terms of craftsmanship and the repertoire of aesthetic procedures used, this comprehends the reiteration ad nauseam of its point. The searching protagonist has been worked out more diligently than the rest of the "garden" and "machine" characters, yet cannot convince as a literary figure herself. With respect to Villanueva's goddess paradigm for ethnic people, man and the environment, I have detailed its none-too-complex and ultimately escapist character. A proclivity for wishful dreaming, such as "love's" use as a panacea for the world's ills, is again manifest at the end of the book. In the short closing segment, Rosa decides to participate in a peace march in town the next day. She feels that she is going to do this "[f]or Quetzalpetlatl's sake," for the sake of her "endless[ ]" "love" (379).<sup>379</sup> Radical white ecofeminists have not

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*Aztlán* by Anaya, whom Villanueva holds in high regard and whose 1976 novel her own text parallels in some regards. *Heart of Aztlán* tells the identity quest of the Albuquerque worker Clemente Chávez. Under the guidance of an old spiritual teacher, he returns from the mythical mountain of Aztlán with the message of "love" for the entire creation and becomes a leader of the oppressed. A feminist treatment of the motif can also be found in a novella nearly contemporaneous with *The Ultraviolet Sky*, Edna Escamill's *Daughter of the Mountain* (1991). It is about growing up female in an increasingly "gringo"-dominated 1950s southern Arizona. The Mexican American Maggie learns about the disappearing ways of the desert and about Native spirituality from her Yaqui grandmother; eventually, she becomes "the daughter of the mountain." Murphy deserves credit for the first ecocritical interpretation of Escamill's narrative (cf. *Afield* 184-86).

<sup>378</sup> An ecomessage is communicated in many of Villanueva's writings, whose pastoral visions have often been inspired by idealized indigenous examples, with or without some sort of goddess. It is, e.g., also put forth in a poem from the same period as her first novel. In "Lament" (*Life Span*) the poet-speaker makes an impassioned plea to the reader and declares that she will not cease to "lament" "[t]ill you / carry your / self like a / guest, born / to love / this wonder / (my earth)" (56). This call is reiterated in the 1985 poem "The Planet Earth Speaks."

<sup>379</sup> The image of the projected march might allude to Rosa being a contemporary (eco)feminist incarnation of the Mexican figure of the Adelita. In the times of the Mexican Revolution, the *soldaderas*, known also as *guerrilleras*, were women who followed their men into war and sometimes fought beside them. Such is the case of one heroine popular in legend and *corridos*, La Adelita. These mythologized revolutionary fighters are prominent in the Mexican American literature of the late 1960s and the 70s, as in Anaya. *Heart of Aztlán* closes with a torchlight march through Albuquerque which starts the revolution of "love" headed by Clemente and his wife Adelita (206-09). The ending

improperly been caricatured as “bourgeois and apolitical—wannabe goddesses who, running with wolves and hugging the trees, fiddle while Rome burns” (qtd. from Carr, Introduction 15). The novelist and her goddess-worshipping wilderness anchorite Rosa must also put up with these charges—not so much in terms of the “machine” discourse but certainly in view of the alternative offered. Owing to its ideological and aesthetic deficiencies, *The Ultraviolet Sky* does not succeed as a Chicana literary contribution to the environmental and ecofeminist movements. This detracts from the text’s relevance to the current ecocritical reclamation of pastoralism and pastoral literature. Let me stress again, however, that Villanueva’s essentializing, spiritualist ecofeminism is just one early—albeit continuingly influential—branch within a much larger global ecofeminist movement these days. Other types of ecofeminism are conceptually more sophisticated and proving more capable of combating social and environmental subjection in many areas of the world.

## 2.5. Conclusion, with an Overview of Villanueva’s Subsequent Fiction

In the foregoing discussion, I have dealt with what I consider another expression of Mexican American ecopastoralism: Alma Luz Villanueva’s as represented in her novel *The Ultraviolet Sky*. This bildungsroman enacts the motif from a Chicana ecofeminist viewpoint. Placing in juxtaposition Villanueva’s narrative with C. de Baca’s, we have found structural correspondences between the texts, including their limitations. There are also discontinuities and developments in the contemporary usage of pastoral, its characters and settings. Important differences and alterations are the following: With regard to genre, it needs to be emphasized that the bildungsroman as a prominent U.S. and contemporary Mexican American form also has an ecological/ecopastoral dimension. A cultural- and literary-historical watershed lies between the pre-movement Hispana memoir and the California novel’s

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of *The Ultraviolet Sky* possibly responds to this. As Rebolledo has shown for some poetry, the heroine of the Revolution is also a figure of identification for contemporary Mexican American women writers (*Singing* 57-58). Villanueva, throughout her volumes of poetry, likes to refer to her female characters as “warriors,” or even “warriors with wombs” (qtd. from “The Work of Love, Unfolding” 142).

1970s/80s Chicana ecofeminism. Among the many shapes pastoral may come in, these Mexican American women writers present two very different versions. Villanueva engages in social protest to a degree unthinkable in C. de Baca's day. As compared with *We Fed Them Cactus*, the apocalyptic metaphor has greatly gained in discursive significance in the context of nuclear danger in the 1980s. Villanueva suggests an indigenist wilderness myth as universal pastoral ideal for today's realities, while C. de Baca gave a Hispano elite account of the historical decline of the local Hispanic-Catholic stockraising culture. Both works belong within U.S. (eco)pastoralism, but, in contrast to the New Mexican text, Villanueva's shows a particularly pronounced influence of a pastoral doctrine broadly spread in contemporaneous America—ecofeminism. The Hispana author, I have noted, conceals certain negative properties of the vanished rural system: its hegemonic nature. Villanueva's pastoral, on the other hand, flees from reality to a far more serious extent, in my view, by upholding an impossible vision for present and future use. The two women's narratives thus evince different types of pastoral's characteristic ideological evasion. Another aspect comes into play here. In its ecofeminist outlook, *The Ultraviolet Sky* judges the prevalent progress, especially scientific and technological, much more unfavorably and is less inclined to get something positive out of it than what we have witnessed in the precontemporary Hispana history. Furthermore, one ought to underline the importance of the wilderness as topos and setting in Villanueva. As it rewrites U.S. wilderness pastoral in a Chicana ecofeminist sense, the book also attests to a contemporary shifting of the U.S. pastoral locus. Wild landscapes are moving ever more to the fore in the literature of Mexican Americans as well. This is also evident in recent nature writing by Arturo Longoria.<sup>380</sup>

Over thirty years of literary work, Villanueva has not tired of reasserting her Chicana feminist/ecofeminist pastoral stand against male power as well as a contrasting ideal of femininity and nature. This is also true of her recently published poetry collection *Soft Chaos*. I will complete my deliberations on the writer by briefly examining her later fiction in this respect, particularly the succeeding novels. In her second novel *Naked Ladies*, of 1994, she again renders the ecopastoral theme by taking recourse to an identity quest plot. It centers on the Mexican American

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<sup>380</sup> More on Longoria in the general conclusion to my study.

woman Alta, whose personal background resembles Rosa's. The first of two parts is set in 1980s San Francisco. It tells of the protagonist's marriage with the abusive Euro-American Hugh, which triggers a personal crisis. The ecofeminist indictment yet exceeds that of *The Ultraviolet Sky* through an unrestrained exploitation of sexual and racial violence. Sensationalist story elements also include homosexuality, abortion and fatal diseases like AIDS and breast cancer. Ecological criticism is uttered through frequent references to fears of nuclear radiation and a "nuclear holocaust" (e.g. 73-74, 90-91, 135; 230), as well as of the hole in the ozone layer (154-55, 185, 244). Part two of the narrative skips ahead to the time around the turn of the millennium. The central character has withdrawn to a farm north of the city, having embarked on a pastoral quest in nature. She has begun to revere, ecofeminist-style, the ancient Egyptian goddess Isis and gradually learns about the earth's and the universe's harmony and "love." "Love" is being taught by the apotheosized earth as well as by Alta's dead Native grandmother (113, 115, 185). This "garden" position reacts against the world in control, of which we get an even darker portrait in the future of 1999. At the close Alta has ripened as a woman. Her new strength and resilience in life are symbolized by the eponymous "fleshy looking" wildflowers called naked ladies (280; 39-40). On the whole, the author has given even greater attention to devices of melodrama in creating the plot and the characters than in the preceding novel. Villanueva's second ecofeminist bildungsroman reveals itself as a frequently intolerable soap opera. *Naked Ladies* resembles, by and large, a work of trivial literature, a "mitreißende[r] Groschenroman[ ]" in Annette Maier's formulation, complete with the "Erheiterungseffekt" attendant on such texts' excesses (121). This award-winning book constitutes Villanueva's least satisfying extended piece of fiction.

*Luna's California Poppies*, the latest novel (2002), also addresses itself to ecofeminist interests in a coming-of-age story. The text revolves around Luna Luz Villalobos and takes the form of an epistolary diary to La Virgen de Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexicans and Mexican Americans. The first section is a picaresque-like tale of the diarist's life full of adversity as an eleven-year-old San Francisco ghetto kid.<sup>381</sup> In part two we encounter an adult Luna, who has moved to what is yet

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<sup>381</sup> This section is dated in the mid-1950s. Following her grandmother "Mamacita's" death, the girl lives in Bolinas for some time. The coastal town provides a pastoral retreat in nature for her and crucial lessons in growing up before she must return to the city.

another specimen of the Villanuevan Californian farm. In its rural idyll, this ecofeminist searcher, too, becomes a devotee of the earth as goddess—here the syncretic Mexican Virgen. She also arrives at a more balanced, “loving” attitude towards the world around her.<sup>382</sup> Luna’s experience in Bolinas and on her farm express ecopastoral principles vis-à-vis the masculine “machine.” Finally, Luna has come to terms with herself as a person and a nascent poet. This also makes the book another Mexican American *Künstlerroman*, with the protagonist a kind of alter ego of Villanueva in many ways. In this work the ecofeminist quest motif has again been more profoundly elaborated than in *Naked Ladies*, and the plot and structure are less dramatic. What is new about Villanueva’s third novel is the compositional mode of the diary. In the first part, she experiments with tone and language in an attempt to reproduce a street child’s perspective and jargon. The text vividly captures her colloquial idiom, which makes heavy use of overstatement, vulgarisms and swearwords. It also has faulty grammar and numerous misspellings.<sup>383</sup> This form and style are an innovation in the literature authored by Mexican Americans. The youth section of *Luna’s California Poppies* is a Chicana re-creation of a major Euro-American novel of adolescent crisis and formation, J. D. Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951).<sup>384</sup> The youthful Luna even shares with Salinger’s I-narrator Holden Caulfield a particular fondness for the word “phon(e)y” in reference to the rejected adult world (e.g. at the very start (1); 3, 16, 22, 26, 35, 80). There are also many touches of humor through the girl’s ingenuous, unabashedly honest and often saucy voice, as well as through her limited understanding of the world as an unreliable young narrator. Such humor is already present in her prefatory “NOTICE TO BURGLERS AND SNOOPS” warning everybody to stay away from her diary under threat of a “HEX” (1).<sup>385</sup> Elsewhere in her writings, by contrast, humor and laughter

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<sup>382</sup> Here this is emphasized by the image of the California poppies (e.g. 186-87, 190-92, 232-35).

<sup>383</sup> Experimentation in typographical representation further occurs in that, all through the book, each diary entry opens with a facsimile handwritten page.

<sup>384</sup> As an adult, Luna calls *The Catcher in the Rye* a “great book[ ]” (232).

<sup>385</sup> This recalls the beginning of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) and “THE AUTHOR[’S]” ironic “NOTICE” to the reader (2). Mark Twain’s novel is the Euro-American coming-of-age classic in whose tradition the books by Villanueva and Salinger may ultimately be seen. As regards the prominent pastoral theme in Twain’s narrative, Huck has, unlike Holden or Luna as children of a later age, still the option to escape from society and “siviliz[ation]” by “light[ing] out for the Territory” at the end (229). Other instances of humor in Villanueva are Luna’s frequent reminders to La Virgen to keep the secrets confided to her—“don’t tell God . . .” (e.g. 3, 4, 10, 19, 30, 135)—, and misspelt words like “sewerside” for “suicide” (e.g. 20). The latter example shows how the introduction of comic elements may offset and lighten the melodramatic quality of an often harsh childhood story and the pastoral ideas it contains.

are clearly not Villanueva's strong point. In sum, the adolescent diarist's voice in *Luna's California Poppies* may be regarded as a noteworthy formal and stylistic advancement within the author's oeuvre. It makes the (much longer) first half of this work of ecofeminist pastoralism a better piece of writing than the ensuing section composed from the adult point of view, as we already know it from *The Ultraviolet Sky*, *Naked Ladies* and other texts.

Leaving aside the formal peculiarities of Villanueva's most recent novel, the ecofeminist subject and its narrative mediation are not exactly characterized by a great deal of inventiveness in the three books. Just as the ideology continuously repeats itself, so do the form and structure in which it is cast. All three employ ecopastoral bildungsroman search plots, whose heroines initially find themselves in similar situations of crisis in a patriarchal society with its corresponding setting and character types. These women are all depicted as achieving the same ecofeminist vision of "balance" and "love" in contact with a natural sphere venerated as some female divinity in recurring, little varied California locations. The farm is a special favorite here. Instrumental in this education process is also the direction provided by certain aged mentors, above all the ubiquitous figure of the Yaqui grandmother. By the end the questers have invariably evolved into "Earth"-wise women in the goddess tradition represented by "Mamacita." The novelist not only displays an exaggerated reliance on the autobiographical in her literary work—unusual even for an ethnic/Mexican American writer. Her ecofeminist quest model also becomes highly wearisome. Besides some of her poetry, the motif of the identity search can also be found in her collection of short fiction *Weeping Woman* (1994).<sup>386</sup> *The Ultraviolet Sky* is the first book-length work of fiction in which Villanueva has taken up a

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<sup>386</sup> In this book (eco)feminist pastoralism comes in short story form. As in the contemporaneous *Naked Ladies*, the critique draws on a superabundance of images of violence. A bucolic quest structure figures especially in the collection's framing stories. In the opening story, titled "La Llorona/Weeping Woman," Villanueva introduces Luna, a girl from San Francisco. Her "Mamacita" takes her to the ocean, where she has a mystical encounter with La Llorona. The wailing woman of Mexican and Mexican American legend is given a positive new ecofeminist interpretation as an embodiment of the "Goddess" in the book. With postmodern playfulness the author offers, in the four final stories, four different versions of the girl's life story. In each of these, an element of ecopastoral search and improvement is more or less prominent as the four women look back on their lives on or around their fiftieth birthday, meeting La Llorona again by one of the world's oceans. In the fourth and final story, "El Alma/The Soul, Four," Luna is able to reaffirm her identity as a poet. She sees herself as taking over from her grandmother, a reciter of church poetry, in her own "task" as a writer in a world of violence (158-59; 160-61). This is symbolized by a seashell, an image with which the collection is virtually pullulating.

bildungsroman pattern to articulate her ethnic pastoral concerns. I have therefore focused on it in this analysis.

The writer's abiding topic again appears not just in her latest volume of poetry, but may be expected to resurge also in her forthcoming novel *The Infrared Earth*. According to the Villanueva critic César González-T., Rosa of *The Ultraviolet Sky* there returns as the protagonist's best friend.<sup>387</sup> It might not be overly audacious to speculate that the Chicana ecofeminist project will again be molded into some sort of quest plot. And most likely, Villanueva will not abstain from populating it with her household characters in new guise, including yet another "Mamacita" figure. In the next section of this study, we will examine how Anaya has utilized the ecopastoral in his own literary writing.

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<sup>387</sup> See his recent article "Liminal" 1.



### **3. Rudolfo Anaya: *Zia Summer* (1995)**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

Rudolfo Anaya comes from the first, largely male generation of contemporary Mexican American authors, which preceded feminists like Villanueva. He has been one of the foremost and most celebrated writers of his ethnic group. Of national and international recognition, he is widely acknowledged to be ““one of the founding fathers of Chicano literature”” (qtd. in Dick and Sirias, Introduction ix). Anaya was born in 1937 into a humble rural family in Pastura, New Mexico, on the Plains in the east-central part of the state. He grew up in the small nearby town of Santa Rosa. In the early 1950s, the family joined the general rural exodus and moved to Albuquerque’s Barelitas *barrio*. Anaya resides in the city to this day. He has M.A. degrees in English (1968) and guidance and counseling (1972) from the University of New Mexico. Professor of English at his alma mater, he taught creative writing and Chicano literature for almost twenty years, until his retirement in 1993. Since then he has concentrated on writing and lecturing.<sup>388</sup>

Anaya has produced a large body of literary work across the genres. He is best-known for his fiction and thinks of himself as a novelist first (Interview with Dick and Sirias 180). Until today much of Anaya’s fame rests, and rightly so, on his 1972 debut novel *Bless Me, Ultima*. It is the classic Mexican American bildungsroman about a small boy growing up in mid-1940s rural New Mexico under the guidance of an old *curandera*. Winner of the prestigious Premio Quinto Sol (1971) and one of the

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<sup>388</sup> Biographical and bibliographical information may be found in recent overview pieces in *Contemporary Authors Online* (“Rudolfo” (2008)) and *Contemporary Hispanic Biography* (2002). Also see the chapter about Anaya in *Writing the Southwest* (16-31). Edited by David King Dunaway and Sara Spurgeon (1995, rev. ed. 2003), this compilation of materials by and about a range of contemporary southwestern authors includes an introduction to the region’s multiethnic literature and literary history. A valuable book-length source on Anaya is *A Sense of Place*, eds. González-T. and Phyllis Morgan (2000); it has an exhaustive primary and secondary bibliography up to 1997 as well as helpful maps. Abelardo Baeza has written a biography for young readers, *Man of Aztlán* (2001). Cf. further Anaya’s 1986 autobiographical essay for *Contemporary Authors* and *Conversations with Rudolfo Anaya*, eds. Bruce Dick and Silvio Sirias (1998), which assembles many of the interviews the writer has given in the course of his career. As to critical monographs on his work, the pioneering publication is *The Magic of Words*, edited by Paul Vassallo in 1982. The most important book of Anaya criticism to date, González-T.’s edited *Rudolfo A. Anaya: Focus on Criticism* (1990), contains articles by some of the leading U.S. and European scholars in the field. Margarite Fernández Olmos has authored *A Critical Companion* to Anaya (1999). Another monograph is by Herminio Núñez Villavicencio, *Las novelas de Rudolfo A. Anaya y la posmodernidad* (2002).

few Mexican American bestsellers, the work paved the way for the outpouring of Mexican American literature and publishing in recent decades (cf. Fernández Olmos 10). *Bless Me, Ultima* was followed by *Heart of Aztlán* (1976) and *Tortuga* (1979, Before Columbus Foundation's American Book Award). Together they form a loosely tied "New Mexico trilogy" of novels (Anaya qtd. in Fernández Olmos 18) on the Mexican American experience, both rural and urban, in New Mexico in the 1940s and 50s. After the publication of *Albuquerque* in 1992 (PEN-West Fiction Award),<sup>389</sup> Anaya turned to detective fiction in the Sonny Baca mystery series. This tetralogy was initiated with *Zia Summer* (1995). *Río Grande Fall* (1996) and *Shaman Winter* (1999) appeared next, and *Jemez Spring* completed the sequence in 2005. Aside from novels, the New Mexican has published various novellas, among them one with a philosophical bent titled *Jalamanta: A Message from the Desert* (1996).<sup>390</sup> The major collections of his numerous short stories are *The Silence of the Llano* (1982) and *The Man Who Could Fly and Other Stories* (2006).<sup>391</sup> Anaya also writes poetry and drama.<sup>392</sup> As with other contemporary Mexican American writers, another important focus of his is children's and young adult literature. In addition, Anaya is the author of countless essays and articles as well as several screenplays, and he has worked as an editor.<sup>393</sup> His writings have been widely anthologized and (his novels in particular) translated into a number of languages. They are standard texts in ethnic and Chicano studies curricula in schools and universities in the U.S. and beyond its borders. The recipient of a National Medal of Arts in literature in 2002 and the 2004 Luis Leal Award for Distinction in Chicano/Latino Literature, Anaya is one of the few Mexican American/Hispanic writers to have arrived in the U.S. mainstream.<sup>394</sup> Through his essays, lectures and literary editing as well as other activities,<sup>395</sup> he has

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<sup>389</sup> According to the author, the first "r" in the city's name—it goes back to a Spanish duke—was dropped by a monolingual Euro-American stationmaster in the 1880s (*Albuquerque* n. pag.). *Albuquerque* restores the original spelling, as will all subsequent novels.

<sup>390</sup> Of an older date are *The Legend of La Llorona* (1984) and *Lord of the Dawn: The Legend of Quetzalcóatl* (1987).

<sup>391</sup> *Serafina's Stories*, of 2004, is a New Mexican Hispano version of *The Thousand and One Nights*.

<sup>392</sup> *The Adventures of Juan Chicaspatas* (1985), a mock epic, and *Isis in the Heart: A Love Poem* (1998) are book-length poems. Published plays are the 1987 whodunit "Who Killed Don José?" and "Billy the Kid" (1995). *A Chicano in China* (1986) is a travel journal.

<sup>393</sup> His most recent book publication is *The Essays* (2009). It gathers more than fifty of his essays, a few of them previously unpublished.

<sup>394</sup> This is also reflected in his engagement with a major commercial publishing company, Warner Books of New York. His six-book contract with Warner in the 1990s included *The Anaya Reader* (1995).

<sup>395</sup> Thus the foundation of the Río Grande Writers Association (1974) and, in 1993, the establishment of the Premio Aztlán.

been a tireless promoter of Mexican American and southwestern literature and younger authors. He might indeed be called, as did Robert Gish, a kind of “Chicano William Dean Howells” (“Anaya” 532).

Throughout his career, from *Bless Me, Ultima* onward, the critic will detect a particular thematic preoccupation in Anaya’s literary writings. Most of them, among them all the novels, are set in his native New Mexico. He describes his work as a portrayal of “a clash of world views—the Anglo-American, in which I live and work, and the traditional Nuevo Mexicano culture of the region” (qtd. in “Anaya” 11). He has also often stated that, most important of all, “. . . I want to communicate with my community” (Interview with Sharma 151). He intends to do so by “reflect[ing]” and relaying what he is wont to term the “traditional Nuevo Mexicano/Chicano world view” to his community and to a larger audience, as opposed to the values of Euro-America (cf., e.g., the interviews with Vassallo 100, González 156 and Clark 42).<sup>396</sup> Anaya’s writings therefore deal with his people’s history and cultural heritage, with special attention to legend, myth and spirituality. As in the works of the authors studied previously, the accent lies on representational-practical textual interests. In comparison with his early trilogy of novels, Anaya has adopted a more openly political stance in his writing during the past two decades. He began to attach greater importance to the incorporation of current issues affecting his community and its eroding traditional culture, especially in an urban setting.<sup>397</sup> As evident in *Albuquerque* and the detective series, it is a refocusing in subject matter accompanied by a more accessible form and a less lyrical style.<sup>398</sup>

As an author with a message, Anaya likes to regard himself as a modern “storyteller.” He sees his work in the tradition of the highly respected old *cuentistas* (oral storytellers) he grew up listening to in his family and community. He goes so far as to style himself as a “shaman of words.” Engaged in what is “almost a sacred calling,” he is intent on “re-establish[ing] balance and harmony” and even

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<sup>396</sup> A word on denominations: As a movement author, Anaya identifies with and commonly employs the term “Chicano,” with its pride in the Native American element, to refer to his ethnic group (Interviews with Reed 1 and Vassallo 98-99; also see his essay “The New World Man” 359-60). With respect to the old Hispanic population of his home state, he also makes frequent use of “Nuevo Mexicano” (cf. “New World” 356).

<sup>397</sup> The change that Anaya’s view of the relation between literature and politics underwent during the 1980s is apparent in various interviews, such as those with Crawford (112-13), Martínez (119) and Jussawalla (138-39).

<sup>398</sup> In his conventionalist ethnic approach to literary composition, Anaya places content over form. He is self-confessedly not much interested in formal and stylistic experimentation (Interview with Sharma 151).

“heal[ing]” the reader with his stories.<sup>399</sup> He proves even more self-confident than Villanueva in his self-definition as a writer and in his universalist claim of art.<sup>400</sup> It is important to acknowledge, as Anaya himself has done time and again, the “great influence” of the Hispano/Mexican American *cuento* or storytelling tradition on his writing (Interview with Harris 50). It is an oral folkloric inheritance already observed in *We Fed Them Cactus*.<sup>401</sup> Contemporary Mexican American authors draw on this tradition in an especially self-conscious manner. Like Anaya, many come from what are, with Walter Ong, “residually oral subcultures” in the U.S. (157). For these writers verbal folkloric materials continue to serve as a major source of inspiration to this day, and are employed as “the building blocks of fiction” (R. Paredes 35, 68; also cf. Urioste 169; 177-78, n. 4, and Padilla, “Tales” 1273). Anaya emphasizes his debt to the oral tales that instructed him in the traditional ways and taught him “the magic of words” as a boy. He traces both the educational impulse of his writings, with their inculcation of the group’s worldview and cultural values, to the *cuentos*, and certain narrative techniques he uses. More on this later.<sup>402</sup>

What has always loomed large in the Hispano conception of the world in Anaya’s works, whether rustic or urban in setting, is the regional landscape and the profound interrelatedness of humans and nature in old rural living (cf. the interviews with Martínez 124 and Sharma 146; also Flys-Junquera, “Voice” 120, 130). It is a strongly spiritual connection on the human part, expressive of deep respect and

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<sup>399</sup> See the interviews with Vassallo 92 and González 157. Cf. too Anaya’s “Notes” on *The Silence of the Llano* (57), in which he also speaks of his general interests in the craft of writing. The concept of the writer as shaman is elaborated in the 1999 piece “Shaman of Words” (25 and passim).

<sup>400</sup> Anaya has always defended the regional and ethnic perspective in his writing and asserted its potential for “universality” as a portrayal of the human condition and the truths of mankind. Cf., for instance, the interview with Harris 49-50 and his articles on the writer’s sense of place (“Rudolfo A. Anaya” 66-67, “Spirit” viii-x). The pretense to literary universality and a place in “the canons of world literature” has also been a favorite with many Anaya critics (e.g. Antonio Márquez 33). With the arguable exception of the masterpiece *Bless Me, Ultima*, it is an inappropriate claim. A self-conception as a storyteller for the community is also found with other contemporary U.S. ethnic authors. E.g. Silko in her 1981 collection of tales and poems entitled *Storyteller* (cf. also Dasenbrock 312-13). Ickstadt refers to Toni Morrison, who has described herself as a writer in the tradition of the *griot*, the storyteller of the traditional African village (cf. *Roman* 166).

<sup>401</sup> See ch. II.1.1 on the Spanish-Mexican oral tradition in New Mexico and the Southwest.

<sup>402</sup> Cf. his remarks in “The Magic of Words” 276-77, “Notes” 48-49; Interviews with Martínez 118, Harris 50 and Chavkin 173. Luis Leal, in a study of Anaya’s short fiction (336-39). On the “*cuentos morales*,” which form part of oral narrative in the Hispanic Southwest, cf. further Padilla, “Tales” 1271. The significance of the tradition of storytelling to Anaya and his interest in the short story form are not only underscored by the many short stories he has written himself. He has also reworked and (co)edited traditional tales and short fiction by contemporary Mexican American and southwestern authors in a number of anthologies. Examples are *Cuentos: Tales from the Hispanic Southwest*, a bilingual collection edited with José Griego y Maestas (1980); *Cuentos Chicanos*, with Márquez (1980), and *Tierra* (1989).

reverence for the land and nature. Such an environmental attitude has been described as a distinctive feature of Hispano culture, as already noted in relation to C. de Baca. It mirrors Anaya's own, oft-professed powerful sense of place and his close tie with the rural tradition. With deep ancestral roots in the region, he is the son of an erstwhile *vaquero* from a family of cattle workers and shepherders and of a mother with a farming background. He spent his childhood roaming the Plains around Santa Rosa. These years nurtured an enduring "love of the earth" in the boy.<sup>403</sup> Central to Anaya's own and his literary characters' spiritual-mythical relationship to landscape is the concept of an experience of illumination, an "epiphany," in the contemplation of nature.<sup>404</sup> Particularly since the 1990s, with the publication of *Albuquerque*, he has been profoundly worried about the increasing deterioration of the environment. His concern for the "fragile planet" ("Spirit" xiii) is already present in his earlier work, in fact in his very first novel. He has also frequently voiced it in essayistic writings as well as in interviews. With respect to his corner of the earth, New Mexico and the Southwest, Anaya expresses a sharply critical view of the, in his opinion, unchecked growth this booming region has undergone since the 1960s.<sup>405</sup> He fears it is leading to an overexploitation of the land and its resources as well as to an overwhelming of the rural New Mexican and southwestern Native and Hispanic communities (345-49). "The environment . . . cries out to us. We see it scarred and polluted," as he drastically puts it, "The people of the old tribes cry out; we see them displaced and suffering" (351). In the face of the destruction of the land and its traditional cultures in today's Southwest, Anaya has stated his belief that "[t]his reality must affect our writings" (349). His new emphasis on topical political issues also extends to social ecological concerns of his community, and he considers it the

<sup>403</sup> Cf. "New World" 361; "Autobiography" 359-60, 365-66; Interview with Bruce-Novoa 12-13; "Epiphany" 99. His paternal ancestors, the Basque-descended Anayas, were among the original settlers of the Atrisco Land Grant, which was established in the late 1600s by the Spanish crown along the Rio Grande in what is now the South Valley of Albuquerque (cf. Dunaway and Spurgeon 16-17). In an article from 1988 ("Sale"), Anaya protests against the planned sale of the public corporation of the Atrisco grant. He still owned three shares of the grant until its eventual sale in 2008.

<sup>404</sup> He has often preferred the term "*la tierra*" because for him the Spanish conveys a deeper relationship between man and his place. See the 1977 essay "The Writer's Landscape: Epiphany in Landscape" 98 (rpt. as "A Writer Discusses His Craft"). On the role of regional place in Anaya's worldview and writing, cf. also his short piece "Rudolfo A. Anaya" (rpt. as "Writing from the Earth Pulse"). A significant more recent statement is the foreword to *Writing the Southwest*, "The Spirit of Place." Regarding critical commentary on the importance of the land and nature in Anaya, it has, aside from Flys-Junquera's work on the 1990s novels, dealt mainly with the New Mexico trilogy. See, e.g., the articles by Gerdes and Armas; Michael Porsche's book *Geographie der Hoffnung?: Landschaft in der zeitgenössischen Erzählliteratur des amerikanischen Südwestens* (1998), where Anaya is one of the writers examined (ch. IV.2), and Núñez Villavicencio (108-23).

<sup>405</sup> Cf. the essay "Mythical Dimensions/Political Reality" (1988).

southwestern writer's responsibility to "inform[ ]" and "alert[ ]" the public to this situation in his works (348, 351; "Spirit" xiii). He seeks to transmit Nuevomexicano values also in this regard.<sup>406</sup>

So as to facilitate communication with his audience, Anaya embraced a new literary form in his novels in the 1990s: the popular genre of detective fiction. This incursion into the mystery field, here as well as in other recent Mexican American literature, is part of a veritable proliferation of the ethnic detection novel as a subgenre of detective fiction in the U.S. in the last two decades.<sup>407</sup> Rolando Hinojosa first introduced the Mexican American private investigator in writing. In the 1990s Mexican American mystery fiction became an important trend (cf. Lomelí, Márquez and Herrera-Sobek 297-98).<sup>408</sup> In addition to Hinojosa, principal practitioners are Anaya and Lucha Corpi as two other established authors who have also cultivated the detective genre. Best-known for their crime fiction are Michael Nava and Manuel Ramos (cf. Sotelo 3; Tatum, *Chicano* 145).<sup>409</sup> As critics have pointed out, the hard-boiled formula of classic Euro-American detective fiction is transformed in the hands of Mexican American writers (cf., e.g., Sotelo 12-13 and *passim*). As with my earlier authors, the mainstream genre is made to serve specific cultural, social and political ends to comment on matters of race, class, gender and sexual orientation. The result are "new literary models that may be viewed as forms of social criticism and cultural representation" (Lomelí, Márquez and Herrera-Sobek 298). We should also add the

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<sup>406</sup> A similar expression of this position appears in "What Good Is Literature in Our Time?" (1998) (284, 285).

<sup>407</sup> Novelists Walter Mosley and Tony Hillerman with their African American and Native sleuths are major representatives (cf. Fischer-Hornung and Mueller, Introduction 18). In view of the underdeveloped state of European criticism on the ethnic mystery, Dorothea Fischer-Hornung and Monika Mueller's edited collection *Sleuthing Ethnicity: The Detective in Multiethnic Crime Fiction* (2003) is a notable contribution to critical discourse on both U.S. (also Mexican American) and European ethnic crime fiction.

<sup>408</sup> The earliest Mexican American mystery (which has no ethnic detective) dates from 1977, *The Waxen Image* by Rudy Apodaca (cf. Sotelo 4). Hinojosa's first detective novel is *Partners in Crime*, a 1985 addition to his ongoing Klail City Death Trip series. Since its inception in the early 1970s, this series has come to include numerous books in different genres. Set in the Faulknerian fictional Belken County, the texts actually express a sense of place of the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. In contrast to Anaya, there is no mysticism involved. Cf. also Hinojosa's widely published 1983 essay on his feeling of place ("This Writer's Sense of Place").

<sup>409</sup> As yet there is only a limited amount of research on Mexican American detective writing. The year 2005 saw the publication of two groundbreaking monographs on the Mexican American crime novel and its main contributors, among them Anaya: *Chicano Detective Fiction* by Susan Baker Sotelo and, by Ralph Rodriguez, *Brown Gum Shoes: Detective Fiction and the Search for Chicana/o Identity*. For an overview, consult also the short but perceptive discussion in Lomelí, Márquez and Herrera-Sobek (298-302) and Tatum's observations in his 2001 study *Chicano Popular Culture* (145-51). Further cf. the essays by Rachel Adams (2007) and Claire Fox about Mexican American detective fiction from the U.S.-Mexico border as well as the article on Mexican American crime writing by mystery author Ramos.

environment to the list of issues being addressed here. What has just been described is precisely what Anaya is doing with the detective form in his series. His practice underlines the dialectic of cultural synthesis operative between U.S. nonethnic and ethnic traditions.<sup>410</sup> In his first mystery novel *Zia Summer* (1995) and in the succeeding books, he instrumentalizes the hard-boiled detective genre and many of its formulaic conventions to send out his Hispano message. Rather than care to adhere strictly to the formula, he has remarked on a number of occasions, he deploys the elements of the genre as a narrative “vehicle” to “illustrate [my] world view.” It allows him to “advance [my] ideology [and] environmental concerns” (Interview with Dick and Sirias 178, Portales 29, Sotelo 167). Anaya’s departure into detective fiction is thus no radical break in his writing. As Carmen Flys-Junquera has shown, he makes “subversive” use of the Euro-American genre, which by definition is urban and realistic rather than centered on nature, myth and spirituality (“Voice” 121).

The Sonny Baca mystery quartet is set in and around contemporary Albuquerque during a little less than a year’s time. Each novel covers one of the four seasons, as reflected in their titles. The texts may be read independently of each other; taken together, they loosely form a continuous narrative. They are rendered in an omniscient third-person perspective (indirect discourse) and in Anaya’s familiar magic realist mode of representation. The thirty-year-old Mexican American detective-protagonist Sonny Baca solves various murders and other crimes in the course of the sequence. I will concentrate on the opening novel. *Zia Summer* is set during a few weeks in June, around the time of the summer solstice.<sup>411</sup> The mystery plot centers around Sonny’s first major case: the investigation of the murder of his cousin Gloria. She had her blood drained and was marked with the Native Zia sun sign. A main suspect is her husband Frank Dominic, an ambitious politician with an ecologically and socially irresponsible urban development scheme. In truth, Gloria was killed by a group of New Age nature cultists and environmental terrorists led by Anthony Pájaro, a.k.a. Raven. They plan to detonate a truck full of nuclear waste, ostensibly in protest against nuclear proliferation but really with the larger goal of destroying the world. The perpetrator of crimes throughout the series, the antagonist

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<sup>410</sup> Anaya first tried his hand at mystery in “Who Killed Don José?,” his culturally themed play from 1987. He went on to integrate an element of suspense into his novelistic work in *Albuquerque*. It narrates the search of the protagonist, a young boxer, for his father.

<sup>411</sup> It is told almost exclusively from Sonny’s consciousness. The detective already made a brief appearance in *Albuquerque*. References to *Zia Summer* are to the 1996 edition.

Raven is in fact a shaman and a modern-day incarnation of evil. Various members of the Hispano community provide traditional spiritual knowledge and practical help to the detective, which includes his own initiation as a good shaman. He solves the case and averts nuclear catastrophe in a dramatic showdown. Raven is temporarily defeated but announced to return to fight Sonny, as happens in the sequel.

*Zia Summer's* largely linear plot—and the later books—derive their basic framework from the detective story. It is structured, according to the genre formula, from the occurrence of the crime via its investigation on to the eventual resolution. Concurrently, at a second major plot level interwoven with the mystery action, the detective undergoes a formational process for much of the series. He moves from a state of alienation to the recovery of his cultural heritage tied to nature. Sonny owes this to guides like the old farmer don Eliseo and his own *curandera* girlfriend Rita. In *Bless Me, Ultima* and the following novels and elsewhere in Anaya's work, a male protagonist's quest into Nuevomexicano tradition under the wing of frequently old teachers has always played a key role in the plot. As in the Baca series, this quest has been symbolically and mythically charged.<sup>412</sup> Like Villanueva and many other contemporary Mexican American authors, Anaya has thus reprocessed the Euro-American identity quest/bildungsroman format in his own writing. In addition, he has now commingled different genres and blended in the detective novel.

Contrary to Anaya's earlier works, especially his debut novel, there is not a great deal of criticism on *Zia Summer* and its sequels.<sup>413</sup> In general, his first mystery novel has been greeted with applause by readers and critics. We have some substantive writings by U.S., French and German scholars.<sup>414</sup> A few of these studies have

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<sup>412</sup> For an extended analysis of Anaya's first three novels in respect of the identitarian search, see my M.A. thesis "Aspects of the Quest for Identity in Rudolfo Anaya's New Mexican Trilogy *Bless Me, Ultima, Heart of Aztlán*, and *Tortuga*" (Universität des Saarlandes, 2001).

<sup>413</sup> As Geuder notes, this disregard seems due to the mystery genre's continuing reputation for being merely commercial, formulaic mass entertainment of low literary value (*Literaturbetrieb* 330).

<sup>414</sup> In "Nature's Voice" (2002) Flys-Junquera furnishes short ecocritical discussions of *Albuquerque*, *Zia Summer* and the next two novels. She demonstrates how the Euro-American/Western cultural ethos is "subverted" by interventions in a genre like detective fiction for the sake of proposing a nature-centered Mexican American worldview. A previous version of this examination of Anaya's mysteries is "Murder with an Ecological Message" (2001). Largely identical, it does go into more detail about the subversions of the genre and its underlying values. On subversive elements in Anaya's detection novels, cf. also the 2000 piece "Writing against the Grain." "Detectives, Hoodoo, and *Brujería*" (2003) focuses on the utilization of ethnic belief systems in contemporary African American and Mexican American—Anaya's and Corpi's—crime fiction. Within Flys-Junquera's fairly ample research on Anaya—she already studied his writings in her doctoral dissertation ("Place and Spatial Metaphors in the Quest for Cultural and Artistic Epiphany" (1998))—, there is further the essay "Shifting Borders and Intersecting Territories" (2002). It is concerned with the transgressions of borders throughout the novels, including *Zia Summer*, particularly in the creation of hybrid cultural,

presented an ecological reading of some kind. Flys-Junquera, who has done the most important work on *Zia Summer*, uses also an explicitly ecocritical approach. Margarite Fernández Olmos must be given credit for what appears to be the first environmentally focused examination of the book. The significance of the ecological theme in the text is also stressed by Pinçonat. The three critics, notably Flys-Junquera and Pinçonat, offer some discussion of the New Mexican Hispano way of thinking that Anaya is so occupied with in his writing. The pitting of this point of view against modern urban U.S. culture, also in relation to nature and notions of ecology, has dominated his novels and many of the other works. However, not only are the critical readings of *Zia Summer*—whether or not ecological in outlook—short and not very profound. As of now there seems to be no interpretation of the book in terms of the pastoral/ecopastoral trope that is clearly at the base of the author's

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expressive and literary borderlands through imaginative spatial configurations. Fernández Olmos, in an analysis of *Zia Summer* in her 1999 guide to Anaya (ch. 7), treats its historical background, characterization, plot development and themes. The chapter is rounded off with a brief but stimulating alternative reading from an “environmentalist perspective” (116-17); it highlights the special role of ecological issues and the book’s “environmentalist message.” An essay that is, like Fernández Olmos’s pioneering reading, not self-consciously “ecocritical” but which does give attention to *Zia Summer*’s ecological dimension is that by Crystel Pinçonat. “Le temps des nouveaux guerriers” (2002) interprets Anaya’s initial mystery as well as Native American novels in terms of the ethnic hero’s fight for his oppressed land and people in a symbolic reappropriation of the conquered territory. In his book on Mexican American detective fiction (2005), Rodríguez also looks at the Baca novels (ch. 5). Examining the discourses of history, race, spiritualism and development, he criticizes the construction of Mexican American identity through Sonny as a “residual” Chicano cultural nationalist claim of ethnic unity (124). He finds this little suitable for the conditions of what he (like many commentators today) views as a postnationalist Mexican American present. Héctor Calderón makes short observations about *Zia Summer* in his 2004 monograph: in a reading of *Bless Me, Ultima* and the other novels as a Mexican American response to and a cultural and formal re-creation of the Anglo American tradition of New Mexico (28-64). Geuder has contributed an article titled “Marketing Mystical Mysteries” (2003). It discusses the reasons and effects on his writing of Anaya’s swerve into the detective genre, and addresses also the publishers’ marketing strategies. Cf. further the ecocritical Ph.D. thesis by Alexander Hunt, “Narrating American Space” (2001), on how southwestern narratives achieve an environmental writing through a practice of transformative mapping or “eco-cartography.” One chapter is devoted to Native and Mexican American authors, with brief analyses of the work of Anaya and Castillo. In a 2005 essay, Hunt ecocritically inspects the carp image in Anaya’s older writing. Another doctoral thesis is by Peter McCormick (“Re-Imagining New Mexico” (1999)). It is a cultural geographer’s investigation of the imaginative geographies of New Mexico in Anaya’s novels and of how these landscapes give a counterimage to the Euro-American discourse on the West. Reviews of Anaya’s first murder mystery are mostly favorable and at times enthusiastic. It may be generally remarked with Geuder that the large majority of reviewers of *Zia Summer*, and the later volumes for that matter, center on the cultural and spiritual theme from the author’s previous writings. Only a few read the work primarily in the context of the detective genre (see Geuder’s comments on the reviews in “Marketing” 89-90; for an overview, cf. also González-T. and Morgan 142-44). Representative of the cultural vantage point are Marilyn Stasio’s very positive 1995 review in *The New York Times* as well as pieces by Brainard Dulcy, Raúl Niño, Pilar Bellver Saez and Edward Joseph Beverly (449-52). The more mystery-minded reviewers, on the other hand—Tom Miller, R. L. Streng and Joyce Park—, are rather critical of how certain mystery elements are employed in *Zia Summer*, especially its predictability. Yet their articles are overall not unfavorable, principally owing to a positive assessment, once again, of the novel’s cultural level.

worldview and ideology as reflected in his texts.<sup>415</sup> My own analysis of *Zia Summer* as an ecopastoral mystery will provide a different perspective and widen the little existing ecocritical research on the Sonny Baca tetralogy. It will thereby add to the environmental criticism of male-authored Mexican American literature. As briefly noted before, Anaya is one of the few writers being considered now; the scholarly focus has so far been on contemporary Mexican American women authors. My reading of this Albuquerque ecomystery is also in the interest of the significant strand within literary and cultural ecocriticism that is growing ever more aware of urban ecological concerns (cf. ch. I.1). They are prominent not just in Anaya's more recent writings but also in the literature of other Mexican Americans as well as in their environmental movement. I will thus inquire into the ways in which a third Mexican American writer beset with environmental disquietude inscribes himself in America's pastoral discourse in his ecological detective novel. Special attention to New Mexico in this thesis justifies itself on the grounds that the Hispanic presence and literary tradition have been particularly intense in that region to this day. Anaya gives us an ecopastoral view on New Mexico almost half a century after C. de Baca.

As the ensuing chapters will show, *Zia Summer's* ideas and the aesthetic by means of which they are organized tie in with those of the above-studied literary texts in fundamental respects. Chapter 3.2 zeroes in on the novel's socioecological criticism of a profit-centered and technocratic New Mexico and Southwest. The land and the people are threatened by urban development in the shape of the amenity and global high-tech industries. The "machine" is personified above all in the Euro-American businessman Dominic. Through such negative representation, here and at other points in the narrative, the author refutes the U.S. pastoral myth. I will also critically discuss his general practice of couching his literary subjects in mythical concepts, along with an extensive project of allegorization. The ideological statement is opened up to debate concerning modernity's more advantageous sides (chapter 3.2.1). The next chapter (3.2.2) looks at the perils of nuclear energy and waste as a major issue of pastoral censure. The envisionment of nuclear cataclysm returns in Anaya as a plot element in the form of the truck. His book also takes issue with the residential real-estate business and its environmental and social consequences for the Hispano

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<sup>415</sup> We have seen early in this study that Marx describes a "conflict of world views" as the core of pastoralism. I would also like to acknowledge Tonn's exploration of pastoral elements in *Bless Me, Ultima* in his 1988 book (165-72); it draws on the pastoral theory Marx expounded in *Machine*.

farming and Plains ranching communities. The focus is on the Albuquerque river valley farmer don Eliseo, while the disjointed urban Hispano is represented by Sonny (chapter 3.2.3). Integral to the melodramatic means of narration is satirical exposure. As we will see in chapter 3.3, it is a satire on Euro-American ecospiritualism and radical environmentalism in Pájaro's terrorist cult.

I will go on to examine (chapter 3.4) what is presented as the ecopastoral ideal of the Nuevomexicano style of life. The detective learns about the ecologically oriented spiritual vision of "the Path of the Sun," which undergirds the "traditional" view of the world. As in Villanueva's work, it is especially interesting to study the ideological makeup. I will identify a variety of influences on Hispano thought here, from Chicano cultural nationalism to a strong U.S. New Age infusion. The sentimental pastoral ideas are again relativized, particularly through the introduction of a self-parodic subtext expressing links with the caricatured mainstream. The chapter also shows how the ideological objective and the generic/formal mix—including the oral form—impinge on the mystery novel's entertainment power as another practical textual function. This leads to serious aesthetic breaks (chapter 3.4.1). My analysis will then concern itself with further aspects of the nature-attuned, communitarian culture in *Zia Summer*. Within the text's structures of contrast also in the dramatis personae, the Rio Grande agricultural tradition is epitomized by Sonny's mentor don Eliseo as well as other old characters. Representative of the "garden" ways are also *curanderismo* and shamanism, with the *curandera* types Rita and Lorenza. Both farming and healing derive from traditional practices, but will be found to be novelistically reimagined with a generous overlay of contemporary Chicano and U.S. concepts (chapter 3.4.2). Chapter 3.4.3 inspects the important ecopastoral nature motif of the New Mexican rain. It also serves as a structuring device in the detective story. In chapter 3.4.4 I will wrap up the conceptual and aesthetic discussion of the novel and the message—ultimately also a global one—that is interlaced with its mystery and quest plots.<sup>416</sup> There will be references to the subsequent Baca novels through the course of my investigation. Chapter 3.5 will finally take a closer look at these sequels.

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<sup>416</sup> The Euro-American pastoral narrative structure of disengagement, search and return (Marx), which is clearly discernible in *The Ultraviolet Sky*, also appears in the pastoral bildungsroman-mysteries of Anaya's series. In the first volume, the quest has just begun.

## 3.2. The New Southwest

### 3.2.1. Urban Development and Its Representatives

We will again start out with the “machine” part of the ecopastoral scheme. New Mexico was an area underdeveloped for a long period after statehood in 1912. As touched upon in the introduction, it has been greatly affected by the Sunbelt boom that began in the 1960s. It turned the “new Southwest” into the fastest-growing region in America (cf. Fernández Olmos 116; Temple, Introduction ix-x, xiii).<sup>417</sup> Especially in the Santa Fe and Albuquerque areas, the state has experienced rapid economic development and growth in the last decades. Of particular importance are tourism, the high-tech industry, military and nuclear research installations as well as industries related to the latter (Fernández Olmos 116; 101-02; Gonzales-Berry and Maciel, Introduction 4). Industrialization and metropolitanization have been accompanied by substantial demographic shifts as new populations have migrated to the region from other sections of the U.S. as well as from abroad (Gonzales-Berry and Maciel, Introduction 4-5). According to commentators, this change and growth in New Mexico and the Southwest have had a tremendous impact on the land and its inhabitants: environmental degradation and social effects such as the demise of traditional rural economies and lifestyles (e.g. McCormick 12-13 and *passim*; Temple, Introduction ix-x). Anaya is concerned about these issues and has tied them up with the detective narrative in *Zia Summer*.

As was already the case in his preceding novel, a prime token of Euro-American dominance in the “new Southwest” (*Zia* 198) is the entertainment and tourist industry. It is represented by the murder victim’s husband Frank Dominic. He is the unscrupulous American businessman, characterized early on as a materialistic and “power-hungry manipulator who let nothing get in his way” (14). It is the 1990s ecological variant of the type of the bad or stupid Anglo/Euro-American or “gringo”

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<sup>417</sup> Judy Nolte Temple is the editor of *Open Spaces, City Places* (1994), a collection of essays by scholars and writers on the changing Southwest. Besides Anaya’s “Mythical Dimensions/Political Reality,” it contains Marx’s aforementioned article noting a pastoral stance vs. progressivism in the present Southwest (“Open Spaces”). Cf. also the earlier volume *Old Southwest/New Southwest*, edited by Judy Nolte Lensink in 1987. Another anthology about the region I have used in this dissertation is *The Multicultural Southwest*, eds. A. Gabriel Meléndez, M. Jane Young and Patricia Moore (2001). It includes the Mexican American viewpoint and a section on the environment. Much information and secondary literature about New Mexico, its history, culture and literature have already been provided in my chapter on C. de Baca. For historical studies, see note 162.

recurrent in Anaya's works (e.g. *Zia* 5, 161, 190) and so much other Mexican American literature. Dominic is running for mayor with a city development project for building "Venice on the Río Grande" (163). It presupposes the diversion of the river to construct canals lined with flower gardens and casinos in downtown Albuquerque—where Old Town is already a thriving tourist museum (37, 163-64, 208; 191). This plan, it is emphasized in the text and through the detective, would take a heavy toll of nature and its resources, including the riparian forest (cf. also *Albuquerque* 223). "[Dominic] doesn't understand the balance, how the river and the underground water play in the scheme of things of the Río Grande basin." "That's why [he] is so damn dangerous, Sonny thought" (*Zia* 208). As he reflects elsewhere, Dominic would run out of water and fail before long (164). Aside from the environmental damage, we are told, a New Mexican Venice is realizable only at the expense of the old Native and Hispano farming villages along the river. Their communal water rights are being bought up by Dominic's corporation, which would put an end to agriculture in the city valley area (256; *Albuquerque* 119). In short, "Dominic Disneyland" is assailed as an "outrageous" project and cited as proof that, to quote Sonny again, "the developers had gotten out of hand" (168; 208; 191). The generic label "developer" is actually found in much "ecospeak."<sup>418</sup> *Zia Summer* employs similarly harsh words for the flourishing high-tech and computer industry. Part of the New Economy of the 1990s, it also symbolizes the deleterious consequences of land development in Anaya's New Mexico. Its embodiment is Akira Morino, a Japanese multimillionaire and global businessman. The "king of technology," representative of a dog-eat-dog corporate capitalism that "sen[ds] its tentacles around the world" (268; 125, 256-57), he is Dominic's competitor for the region's scarce water. As Gloria's lover, he is also another suspect. Morino intends to erect a big computer plant in the city and introduce the latest technology to what the narrator caustically calls a "new Southwest . . . dancing to the high-tech tune" (74-75, 198). The environmental permits and the water needed to run the plant are promised to him by the incumbent, and eventually reelected, Mexican American mayor (198, 256). This is happening, the reader learns, regardless of the fact that the

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<sup>418</sup> Killingsworth and Palmer have coined the term "ecospeak" for such dichotomic rhetoric. They name the distinction between "developmentalists" and "environmentalists" as an instance of the same. Cf. their book *Ecospeak: Rhetoric and Environmental Politics in America* (1992) (9-10).

rival company Intel is already lowering the water table. It is a situation especially detrimental to the surrounding agricultural communities (256).

The first Baca mystery thus raises a forceful voice of ecopastoral resistance to a Euro-American-controlled, globally oriented New Mexico obsessed with growth and ruled by industrial and political interests. In the protagonist's opinion, given in a conversation with the Japanese businessman, New Mexico even finds itself in a state of "coloniz[ation]" by U.S. and global forces. Hispanic New Mexico therein allegedly resembles Aztec Mexico (270-71). The novel's critique reflects Anaya's personal view of what he has also termed the "destructive overdevelopment" of the new Southwest.<sup>419</sup> Here as in the following, *Zia Summer* also expresses a social ecological perspective. It parallels that of the Mexican American environmental movement which has formed across the Southwest in recent decades. As explained above, the environmental justice movement, of which Mexican American environmentalism is part, has addressed itself to questions of social ecology. This is because it has, in M. Jimmie Killingsworth and Jacqueline Palmer's words, "become clear to activists in the United States that places where the earth suffers the greatest insults are the very places most likely to be inhabited by African Americans, Mexican Americans, Native Americans, and the working poor and dispossessed of all colours and kinds" ("Ecopolitics" 196-97).<sup>420</sup> "Environmental inequity" or "racism" in the access to water in particular is, as manifest in Anaya's writing, a key issue in the Southwest.<sup>421</sup> Today's socioecological concerns have been prefigured in

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<sup>419</sup> He believes the region to be "in the hands of world markets and politics"—a "new and materialistic order." It is characterized by "a plundering of land and water, and a lack of attention to the old traditional communities," the victims of "[i]mmense social disparity" ("Mythical" 346-347). Also cf. his previous essay "At a Crossroads," in which he dwells on the drastic changes that have come to the Mexican Americans of New Mexico in seventy-five years of statehood. With respect to the concept of the Mexican Southwest as an "internal colony" in the U.S. since 1848, it is used by Anaya (e.g. Interviews with Sharma 146 and Jussawalla 139) as well as by many other contemporary Mexican American writers and intellectuals. As Manuel Gonzales points out (3-5), the "internal colonial" model was popularized by the historian Rodolfo Acuña in his highly influential radical study *Occupied America: The Chicano's Struggle toward Liberation* (1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1972). I have commented before about the problematic character of a postcolonial angle in Chicano studies. For detail about the critique of the internal colonial approach with its overly simple equation of Mexican American experience and that of the formerly colonized Third World, see Gonzales 2; 263, n. 3. Cf. also Heide 41 on this. Gonzales further notes Chicano historiography's lack of objectivity in depicting Mexicans as heroes and Anglos as greedy oppressors (1-2). We have perceived such distortions already in C. de Baca's pastoral history, as much as in later Chicano/a literature—like Anaya's.

<sup>420</sup> Don DeLillo has also articulated this in *White Noise* (1984). I am thinking of college professor Jack Gladney's cynical remark that what is officially euphemized as an "airborne toxic event" is one of those disasters that "happen [only] to poor people who live in exposed areas" (117; 114).

<sup>421</sup> With regard to *Zia Summer's* indictment of the Intel chipmaking plant in Albuquerque, one might mention that Mexican American and Native environmental justice activists have expressed concern

C. de Baca's Plains memoir and also appear in Villanueva's ecofeminist work. They are especially salient in Anaya's 1995 novel with its focus on Albuquerque's ethnic lower class. The devastation of the environment and the citification of the Southwest have long been underexplored in the region's literature while the remaining wilderness has been sung by Euro-American authors (cf. Pilkington 464). Anaya is one of the contemporary southwestern ethnic—male—writers to bring these matters into the foreground.

As for the pastoral character of *Zia Summer*, I see a Nuevomexicano new pastoral rejection of the majority culture and its perceived insatiable pursuit of progress and material profit at the cost of nature. As in *We Fed Them Cactus* already, a character like Dominic constitutes an ethnic author's illustration of the unsympathetic figures generally made to represent the establishment in classic Euro-American pastoral. There, Marx has said, by and large "the characters who most explicitly endorse or embody [the] regnant viewpoint [i.e. the ideology of progress] also tend to be narrow-minded, self-seeking, and, all in all, morally reprehensible" ("Pastoralism" 53). In Anaya too ecopastoral representation serves to demythologize some of Euro-America's most treasured notions in relation to the land. Dominic is central here as the self-made businessman whose pastoral American reverie of creating an "oasis" in the desert (208) is far from becoming an environmental success. He is doomed to founder with his grandiose projection of a Euro-American landscape ideal of eastern origin onto a West still thought to furnish an endless supply of water—much as in C. de Baca's time.<sup>422</sup> In its pastoral portrayal—also that of the "garden" below—, *Zia Summer* may therefore be called an ecological "nouveau[ ] western[ ]," in Pinçonat's phrasing. It is, she notes, a reverse version of the U.S. national epic of the western with its confrontation between Euro-Americans and indigenes, and is as such an "allégorie[ ] nationaliste[ ]" (6-7, 24).<sup>423</sup> In this novel and throughout his

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about Intel's mining of the groundwater aquifer (cf. Peña, *Mexican* 170-71). Another Mexican American environmental struggle in New Mexico is directed against the tourism industry, which is responsible for ecological disturbance and the displacement of rural people (cf. *Mexican* 167). On environmental justice and environmental justice ecocriticism, cf. already part one herein; specifically on Mexican American environmentalism, ch. I.2. *Words on Water*, eds. Devine and Grewe-Volpp (2008), is an important European ecocritical collection which examines local and global issues of water in literary and cultural representations from the U.S. and other parts of the world. One essay by Flys-Junquera is about the prominence of water in Anaya's novels; it makes brief references to *Zia Summer* ("Water Is Life").

<sup>422</sup> Cf. ch. II.1.3.3 on the Euro-American mythology of the West and the frontier and on the ongoing academic revisionism.

<sup>423</sup> Pinçonat's use of "allégorie nationaliste" modifies a concept of Fredric Jameson.

work, I should like to emphasize, Anaya attempts to create a Chicano pastoral national epic. Maintaining that “there can be no one national epic” in the U.S. (“Spirit” x), he is intent on delivering an ethnic reply to “King Arthur’s Court.” By this he metaphorically refers to the “foreign” Euro-American worldview and symbols imposed on the Southwest in 1848.<sup>424</sup> In *Zia Summer* Dominic’s vision of a ““Camelot of the desert”” (164) is destined to go awry.

Pastoral mythopoeia in the book is an expression of the author’s characteristic larger ideological and artistic interest in myth and mythmaking. He draws particularly on traditional, ancient Mexican American myth and legendry. His conception of myth and archetypal symbols is self-admittedly influenced by Carl Gustav Jung’s theory of the collective unconscious as a reservoir of archetypes or primordial images shared by all mankind and surfacing in dreams and fantasies (cf. Interviews with Johnson and Apodaca 46-47 and González-T. 84-87; “Mesa redonda” 445-46). On this basis Anaya likes to “re-creat[e]” myth. Rather than simply retell it, he has observed, it interests him to “take bits and pieces and remake it with a modern meaning that says something to our lives now” (Interview with Johnson and Apodaca 39). It is a (re-)creative treatment of myth that Antonio Márquez, in an early article assessing the work of Anaya, has rightly called the “core of his novelistic invention” (51-52). Within *Zia Summer*’s “machine” depiction, a recurring symbol is that of “el hombre dorado” (the man made of gold) from a Hispano folk story. Anaya uses it to highlight the acquisitiveness and consumerism he finds rampant in the Southwest today.<sup>425</sup> The influence of the Hispano oral and oral storytelling tradition on his writing shows in the recourse to the old *cuentos*. Mexican American storytelling has declined in the last decades (cf. Padilla, “Tales” 1273). In reworking his culture’s ancestral narrative forms, Anaya tries to preserve some of this tradition in literature.

In its concern with mythical vision, *Zia Summer* also brings up the “devil” and his witches. As a matter of fact, the novelistic universe is conceived in terms of the ““eternal struggle”” between the archetypal forces of “good” and “evil” (e.g. 183, 62;

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<sup>424</sup> See the 1984 essay titled, with a nod to Twain, “An American Chicano in King Arthur’s Court” (296, 298 and passim).

<sup>425</sup> Don Eliseo tells Sonny the old story of the man who had his body coated with gold after selling his soul to witches to buy immortality. He adds admonishingly, ““Now there are many like him. They don’t want to plant and wait for the harvest of the earth, they think gold can buy everything. But it’s an illusion, Sonny. . . . It is the work of the devil”” (59-60). Such a modern “hombre dorado” is Dominic with his ““El Dorado plan”” of urban improvement (326, 166; *Albuquerque* 118), in what Anaya might well term a late-twentieth-century Gilded Age.

60, 179, 183). This manichean epistemological concept is basic to the Hispano folk religion of the octogenarian don Eliseo Romero. “[B]rujas [evil witches],” he explains to Sonny, “are really people who have destruction in their hearts. Things don’t change. Now maybe they drive to work in fancy cars, wear nice clothes. They work all over the city. The surface changes, Sonny, underneath the evil intent remains” (62). “Evil” forces are taking over in this southwestern world which is thrown out of “balance” (184), a description yoked with images of “chaos,” “darkness,” “destruction” and “death” (e.g. 303; 183, 62; 161). The counterpastoral epicenter is New Mexico’s largest city, the virtually infernalized Albuquerque (also 336-37). It is a contemporary embodiment of Wordsworth’s representation of turn-of-the-nineteenth-century London as a “monstrous ant-hill.”<sup>426</sup> Not only the proliferation of “hombres dorados” and murder (e.g. 60) are symptomatic of “evil” in the narrative but also ecological destruction. In Anaya’s view, “[t]he [scarred and polluted] environment seems to reflect [the] struggle between evil and good [in our times]” (“Mythical” 351). The primal mythical framework of “good” vs. “evil” has been present from the start in his overall ethnic realist works. In 1995 now it is applied to the topic of environmental harm and a lack of ecological balance. Through the utilization of this trope to reinforce the pastoral argument, the novel becomes, on the highest plane, a universal religious allegory: a sort of ecopastoral morality play of the conflict between the Hispano and “evil.”<sup>427</sup> We have observed structures of symbolic condensation in all of the literary pastorals examined, but this writer far exceeds the level of allegorization in C. de Baca and Villanueva. His is an extremely melodramatic narrative stratagem that is anything but an adequate reflection of the complexities of reality.

For all criticism, the book also transcends its pastoral polarities. An important instance is the high technology symbolized by Morino, whom the reader finally meets together with the private eye. Their conversation deals with the (self-)image of the Mexican American and his lands as being overrun by the “colonize[r],” as Sonny sees it (270-71). “That is [just] one view,” Morino points out (271). The businessman argues that historical movement and transformation are not only

<sup>426</sup> Happy to have returned to rural England, the Romantic poet apostrophizes the London of his day as “thou monstrous ant-hill on the plain / Of a too busy world!” in *The Prelude* (1805, 1850) (211).

<sup>427</sup> I have mentioned earlier that traditional Nuevomexicano landscape spirituality has been related to seventeenth-century Spanish mysticism. Similarly, I suggest, Anaya’s liking for moral-religious allegorization in the tradition of Hispanic New Mexican Catholicism may be traced back to the influence of the Spanish baroque idea of *sub specie aeternitatis* in the New World.

“inevitable.” They may, along with new technologies like those now introduced from Japan, also be regarded as “positive” and an injection of new strength into Sonny’s home state (270). Hence, Morino goes on, there should be a compromise in New Mexico between embracing the fruits of the new technology and preserving the old traditions and the beauty of the land (271). In the course of this meeting, the Japanese turns out to be more than a mere high priest of modern technology, which Sonny long expected him to be; and he furnishes a new perspective. The protagonist, who wants to understand the opposing side as well, finds this “[i]nteresting” (271). Despite his disapproval of unlimited development, the pastoral author himself shares his fictional Asian character’s attitude towards change and growth and their good aspects.<sup>428</sup> Besides, Anaya makes it clear in his novels that Morino’s—as well as Dominic’s—development plan would also bring money and jobs to Albuquerque’s flaccid economy (*Albuquerque* 118; 6; *Zia* 164). *Zia Summer’s* articulation of a position reconciling tradition and change again reveals an American pastoral openness to things modern, which was especially pronounced with C. de Baca. By negotiating divergent, even contradictory viewpoints through the introduction of a character like the Japanese businessman, Anaya offers a more nuanced exploration of the pastoral subject. His use of narrative strategies available to fiction may be taken as an illustration of how a work of literature can function, with Ickstadt, as a kind of aesthetic platform for “test[ing]” political discourse (“Pluralist” 269).<sup>429</sup> Regarding computer technology, ambiguity is also brought in when Sonny’s widowed mother does not stay home the traditional way. Much to her son’s displeasure, she prefers to take a data processing class of all things (87, 160).<sup>430</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> Anaya views historical change as “inevitable,” employing the same word as Morino in his essay (“Mythical” 348). He has also often underlined his belief, as he puts it in reply to Bruce-Novoa’s question about his U.S. formal education, that the Mexican American “[should not be] afraid of change. We cannot hide our heads in the sand and pretend that everything that is important and good and of value will come only out of our culture. We live in a small world where many other cultures have a great deal to offer us” (Interview 16). Another literary formulation of this standpoint appears in the mystery play “Who Killed Don José?,” whose central interest is the change taking place in Hispano culture and the need to adapt to it. The murder victim, a wealthy Hispano sheep rancher who has welcomed the computer and high-tech age on his ancestral ranch, expresses it thus: “If we don’t change now, we get left behind” (449).

<sup>429</sup> Fluck has made a similar case for literature as a “testing-ground” (“Symbolic,” esp. 365-69).

<sup>430</sup> As with the other writers, this level of ideological discussion shines through in the text in a number of places, but has no continuous presence. I will return to this with reference to the “garden.”

### 3.2.2. The Antinuclear Discourse

Particular weight in the environmental pastoral critique in *Zia Summer* is given to the nuclear issue, above all the problem of nuclear waste. It is an issue crucial to New Mexico, the center of federal nuclear research and development in the U.S. The topic is introduced by the protagonist in the opening chapter (8).<sup>431</sup> The Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) mentioned here is an actual federally run nuclear waste storage facility located near Carlsbad in the southeastern New Mexican desert.<sup>432</sup> As the novel begins, a truck laden with high-level refuse from Los Alamos National Laboratory is about to be sent down south to conduct preliminary in-situ storage tests (8). For years the WIPP project has been battled by antinuclear groups around the state, Anaya tells us. The principal fear is of contamination owing to the possible corrosion of the irretrievably stored waste barrels (97, 99; 218).<sup>433</sup> It is further suggested in the text that the major military and nuclear research facilities in and around Albuquerque<sup>434</sup> are accountable for a previous pollution of the earth and humans. In all of these locations the federal government is suspected of having been stockpiling nuclear material and waste (44, 100, 101). It is, for example, claimed that the water table of Albuquerque's South Valley has been contaminated by substances seeping down from the Air Force Base and Sandia Labs (56, 100, 218). According to environmentalists, this makes the area, whose population is largely non-Euro-American, the one with the highest cancer rate in the city (100). Sonny, we are repeatedly informed, is "sure" that the leukemia that killed his father long ago was caused by exposure to radioactive material in the South Valley (44, 56, 100). These are once again the emotionally loaded victim figures well-known from ecopastoral and environmentalist rhetoric in the antecedent books. Here too they are subject to

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<sup>431</sup> This occurs even half a page before the detective story is kicked off with the news of the murder of his cousin.

<sup>432</sup> It would begin operations in 1999. WIPP was built to permanently and irretrievably store radioactive waste from around the country in underground salt mines. Much of it is high-level material produced by the dismantling of nuclear warheads after the end of the Cold War (cf. *Zia* 99; 153).

<sup>433</sup> For a scientific evaluation of the potential risks of the irretrievable storage of radioactive waste in the salt beds at WIPP—the first permanent repository for such waste in the world—, see the article by David Snow.

<sup>434</sup> Specifically Kirtland Air Force Base, the Sandia National Laboratories and that in Los Alamos—birthplace of the atomic bomb.

nuclear oppression. Aside from the protagonist's father, there is "Mother Earth" being mistreated at WIPP (101).<sup>435</sup>

Environmentalist opposition against nuclear power is voiced by the activist and leader of "Nuclear-Free Earth" Anthony Pájaro (100)—alias the ecoterrorist Raven, as the detective eventually realizes (215). The man's rhetoric is strident and studded with catch phrases: "It's madness, Sonny, insanity. Everybody knows it's crazy [to go on creating nuclear waste], but nobody wants to be the first to admit it! We know we can't store the stuff! It remains radioactive for centuries! The only thing for us is to stop producing the poison! Shut down WIPP!" (101) The main character has actually been temporarily involved in a group fighting environmental pollution in the South Valley (224). He concurs with Pájaro's arguments already during their first encounter, though with a less excited style to his musing. "Sonny nodded," the text continues, "Yeah, the WIPP site was a temporary solution, they couldn't go on stockpiling radioactive waste forever. Mother Earth was being disemboweled; the caverns that were her womb were now poisoned with barrels of nuclear waste. She was impregnated with plutonium, the deadliest element known to mankind . . ." (101). The quotations show that the novelist is careful to associate the most clamorous antinuclear protest with Pájaro, and not with the central identificatory figure. Sonny, for whom Pájaro has the "fervor of a religious fanatic" (99), is no militant activist but rather a sympathetic observer on the environmentalist sidelines. He does share the counternuclear movement's basic reasoning and dissent, but most emphatically not Pájaro's terrorist plan of blowing up the WIPP truck (218, 220, 226). Through a protagonist who is "reluctan[t]" to become politically involved but does feel a "kinship" with the movement (101; 100), Anaya seeks to make the reader go along with the novel's clear endorsement of what Sonny terms "the right-minded antinuclear campaign" in New Mexico (158). As the young man once phrases it in a disarming rhetorical question, "[W]ho in the hell could be against a clean Earth?" (224). In contrast to *The Ultraviolet Sky* with the exceedingly high-pitched utterances

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<sup>435</sup> Sonny also refers to the many Navajo sheep that died or bore mutated lambs on the polluted land of Mount Taylor in western New Mexico in the wake of the 1950s uranium mining boom (157-58). In these passages of the novel, we may think back to "Papá's" fate on the Plains and to the "jellyfish babies" dying from nuclear testing in *The Ultraviolet Sky*. In *Zia Summer* the corresponding "machine" types are the "DOE" (Dept. of Energy) and the "Defense Department," in brief the "feds," the "government" (97, 99-101, 149, 218; 306). The latter also reminds us of Graciano C. de Baca's rage against "those idiots in Washington" who required farming on the homestead in early-twentieth-century New Mexico.

of its heroine Rosa, Anaya has given a radical foil to his protagonist in the attempt to communicate his antinuclear views. This is certainly the less alienating method.

*Zia Summer's* ethnopastoral criticism is aimed at the continuation of nuclear production and the proliferation of radioactive refuse by both the military and by commercial industries operating nuclear power plants (101). It condemns the irresponsible dumping of the waste and the concomitant contamination of the environment all over New Mexico.<sup>436</sup> It is evident, also with Sonny, that this heavily politicized attack often comes close to being a kind of propagandistic environmentalist muckraking. This is particularly true of the unveiled denunciations of real-existing military and research installations, WIPP or, for that matter, Intel.<sup>437</sup> The counternuclear discourse is central to the book's environmental justice arraignment of the subjection of the earth and the New Mexican ethnic minorities. Along with questions of land and water rights, the effects of nuclear energy have been of great concern to the state's colored population since World War II. The issue already came up in Anaya's earlier writing.<sup>438</sup> It is also critically addressed in other Mexican American literature on New Mexico.<sup>439</sup>

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<sup>436</sup> The economic factor also enters here. Not only an installation like the Air Force Base plays an important part in Albuquerque's economy, Sonny knows. WIPP itself has meant major federal investment and jobs for the state (44; 322). As with Morino's and Dominic's development projects, Anaya's pastoral narrative again makes room for a more differentiated portrait of the forces determining the nuclear issue in a state as needy as New Mexico.

<sup>437</sup> One would prefer the greater indirection in dealing with sociopolitical concerns in literature that still governed Anaya's writing at the time of *Bless Me, Ultima*. He revised his position by the mid-1980s, as obvious in the above-cited interviews in which he advocates more overt politics in Mexican American literature.

<sup>438</sup> In his 1972 novel, the detonation of the first atomic bomb at Trinity Site near Alamogordo, New Mexico, in July 1945 is a literary symbol of the evils of modernity (190). Twenty years later the environmental short story "Devil Deer" (1992) relates how a Pueblo hunter kills a mutant deer on the grounds of the weapons laboratory at Los Alamos. By that time, the 1990s, the hazards of nuclear technology have evidently become such an unsettling form of modern "evil" for Anaya as to warrant a book-length treatment in *Zia Summer*.

<sup>439</sup> For instance in Castillo's ecofeminist novel *So Far from God* (1993) (242-43). Another type of toxic pollution that is criticized in Anaya's first detective novel (93) is the pesticide poisoning of Mexican American farmworkers by the Southwest's agricultural industry, especially in California and Texas. César Chávez, the famous Chicano labor organizer and leader of the United Farm Workers jointly with Dolores Huerta, campaigned against pesticides since the 1960s. Anaya has paid literary homage to Chávez in an epic poem for young readers entitled *An Elegy on the Death of César Chávez* (2000). Farmworkers' exposure to pesticides has been often thematized by Mexican American writers since the movement. Thus in Raymond Barrio's 1969 social protest novel *The Plum Plum Pickers* and in Valdez's Teatro Campesino. Founded in the mid-60s as the artistic arm of Chávez's activities, one of its *actos* is "Vietnam Campesino" (1970). Pesticide contamination is an environmental justice matter that is also prominent in a number of works by ecofeminist Mexican American women authors. E.g. "Heroes and Saints" (1989), a play by Moraga in Valdez's tradition, Viramontes's novel *Under the Feet of Jesus* and Corpi's ecofeminist mystery *Cactus Blood* (1995).

In *Zia Summer* the author also employs the widespread environmentalist topos of nuclear apocalypse. Sonny is preoccupied with it. As he proceeds in his reflections on WIPP, “[though poisoned with plutonium, Mother Earth] would resist. She would spew it out, if not now, sometime in the future. She would thwart science and technology, and when she did, the catastrophe created would make Three Mile Island or Chernobyl look like a picnic” (101).<sup>440</sup> The rhetoric of nuclear doom with its neoromantic distrust of science and technology—a distrust we have seen in more radical ecofeminist form in Villanueva—also manifests itself in this post-Cold War 1990s novel. Compared with Villanueva’s 1980s text, the Cold War has ended and its radioactive remains now represent the main threat. Moreover, there is concern over global nuclear rearmament, above all by small countries such as North Korea (218, 228). The image of ecological disaster appears not just in the thoughts and speech of the characters, as in Villanueva and C. de Baca. It is also turned into a structural element integral to the propulsion of the mystery action: through the WIPP truck whose explosion the detective prevents at the last moment. This truck is a contemporary Gothic creature described as “a huge shadow in the mist, the huge barrel it carried rising like the hump of a prehistoric monster in the dark. Plutonosaurus” (316). Anaya uses the menace of the truck and its slow progression towards the south as a way of underscoring the ecopastoral message all through the story, which culminates in the near-catastrophic showdown episode. He wants to warn his audience and shock it into awareness—“[s]car[ing] the world to its senses” by means of a cathartic effect, just as his ecoterrorist Pájaro tries to do within the reality of the text (322). It is of ecocritical interest that environmental issues have entered the popular mystery genre with its potentially broad readership, and also an ethnic crime novel like Anaya’s. Its waste truck plot must, however, also be viewed critically for its sensationalist reduction of the nuclear subject to a thriller-like detective story.<sup>441</sup> Furthermore, it is plain here and elsewhere in the book that the

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<sup>440</sup> Jungian dream sequences and rich oneiric symbolism have always been of major significance in depicting the protagonists’ psyche in Anaya’s writings. Sonny’s fear of nuclear catastrophe surfaces also in this way. In a nightmare he sees the shape of a mushroom cloud rising in the sky (176). For Anaya the nuclear cloud is a new “archetypal image of the New Mexican mythology and identity” in the age of technology (qtd. in Flys-Junquera, “Voice” 131).

<sup>441</sup> In a 2000 essay on “Ecothrillers,” environmental critic Richard Kerridge has credited contemporary ecological thrillers and detective thrillers, both in U.S. and other literature and film, with offering a “model” for taking up environmental themes. Yet he remains justly critical of their sensational treatment (247 and passim). Aesthetic problems of the detective form in Anaya’s environment-oriented use will be examined in detail below.

crime/thriller genre's melodramatic compositional structure is deepened by the added ethnic ecopastoral dimension.

### 3.2.3. Rural Decline

In conjunction with enormous economic expansion in recent decades, New Mexico and its major cities have seen a spread of suburban subdivisions and housing for the rapidly growing population. The negative impact of this on nature and the land-based cultures is a third important aspect of novelistic displeasure in *Zia Summer*. As begun in Santa Fe in the 1980s, Albuquerque and other sections of New Mexico have been faced with an escalation of land prices and property taxes. This is due to real-estate developers and “speculators [who] crush everything in their way to build homes for those who can afford them,” as the protagonist puts it. “Never mind that those who are already there can’t” (71; 126-27). It is a process of gentrification, with custom-built Santa Fe adobe-style houses for affluent Euro-Americans, that is blamed for forcing Hispanos to sell their lands (192; 71, 126). Along the Rio Grande, the sprawling city of Albuquerque is “swallow[ing] up” the farming villages once established on the Spanish and Mexican land grants (186; 87). The narrative is centered in the North Valley of Albuquerque, a literary microcosm symbolic of the Hispano farming tradition of the Rio Grande valley and New Mexico. Its heart is the old settlement of Los Ranchitos, an actual community that is the ancestral home of Sonny’s neighbor don Eliseo.

In the North Valley, more and more of the old river cottonwoods are cut down, and expensive homes now cover the fields of Ranchitos (66). One of the last remaining farmers, don Eliseo “was always sad when he spoke of the large estates that had taken the farming land of the valley.” His recollections of the past are accompanied by a “sigh[ ]” (67-68; 66). Don Eliseo is the primary sentimental character in the novel. Like *We Fed Them Cactus*, it is also a rural pastoral dirge bemoaning the end of the halcyon days of yesteryear. In 1982 Márquez remarked on Anaya’s writing that its “tragic sense” is frequently “weakened by obtrusive sentimentality” (45). This also becomes obvious at many points in my reading of *Zia Summer*. A prominent nature image is the centuries-old cottonwood in don Eliseo’s

front yard. It is “[one of] the ancestors of the valley, just like don Eliseo” (60; 66) and thus a major emblem of the deep-rooted Hispano culture maintained by its owner. Initially, the dry old tree is to be felled.<sup>442</sup> The cottonwood is “wither[ed],” it seems dried-up and dead (67; 4, 66). A dry spell is afflicting the Rio Grande valley and other parts of the state; not only the tree but all plants are “dry” and “withering,” being “burned” and “shrivel[ed]” by the summer heat (204; 178; 205). The drought serves as an extended metaphor. The dry plants, in particular the old tree, synecdochically reflect the spiritually “wither[ed]” state of southwestern modernity (345) as well as, in the case of the tree, the “drying up” of the Hispanic tradition.<sup>443</sup> So literally and figuratively, the Southwest is presented as becoming a wasteland.<sup>444</sup> Like the tree leitmotif, Anaya’s elaborate imagery related to drought and dryness is rather uninspired and too ornate.

Albuquerque’s urban sprawl into the periphery also extends east. The fate of the Rio Grande farming lands and villages is paralleled by that of old Hispano ranching communities like La Cueva in the eastern foothills of the Sandia Mountains. There, to the edge of the Estancia Valley and the High Plains, the narrative takes the reader several times in the course of the detective’s investigations. The Estancia Valley and La Cueva stand for the disappearing Nuevomexicano stock economy. It is the second great tradition within the rural Hispano culture of New Mexico, besides farming—both Anayan themes since *Bless Me, Ultima*. Its passing gives rise to similar elegizing and critique as in the portrayal of the North Valley. We know this story from a *patrón*-class angle in C. de Baca’s account. Historically, we read here, La Cueva was confronted with the establishment of the large Euro-American cattle ranches across the sheep-grazing Plains in the late nineteenth century.<sup>445</sup> The cattle

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<sup>442</sup> The text opens on the jarring sound of a chain saw (1). This expressive auditory image sets the tone for the book by (melo)dramatically enacting the often harsh conflict between the intrusive “machine” and the “garden” from the very start.

<sup>443</sup> His tree, the old man says, is “like me, bien seco” (66). This pattern of imagery of heat and drought is also used to describe the ecologically harmful practices of a society “drying up” its water table and taking the risk of the “deadly heat of [nuclear] radiation” “burn[ing] and shrivel[ing]” the earth (256; 321, 322).

<sup>444</sup> Another rendition of this is the barren desert in *Tortuga*. It symbolizes the condition of the paralyzed boy protagonist Tortuga and all the crippled young patients in a southern New Mexico desert clinic, as well as the Mexican American and human condition in general (e.g. 42, 116, 131, 173). Anaya has repeatedly invoked the image of the wasteland to represent his people’s contemporary existence in his literary work; in *Tortuga* the word is even quoted (5, 19, 188). This image shows the self-acknowledged influence of T. S. Eliot on the New Mexican (on the latter, cf. “American Chicano” 298).

<sup>445</sup> Anaya has made his protagonist Elfego “Sonny” Baca the great-grandson of the legendary historical figure Elfego Baca, in whose footsteps the detective begins to follow in *Zia Summer* (e.g.

ranches were followed, in the early 1900s, by the massive influx of “gringo[ ]” homesteaders who attempted to farm the land (132, 206).<sup>446</sup> Anaya also adds to the early Hispana narrative. According to *Zia Summer*, aside from the ongoing expansion of the big cattle ranches (207), a major Euro-American threat to ranching settlements like La Cueva is today posed by real-estate development. The “developers” are converting more and more Hispano villages into suburban subdivisions for Albuquerque commuters (132, 207; 126). A profitable business line Anaya makes special mention of is the sale of small plots of land to those he calls the “new homesteaders” (207). The term refers to the many Euro-American urbanites who “dream” of “country living”—and surely the same “rugged privacy” the commuters are after (126)—in a trailer, farming a groundwater-irrigated piece of land of their own (207).<sup>447</sup> This, the text points out, is another environmentally inappropriate and ultimately doomed Euro-American enterprise on the land. “Water,” Sonny recalls don Eliseo always saying, quite patronizingly, “they’re going to run out of water. Just like the ranchers of West Texas. The aquifer will dry up . . . so will their dreams . . .” (127).<sup>448</sup> The huge Ogallala Aquifer in eastern New Mexico and western Texas is itself being gradually “suck[ed] . . . dry” by irrigation, and West Texas is already dotted with ghost farms. “[S]o,” the young man goes on to predict, “they would dot [eastern New Mexico] and eventually the Estancia Valley. The wind would blow away the trailer castles” (207-08).<sup>449</sup> The “new homesteaders” agrarian

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328). Sheriff of Socorro County in the New Mexico Territory in the 1880s and 90s, Baca is still revered among Hispanos as a “Robin Hood”-type lawman who stood up for the local farmers against the “abusive Texas cowboys” employed by the cattle ranchers (5, 214; also cf. Fernández Olmos 104). The negative Anglo cowboy in Anaya is another ethnic rewriting of the Euro-American cowboy, by an author for whom a figure like western movie actor John Wayne “symbolizes the aggressive element in American society” (Interview with Reed 10). The cowboy of old also has a present-day embodiment in the book, as stereotypical as the specimens vituperated in Villanueva’s ecofeminist California novel. These are the urban “cowboys” Sonny encounters on the road in downtown Albuquerque, who are armed and full of beer, tailgating and threatening him from their high-riding truck (50-51).

<sup>446</sup> Like the Hispana writer, *Zia Summer* correctly suggests that the cattle ranchers’ and homesteaders’ ways of using land fit only for sheep grazing were ecologically detrimental practices. They are ultimately held accountable for the fact that La Cueva’s few remaining Hispano stockmen “[n]ow . . . have grass only for a few cattle” on the small ranches of the broken-up land grant. “[W]hat used to be our land,” as is observed in a tone of bitterness (132; 126).

<sup>447</sup> On America’s continuing idealization of the Plains as representing the nation’s pioneer heritage and traditions of “rugged individualism,” tightly knit families and rural society, see Opie, *History* 367.

<sup>448</sup> He says this about the Albuquerque aquifer and land development in the city, but it also applies here.

<sup>449</sup> The Ogallala (High Plains) Aquifer is the largest groundwater aquifer in the U.S. and extends north as far as South Dakota. Reached in the 1960s, it has allowed Plains farmers to enjoy an extraordinary fifty years of high-speed groundwater consumption, thanks to modern irrigation technologies. This “Golden Age on the Plains,” as environmental historian Opie has labeled it, is bound to end with the

ideal of rugged individualism, self-reliance and independence on a family farm in the countryside is—like the original homesteaders' and Dominic's dreams—another instance of how the Euro-American pastoral myth of the West as a land of plenty and some its Turnerian core values are being exploded in this work of Mexican American ecopastoralism.<sup>450</sup>

This first analytic section of chapter II.3 has shown that *Zia Summer* passes strictures on the Euro-American exploitation and commodification of land in the Albuquerque area and in the rest of New Mexico for a variety of entrepreneurial and political motives. Besides environmental disturbances, Anaya speaks out against the serious social repercussions especially for Natives and Hispanos. With their lands and water rights dwindling and/or contaminated, the deterioration of the old Hispano farming and ranching settlements has accelerated in our time, and many have vanished today (126, 137).<sup>451</sup> In what the principal character dramatically calls a “deadly diaspora,” the villagers migrate to the urban centers and their ghettos, like Albuquerque's (128; 126-27). This leads to the waning of the community and family-oriented rural customs.<sup>452</sup>

Sonny Baca, who is himself relatively assimilated into the mainstream in many respects, experiences a severe identitarian crisis. He is descended from old Rio Grande families and was raised in the South Valley in the tradition of his ancestors. Like many of his generation, he has “forgotten a lot of the old ways. . . .

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depletion for irrigation farming of the mostly irreplaceable aquifer. As prognosticated in 1998, it will be noticeable around the year 2010 (Opie, *History* 361-65, 366). Cf. also Opie's study of Ogallala.

<sup>450</sup> Another contemporary Mexican American writer, Joseph Torres-Metzgar, pronounces a trenchant indictment of the Euro-American pastoral vision of Texas as “the new Promised Land” to be ruled by “God's Chosen People.” See his 1976 novel *Below the Summit* (103-06 and passim). Set in a small western Texas border town in the 1960s, this little-studied Mexican American text is unusual in having a Euro-American protagonist, a bigoted, racist preacher.

<sup>451</sup> This decline has been marked all over New Mexico since World War II. According to Manuel Gonzales, by 1960 about two thirds of the Mexican American population was urban; the proportion was even higher in the Southwest (192). By the year 1990, almost ninety-one percent of Mexican Americans lived in cities (224).

<sup>452</sup> Anaya already deals with this in his novel *Heart of Aztlán*, which tells of the disintegration of the rural Chávez family after their move to 1950s Albuquerque. Concerning the city's Mexican American ghettos, such as those in the South Valley, they are defined by a difficult life amidst guns and drugs in *Zia Summer* (117, 233, 238). No less negative than that of the San Francisco *barrio* in Villanueva, this description intensifies the “machine” picture of late-twentieth-century Albuquerque, whose “dark streets . . . throb[ ] with death” (161; 199). One of the centers of the urbanizing Southwest, Albuquerque seems, in Anaya's eyes, well on the way to becoming as materialistic, violent and depraved a city as Los Angeles. Of the latter his novel takes an especially unfavorable view (11-12, 14, 198). One thinks of California urban theorist Mike Davis here, who has a dark, apocalyptic vision of urban America and its future, as epitomized by the megalopolis of Los Angeles. Cf. his broadly known 1990 book *City of Quartz* as well as, with an added environmental studies perspective, the follow-up volume *Ecology of Fear* (1998); a more recent publication is *Dead Cities* (2002).

[S]omewhere along the way, he began to get separated. Getting a degree at the university meant entering a different world, and living in the vast change that swept over the land meant losing touch” (5; 340). A former high school teacher with a college-acquired rationalistic and rather cynical view of things (cf. *Río* 32), this young urban Hispano has almost lost contact with his dispersed “familia” and his community (e.g. *Zia* 162). As he became separated from the land and the old culture, he has felt a loss of “internal harmony” (326).<sup>453</sup> Within the plot strand of his pastoral journey to his Nuevomexicano self, the investigator-protagonist is a Mexican American “Everyman.” Anaya sees him as a symbol of the younger generation as well as modern man in a world out of kilter (cf. Interviews with Dash et al. 154, 161 and with Crawford 111, 106)—much like Rosa in *The Ultraviolet Sky*.<sup>454</sup> “The old southwest [is] dead, or dying . . .,” *Zia Summer’s* narrative voice laments (198). Unlike C. de Baca, however, Anaya imagines the “old” Hispano “garden” also as an ecopastoral antidote to the new Southwest.

### 3.3. A Satirical Attack: New Age Spiritualism and Environmental Terrorism

Prior to discussing the bucolic ideal, I will examine the Euro-American ecocult that presents itself as an alternative to dominant society. It is Raven’s sun cult, on which the criminal plot hinges. The novel here casts its ideological criticism in a satirical mold. This aesthetic strategy characteristically resorts to the devices of irony, hyperbole and ridicule. Raven/Pájaro is the founder and spiritual leader of a small New Age hippie cult in the Sandia Mountains, whose worldview and religion center

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<sup>453</sup> Within the tree symbolism, this is underlined by his image of himself as a rootless “tumbleweed” drifting aimlessly around (70). In terms of drought, there is, e.g., his spirit’s “wither[ed]” condition (345). His crisis is compounded by “susto” (fright), which refers to the folkloric belief that his dead cousin’s restless spirit is haunting his soul since viewing her body (55-56, 194-95).

<sup>454</sup> As said before, Anaya’s searching protagonists have always had a collective dimension. There are a number of parallels between *Zia Summer* and Silko’s 1977 novel *Ceremony*, which is positively referenced by Sonny (30). It is an intertext for Anaya (cf. also Pinçonnat 5). *Ceremony* recounts the allegorical quest story of the sick and alienated Laguna Pueblo World War II veteran Tayo in a disharmonious, drought-ridden modern New Mexico of white violence against humans and the earth—which is really due to the plotting of evil Native witches.

on worship of the Zia sun (40).<sup>455</sup> When the group is introduced, we learn that their religion is a “curious blend of mystical beliefs, mostly a misinterpreted Pueblo Indian way of life.” This comprehends “bits and pieces of Indian lore” picked up during years of encampment near Taos Pueblo (40; 41). As the ironic, satirical tone begins to indicate, it is a rather ridiculous nature cult these marijuana-smoking would-be Native sun worshippers are practicing in their Zia-shaped mountain “temple” (142; 143). Raven is the “Sun King” and master of four brainwashed, slavish wives vying to be the “Earth Mother” who is allowed to bear his offspring (143; 144). This solar cult is also highly questionable and dangerous. In addition to sanguinary solstice rites in the form of animal sacrifices and cattle mutilations, its adherents perform gruesome cult murders of wealthy but too little cooperative women in search of spiritual healing, such as Gloria Dominic (287, 42, 45-46; 303). Her blood was offered to the Zia sun, whose sign was etched around her navel (29, 336).

Animal mutilations and sacrifices notwithstanding, what its members claim to be essential to the cult’s supposedly Native philosophy is a “pro-environment stance” focused on harmony with “Mother Earth” (41). The cultists attempt to live off the land like Pueblo farmers. Yet, as is sarcastically noted in the text, their land on the mountain is “so bone-poor that the practice translated into poaching livestock from the local ranchers to keep the group in meat” (40-41). The hippies are derided as laughably incompetent in living off the land (also 140-41). It is a satirical representation of the pastoral ideal of the simple life off the land that brings to mind the hapless Transcendentalist communards in Hawthorne’s *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), at whose awkwardness as farmers even the cows are said to laugh (65). Raven’s sun cult is formed by “out-of-date flower children [who had] never moved on”—a “relic” from the 1960s and 70s with their hippie communes in places like Taos (146; 40).<sup>456</sup> This rendition of the cult is a satirical assault on the numerous, largely Euro-American New Age spiritualists and primitivist back-to-naturists that have been attracted to the spectacular landscapes and indigenous communities of the Southwest and New Mexico from all over the U.S. in the last decades (on the latter, cf. also Fernández Olmos 116). “Albuquerque’s full of [spiritualists],” the police chief laconically tells Sonny, “And Santa Fe’s worse” (31).

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<sup>455</sup> This ancient sign is sacred to the New Mexico Pueblo cultures, taking its name from Zia Pueblo. It consists of a circle symbolizing the life-giving sun and four radiating lines that stand for the four sacred directions of the Pueblo world (29).

<sup>456</sup> Or, for that matter, the rural California farming commune of Villanueva’s protagonist.

What is central here is Anaya's critical attitude towards the mainstream usurpation of Native and Hispano cultural beliefs and symbols. This cooptive practice, whether simply ill-informed and misinterpretive or downright hypocritical, has to do with the centenarian Euro-American infatuation with the "mystique" of New Mexico (qtd. from *Zia* 13). The rich Albuquerque socialite and *Zia* cultist Tamara Dubronsky is a case in point. She believes New Mexico to be a "sacred and primal place on earth," conducive to her "psychic" powers (96).<sup>457</sup> She lives in a mansion filled with traditional Native and Hispanic artwork "religiously" collected by her late husband. According to the ironic narrator, this encompassed buying "as many Georgia O'Keeffes as he could." He did so in order to "safeguard the romance of New Mexico"—the "'Land of Enchantment,'" to quote the hackneyed epithet regurgitated by his widow (95, 200; 331, 96). It is a Euro-American exoticism that Marta Weigle has critically and fittingly dubbed "Southwesternism."<sup>458</sup> Such a romanticist assumption of ethnic ways is not just found with nature spiritualists and other New Agers in *Zia Summer*—as much as in Villanueva's ecofeminism. It is also popular with other sections of the population represented here, as is apparent in the previously mentioned faddish Euro-American predilection for Santa Fe adobe-style living.<sup>459</sup> As to the Native *Zia* sun, we are told that it is the most-used symbol in New Mexico. It appears not only on the state flag, but has been commercialized by electricians, plumbers, medical groups and dozens of small business (99, 30).<sup>460</sup> A particularly perverse manifestation of the Euro-American arrogation of

<sup>457</sup> This widow of eastern European origin—though no member of the commune—is Raven's "Sun Queen" and sexually as well as financially devoted to the guru (332).

<sup>458</sup> Weigle properly refers to late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Euro-America's cultural and literary enthusiasm for the Southwest's landscapes and cultures as a form of "Orientalism" in Edward Said's definition (cf. my C. de Baca analysis on the nonnative pastoral discourse of the Southwest and New Mexico (note 197)). Weigle goes on to propose the concept of "Southwesternism" to describe the immense popularity of the region and the commercial craze for Santa Fe style and the like in the late twentieth century (cf. her 1990 article "Southwest Lures;" qtd. in Porsche 98-99). As D. H. Lawrence—himself an outsider with a romantic vein—self-ironically observed in 1924, "'The Southwest is the great playground of the White American. . . . And the Indian, with his long hair and his bits of pottery and blankets and clumsy home-made trinkets, he's a wonderful live toy to play with. More fun than keeping rabbits, and just as harmless . . . . Oh, the wild west is lots of fun: the Land of Enchantment. Like being right inside the circus ring . . .'" (qtd. in Porsche 29 from "Just Back from the Snake Dance" (1924)). With regard to Anaya's writing, a piece of satire from his final mystery *Jemez Spring* are the California tourists seeking a New Age psychic guide to take them to an "'energy place'" in the Santa Fe mountains "where they could Oooooommm and Ahhhhhhh and get in touch with the spirits of the Native Americans long gone to the happy hunting grounds. The same Indians pierced with cannon shrapnel during ancient battles with the same tourists' Anglo ancestors," in the narrator's words (233).

<sup>459</sup> E.g. in Dominic's North Valley home (17). Complete with wood antiqued to imitate the original Hispano settlers' earthen houses, these residences are made fun of by Sonny (338).

<sup>460</sup> Not forgetting the cover of the novel's Warner edition I am using.

autochthonous New Mexican traditions and emblems is Raven's instrumentalization of the sacred sign of life for his murderous cult (30, 158). This may be interpreted as a sharp satirical thrust at the way in which the old cultures have been taken over by the mainstream and reduced to a handful of misunderstood or empty, inflationary symbols and a few quaint customs.

It has become clear from Anaya's at times light and funny, at other times rather dark satirical portrait of the spiritualism and ecocultism of the Zia hippies: While they may proclaim themselves an ecological counterpoint to the "machine," theirs is really another Euro-American pastoral model being smashed from an ecoethnic point of view. These New Agers, who have been swarming over the region like the developers, reveal themselves as neither a viable nor a morally acceptable response to the present Southwest. In fact, they share its anthropocentrism and ignorance of the land and its rural peoples. Anaya's use of a satirical mode of expression in *Zia Summer* and many of his other works partakes in the Mexican American cultural and literary tradition of satirical discourse against U.S. norms and values. Such caricature—albeit less pronounced—appeared already in C. de Baca's memoir. Here too the satire engages also with the principal culture's treatment of the environment and nature.<sup>461</sup> The incorporation of such melodramatic satirical elements in the novel is, like the vehicular mystery story, meant to teach the lesson in an entertaining manner. The latter is as the Roman poet and satirist Horace would have it in his famous remarks on the function of poetry in *De Arte Poetica*.

Anaya takes his lampoonery of the Euro-American and general New Mexican ecomovement even one step further. The charismatic Pájaro's "Nuclear-Free Earth"

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<sup>461</sup> On the longstanding subversive utilization of satire in Mexican American culture and literature and on classical pastoral satire, see ch. II.1.3.1. I there referenced Hernández's study of Mexican American literary satire. A wider approach is employed in the 2003 book by Thorsten Thiel, *There Is More than One Site of Resistance*. Thiel analyzes irony and parody as strategies of resistance and opposition in the contemporary Mexican American novel; these strategies may be used for a satirical purpose, he notes. Satire in *Zia Summer* has remained largely unexamined by critics. An exception is Robert Con Davis-Undiano: he casually mentions the satire on New Age spirituality, citing mainly the figure of Tamara Dubronsky (136). As for Anaya's creation of satirical types—another common device of satire—the major representative is the "spiritualist." He is joined by a derisive depiction of the Euro-American environmental activist, the "Greenie" (99). This is what Sonny expected Pájaro to be: a "'back to nature' environmentalist with a thick beard full of ticks from sleeping in the forest" (98). Similar types are also used by other Mexican American writers, thus in Denise Chávez's description of a Euro-American New Ager living in the New Mexico desert in her novel *Loving Pedro Infante* (2001). In the voice of the I-narrator, "Sister Full Moon. . . was one of those Anglo-shaman types with thin, frizzy, permed blond hair who'd moved to the desert to be close to nature but who secretly hated the weather and the people and would always refuse to learn Spanish and would always pronounce Juárez 'Wha-rez'" (203). Within Native literature there is the "owl-shit expert" satirized in Silko's monumental novel *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) (375).

comes to control most antinuclear groups in the state, including Mexican American activists (224, 227). The leader plots the explosion of the waste truck on its way to the WIPP site in order to achieve his counternuclear goals. The sizable nuclear disaster thus created would be likely to kill a lot of people and contaminate a large area (306, 308-09). All the same, it might serve to scare society to its senses and stop nuclear production once and for all, the activist's preposterous argument runs: "Yeah, one big accident, Baca, and we could have a nuclear-free earth!" (217-18) It is profoundly ironic that this ecoguru who professes an environment-friendly stance centered on "sav[ing] Mother Earth from destruction by pollution" (41; 99) apparently could not care less about a nuclear-free earth, judging from his plan. He actually used to be an explosives expert in the Mount Taylor uranium mines, "helping with the destruction he said he abhorred," as Sonny sardonically observes (154; 158). Pájaro turns out to be a ruthless hypocrite, if not a "lunatic" (158). Behind the green façade, he is not just a murderer but an "eco-terrorist[ ]" (155; 148). In Sonny's judgment on the man: "Idealism or insanity, it didn't matter what you called it . . ." (220). His foiled attempt at environmental sabotage is depicted as a megalomaniac undertaking that is ecologically more irresponsible and more immediately perilous than the "insan[e]" creation of ever more nuclear refuse he has been cautioning against (101). The Zia leader's environmental terrorism is a far cry from the light-hearted mockery of his cult as an outmoded experiment in malinterpreting Native philosophy and ridiculously failing to live off the land. To my mind, this terrorism constitutes the grotesque apex of *Zia Summer's* ethnic satire on mainstream back-to-naturism and environmentalism. I have pointed out earlier that the "right-minded" antinuclear campaign (158), whose fundamental critique does not differ from Pájaro's, is clearly approved in the narrative. Here, by contrast, Anaya seems to chastise, via satire, a radical environmentalism reliant on simplistic thinking ("Yeah, one big accident . . .") and militant action, as well as chiding its numerous followers for their gullibility. In addition to the simplifications used throughout his satirical portrayal, the author then again takes recourse to maximum overstatement and boils everything down to the ancient mythical battle of good and evil. Pájaro/Raven, who keeps warning about a nuclear "Armageddon" (101), is himself stylized as the personification of "evil" in his day and age. He is a "brujo" whose true motive is the plotting of chaos and destruction and nothing short of the end of the world to seize power himself in a new world (e.g. 61-62, 302, 322). Rather than add

anything to the text's satire, this exaggerated invocation of the level of myth, if anything, impairs it.

As a shape-shifting shaman, Raven<sup>462</sup> is evidently an adaptation of the trickster figure of Native American folklore. He is also a prominent expression of Anaya's trademark technique of fusing reality and magic in his works. Like much other Mexican American literature, the Anayan New Mexican brand of magic realism stands in an intertextual relationship to the Latin American literary mode and style. In Latin America as much as in Mexican American/U.S. Hispanic writing, it has become overused in recent years. Anaya's magic realism in a book like *Zia Summer* may be viewed as an "ex-centric" (Theo D'haen) mode of representation employed to affirm an alternate Mexican American pastoral way of seeing the world, as well as a divergent aesthetic.<sup>463</sup>

### 3.4. The "Old" Nuevomexicano Garden

#### 3.4.1. "The Path of the Sun"

Euro-American ecopastoralism being satirically dismissed, *Zia Summer* presents a New Mexican Hispano vision. Its hub and central location is don Eliseo's farm, which has a "garden" of corn, trees and other plants (178). The farmer represents a centuries-old Rio Grande culture in which physical dependence on the land has produced a deep sense of place; the landscape is thereby also linked with values of the spirit and the affects. Basic to the traditional Hispano worldview and lifeways as

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<sup>462</sup> The Spanish word *pájaro* signifies "bird."

<sup>463</sup> Instead of merely recording reality, Anaya's declared interest in writing has always lain in "explor[ing] the magic in realism" ("Epiphany" 98). For D'haen the practice of magic realism is an "ex-centric form of resistance to the paradigmatic discourse of the 'privileged centers' [Carlos Fuentes]" of white Western modernity. As such, it is an important example of the aesthetics of what D'haen has called "counter-postmodernism" ("Repressed" 198-99). Among postmodern Mexican American and other U.S. ethnic authors who make use of magic realism, he names Anaya (*Heart of Aztlán*) (206-07). Cf. also his previous essay "Magic Realism and Postmodernism." For a book-length analysis, see Roland Walter's *Magical Realism in Contemporary Chicano Fiction* (1993). A delightful spoof of Latin American magic realism with its "long and tiresome string of miracles" (135) may be found in the novel *The Love Queen of the Amazon* (1992, rev. ed. 2001) by Cecile Pineda. This writer has been hitherto unjustly neglected by critics for lacking what are considered specifically Mexican American/Chicano themes in her work.

rendered by Anaya are don Eliseo's animistic belief in the spirit world of nature and his religious adoration of the earth. In his view, the cosmos and the earth are "alive" and endowed with a "soul": "For the old man everything had a spirit. Tree, corn, stone, rain, clay. Everything was alive" (322; 66). And everything is revered as sacred, the principal immanent deities here being "Mother Earth"—"la madre tierra"—and especially "Grandfather Sun" (177; 181). In their ancestral devotion to the Zia sun, the Hispanos allegedly share the ancient Pueblo veneration of "Grandfather Sun" as the god of life (107; 158, 29), whose symbol is the Zia sun. As among the Natives, the "Tata Sol" of the Hispano is worshipped by don Eliseo in a daily sunrise ritual in his yard (107; 162). The reader witnesses this in one of the novel's pivotal passages when Sonny first joins his neighbor for the ceremony. It is a long and detailed episode placed in the central chapter seventeen (out of thirty-three) (177-85). "Mira," don Eliseo says when the sun is about to rise,

'Es tiempo de los Señores y las Señoras.'

The first rays of the sun peeked over Sandia Crest, filling the valley with a dazzling light. Dawn shadows scattered as the brightness exploded.

A stillness filled the air as the first moments of scintillating light filled the valley, then the leaves of the cottonwoods quivered as the playful light came racing across the treetops and dropped to glisten on the leaves of corn. The entire valley seemed to fill with a presence, something Sonny thought he could reach out and touch.

'Los Señores y las Señoras,' Sonny whispered, and held his breath. . . .

'Sí,' don Eliseo replied. 'Grandfather Sun is rising to bless all of life, and sends los Señores y las Señoras down to earth. See how they come dancing across the treetops, on the corn, the chile plants, everywhere . . .' (181)

The old man then offers a prayer in Spanish to the sun and asks its blessing (181-82). This is the approved version of Zia sun worship, unlike the cult's perversion and gory sacrifices, he stresses (302). When the sun has fully risen, the sensation of a "living presence" around them has become so intense that, for a few "magical" moments, Sonny can, like don Eliseo, really "see" "los Señores y las Señoras" (182, 181). "At that moment, when the dance of the dazzling, shimmering Lords and Ladies of Light was at its strongest, there was clarity. His mind was clear, at rest, absorbing light, communing with something primal in the universe, connecting to the first moment of light in the darkness of the cosmos" (183). A "mystery," he later

observes, has been “revealed” to him in the “beauty” of “los Señores y las Señoras de la Luz” (226).

In the sunrise scenes and in related passages, Anaya uses a solemn, elevated style of celebration brimming with pathos and tending towards pomposity. The description of Sonny’s experience at sunrise finally peaks in the narrator’s fustian declaration that “[i]f there was anything sacred on Earth, it had washed over him. Then it was gone . . .” (184). *Zia Summer*’s overdone language recalls that found in passages of pastoral nature representation and spiritual experiences composed with similar intent by the earlier authors. It is indeed a self-admitted aesthetic weakness of Anaya to occasionally “get carried away” in purple prose with “cutesy” mannerisms (Interview with Johnson and Apodaca 45). Such rhetorical excesses, Márquez rightly notes, are one of his “most common liabilit[ies]” (41-42). A particularly salient instance of a “cutesy” mannerism in the book is the humanoid depiction of the sunbeams, the “Señores y Señoras (de la Luz).” Anaya has his narrator and sun disciples rhapsodize over the “brilliant, tall, and handsome Lords and Ladies of Light” and their daily “dance of light” (181, 182, 183, 184), “dropping in radiant raiment to touch the Earth with light” (328). This is more cuteness and sweetness than the reader can possibly stomach.<sup>464</sup> Like the above writers, Anaya also switches between languages to lend expression to cultural interstitiality as a Mexican American. It is a further type of oppositional literary tactic, as seen in *We Fed Them Cactus*. Spanish words are scattered throughout the detective novel. Examples from the “garden” lexicon are don Eliseo’s Spanish prayer to “Tata Sol” and the “Señores y Señoras,” “álamo” (cottonwood), “llano” and “familia” (e.g. 107; 4, 66; 126, 205-07; 35, 162). One thing is plain, not so much with C. de Baca yet but certainly with today’s Mexican American authors, most of whom are not fluent in Spanish anymore. Their use of the language is oftentimes not only faulty, but may, in all its sentimentalism, also become quite affected.

Sonny had abandoned his culture’s spiritual outlook for more modern notions. Now, through mystical enlightenment by the sun in the company of his mentor, he is shown to realize the oneness of the universe. It presents itself as a beautiful whole of

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<sup>464</sup> In an essay on prose style in *Bless Me, Ultima*, Willard Gingerich has characterized Anaya’s style as a whole as “rhapsodic.” He sees as its primary features a “diction of exaggeration”—which includes a reflection of exaggerated violence for him—and the frequent use of value descriptors such as “good,” “beautiful” or “evil” (216-18). Porsche criticizes a “pittoreske[ ] Formelhaftigkeit” in the treatment of landscape in Anaya’s novels of the 1990s (155). Both Gingerich’s and Porsche’s points aptly describe pastoral representation in *Zia Summer*.

which the particular is part, which gives his soul harmony and rest. Like his literary predecessors, notably the ecofeminist seeker, Sonny is granted a vision in communion with nature. Anaya calls this an “epiphany in landscape.”<sup>465</sup> He relates “epiphany” to man’s spiritual bond with “the raw, majestic and awe-inspiring landscape of the southwest”—“*la tierra*.” Thus, he believes, one is able to receive the latent “energy” of the land and momentarily even “fus[e]” with it. It is a revelatory encounter with the *spiritus loci* that has an almost “religious” quality (98-99; Interview with Bruce-Novoa 12). Anaya offers another rendering of the numinous landscape vision of the American pastoral character of Marx’s reading.<sup>466</sup> In *Zia Summer* the landscape “sacred” to don Eliseo and the Hispano is the Rio Grande valley, the midpoint of their universe (326). In the mythical substructure—not unlike *The Ultraviolet Sky’s*—, the cottonwood is the “Tree of Life.”<sup>467</sup>

The protagonist is one of the few young who listen to the old-timers’ stories and sayings, and he grows increasingly aware of the need to “return[ ]” to the ways of the land (84, 85; 340). His introduction to the cult of the sun in the early-morning episode is a major rite of passage in his development. In a flowery metaphorical phrase, don Eliseo speaks of the spiritual practice of “the Path of the Sun,” on which Sonny too now commences to “walk” (184; 183). It is the ecopastoral system set in opposition to the contemporary southwestern order. At sunrise and through the course of the narrative, this is accentuated by symbolism of “light,” “life” and “balance” (e.g. 183-85) vs. the ruling “darkness,” “destruction,” “death” and “chaos.” The aged Hispano’s garden is a “lush and green” “oasis of coolness” in the heat and drought of the Albuquerque summer (59, 177; 178). Such a paradisiacal green space is a traditional—rural, now suburban—middle landscape of pastoral that

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<sup>465</sup> I have brought in Eliade’s concept of “hierophany” for Villanueva. The historian of religion David Carrasco applies it to *Bless Me, Ultima* in his discussion of non-Christian religious dimensions in the Mexican American experience therein reflected. Anaya delineates his idea of epiphany in landscape in his homonymous essay (1977). In literature this Christian religious concept acquired fame through James Joyce.

<sup>466</sup> Marx actually also uses the term “epiphany” for this vision of harmony (Afterword 378). Anaya has further associated “epiphany in landscape” with the concept of “inscape.” He borrows the word from the British Victorian poet Gerard Manley Hopkins. The author of spiritual nature poetry, Hopkins invented “inscape” to refer to the underlying unity of creation. Cf. the article by Calderón 77. From his first novel onward, Anaya’s protagonists have had such spiritual experiences in nature. In the much-quoted opening paragraph of *Bless Me, Ultima*, the young Antonio Márez y Luna gains a sense of oneness with the land and the sky through *Ultima* (1).

<sup>467</sup> This symbol of the *axis mundi* recurs in Anaya’s mythical imagination (cf. “Mesa redonda” 445). The sunrise ceremony, during which Sonny has his first epiphany in landscape, takes place beneath the tree.

regularly comes up in Anaya's writings.<sup>468</sup> The antonymic portrayal of the "garden" and the "machine" is further underscored through the character of Sonny.<sup>469</sup> Overall, the novelist engages in a similarly symmetrical and mechanical exercise in jejune pastoral imagery as Villanueva did. Referring to *Zia Summer* generally, Pinçonat has appropriately objected to its "surcharge symbolique" (21).

"The Path of the Sun" is the phrase by which Anaya denotes his personal solar theology. Appearing in bits and pieces in his novels and other literary works since *Bless Me, Ultima*, it is a continuously evolving ecological pastoral philosophy that culminates in the philosophical novella *Jalamanta: A Message from the Desert* in 1996 (cf. Interviews with Chavkin 175-76 and Dick and Sirias 182).<sup>470</sup> As Anaya himself has noted, his spiritual vision is a *mélange* of various world religions and philosophies (Interview with Dick and Sirias 182). In the following I will point out an assortment of ideological influences whose presence and provenance he does not necessarily render explicit in the novel under investigation. A central constituent of this pastoral epistemology is obviously connected with the Native American. As a writer profoundly affected by *Chicanismo*, Anaya evinces a special cultural nationalist insistence on and exaltation of indigeneity and the indigenous legacy. Villanueva has given us a Chicana ecofeminist enunciation of this. In *Zia Summer* as well as in Anaya's other texts, there is Mexican American pride in *mestizaje* and the "grand mestizo mixture" that has taken place for centuries along the Rio Grande (5).<sup>471</sup> Since he comes from a New Mexican background, the Pueblo roots are of particular significance to Anaya. Hispanic New Mexicans ought to be familiar with Pueblo history and culture because they are "part of their [own] history, their heritage," he has Sonny lecture the reader. Among other books, Sonny recommends

<sup>468</sup> E.g. also the old seer Crispín's idyllic *barrio* garden in *Heart of Aztlán* (13 and *passim*).

<sup>469</sup> He has a symbolic nickname—"Sonny, like sol" (161)—and is a "good man," as don Eliseo emphasizes (62, 185).

<sup>470</sup> Written in 1994, this is a preachy parable about the old desert prophet Jalamanta. He returns from banishment to teach his people the ways of their ancestors and "the Path of the Sun" in a New Mexico of chaos and destruction at "the end of time" (5). The book is a highly illuminating source on the sun spirituality and views of a character like don Eliseo in the murder mystery series.

<sup>471</sup> The author was never exposed to subjects such as Mexican history or Native religions during his school and college education. By his own account, he started to study Aztec and other Native American thought in the 1960s, while writing his first book ("Autobiography" 373; Interview with Materassi 3). "The New World Man" is the title of an important essay (1989) in which he stresses the Mexican American's and Nuevomexicano's mestizo heritage. Written on the occasion of the Columbus quincentennial, the piece is meant as a Chicano "declaration of independence" from a narrow Hispanicist interpretation of Mexican American ethnic identity (359-60 and *passim*). *Mestizaje* as a key concept in Chicano/a thinking has been commented on with regard to Villanueva (ch. II.2.3).

Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (29-30).<sup>472</sup> In Anaya's novel the harmony of creation is symbolized by the Zia sun sign with its circle of life binding everything together in the Pueblo universe (29). As in Villanueva, a characteristic Chicano pan-tribalism shows also in don Eliseo's Zia thought. He shares, for instance, the Aztec notion of the age of *El Quinto Sol*.<sup>473</sup>

Like Villanueva and many other Mexican American authors since the 1960s, Anaya emphasizes the indigenous in order to revise Hispanicism. Not just in C. de Baca's times but even today it is prevalent in New Mexico.<sup>474</sup> Also for Anaya this revision comprehends a depreciatory representation of the Catholic religion and church in *Zia Summer*. As don Eliseo remarks to Sonny in a rather condescending tone, "not a single priest [he met in fifty years] ever knew about los Señores y las Señoras de la Luz. . . . [T]hey didn't understand that Grandfather Sun is the giver of life" (182).<sup>475</sup> Unlike the ecofeminist Goddess novel, Anaya does not go so far as to charge Christian religion with ecological degradation. Still, the young protagonist is completely distanced from his Catholic creed. He finds answers to nagging spiritual

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<sup>472</sup> Among the works on the Pueblo people Sonny made his students read when still a teacher is also *The Tewa World*, an anthropological treatise by Alfonso Alex Ortiz (1969). He further names Frank Waters, the novelist, historian and ethnologist who wrote the novel *The Man Who Killed the Deer* (1942). Waters is the person Anaya "admire[s] the most" of all southwestern writers (qtd. in Dunaway and Spurgeon 28). In an article offered as an elegy for Waters upon his death in 1995 ("Return to the Mountains"), he praises him for the "enduring lesson" passed on in his work about New Mexico's old Pueblo and Hispano cultures: "to take care of the earth" (279). Waters's 1942 novel, which treats the clash between Taos Pueblo and the new Euro-American mode of life, was a source of inspiration for Anaya's antinuclear short story "Devil Deer" ("Return" 278). Sonny also values the poetry of Simon Ortiz. Ortiz and Anaya coedited *A Ceremony of Brotherhood, 1680-1980* (1981), a collection of writings and artwork that commemorates the Pueblo revolt of 1680. Anaya, who has Pueblo ancestors himself (Interview with Sharma 142-43), began to form relationships with New Mexico Pueblo people as a young man in the 1960s, especially at Taos Pueblo. It was through the hunts and the time spent with an old Taos man, he would later say, that he understood "the delicate balance of nature." In general, he started to feel what he terms "the vibrations of my Native American soul" ("Autobiography" 381, Interview with Materassi 3). Silko has also written a well-known essay on the Pueblo relationship to the land, "Landscape, History, and the Pueblo Imagination." Besides the apparent Pueblo influence on Hispanos' strong, spiritual attachment to their physical environs, there is, as already observed in reference to C. de Baca, also a possible connection with the mysticism of Spain (cf. note 239).

<sup>473</sup> The present cycle of time, the Fifth Sun, is believed to be destined to end in evil (*Shaman* 158, 162, *Zia* 110; cf. Thelen-Schaefer 217).

<sup>474</sup> The romantic idea of the Spanish "fantasy heritage" (McWilliams) infects also non-Mexican American outsiders like Dominic. He is caricatured as one of the "nut[s]" in New Mexico who long for a Spanish *conquistador* bloodline (*Albuquerque* 72, 291) and a family history of Spanish "grandeur" (*Zia* 12-13, 164). Mexican American and Anglo Hispanicism and the denial of the Native heritage are also an important issue of critique in Richard Vasquez's early California Chicano novel generically titled *Chicano* (1970).

<sup>475</sup> The religious pastoral dualism has been set up in a church episode at Gloria's funeral earlier on. There the Catholic faith is characterized by somber, highly abstract concepts like "[s]in and guilt" and a punishing, transcendent God revered in a "stifling" church, where the sunlight is only refracted through the windows (11; 107-09). This contrasts with the picture Sonny evokes in a mental flashback to his neighbor's joyful Native-style celebration of the natural godhead in his sunny yard (108).

questions, e.g. about death, only in the Native earth religion (110; 139).<sup>476</sup> In this way the narrative takes up the theme of the Mexican American's religious estrangement and the search for Native beliefs, which has been a pet idea in Chicano/a literature. It has been familiar to Anaya's audience from the first.<sup>477</sup>

As with Villanueva's ecofeminism, I again discover a distinct Euro-American resonance in the Native ideal. As I view it, it is strongly informed by the pastoral primitivism of the New Age and certain strands of the Euro-American environmental movement. This coalesces in the figure of the "Ecological Indian" (Krech), which has even been taken over by Natives. In Anaya's text the figure comes in the shape of traditional Hispano characters, as we will later see in greater detail. The narrator affirms about the sun philosophy that "it wasn't a New Age theory" but age-old knowledge in don Eliseo's world (267). Clearly, however, it is influenced by the New Age movement as part of the larger U.S. counterculture since the 1960s. This not only manifests itself in its back-to-naturism and ecoprimitivism but also in the universal eclecticism and the esotericism of its spiritual beliefs and practices. As he draws liberally on ideas from around the world, Anaya participates in what Michael York has aptly labeled "the postmodern spiritual consumer supermarket" (288). Different Native American influences have already been mentioned.<sup>478</sup> A further

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<sup>476</sup> Likewise, he recognizes that one "need[s] no great cathedrals" to experience a divine presence. The phrase—well-worn since the days of the Romantics—is Jalamanta's (76).

<sup>477</sup> In *Bless Me, Ultima* the mestizo boy suffering a religious crisis commences to wonder, "If the golden carp was a god, who was the man on the cross?" (81; also cf. 257). In a careful reading, the book is found to be more balanced ideologically than Anaya's later works. Under *Ultima*'s tutelage Antonio attains a compromise between the different components—Native and Spanish-Catholic—of his ethnic identity. By the time of the trilogy's second novel, *Heart of Aztlán* (1976), the author subscribes to *Chicanismo*. He begins to cultivate a pronounced cultural nationalist interest in the Native and Mesoamerican inheritance and myth in his writing, while mediation with the Hispanic element loses import. This also expresses itself in a more unfavorable depiction of Catholicism and its professors in a book like *Heart of Aztlán*. In the first detective novel, Native nature worship is the better religion, although there is some of the syncretism distinctive of Indohispano New Mexican religious practice. Don Eliseo prays to the sun "just as I pray to the kachinas and the santos" (182). Anaya's concern with Mesoamerican myth and legend is also evident in his remodelings of the Quetzalcóatl myth in *Lord of the Dawn* and of the legend of La Llorona in the novella of the same title. It makes Malinche into the New World's first Llorona.

<sup>478</sup> There are also echoes between "the Path of the Sun" and the teachings of Sun Bear. Of Chippewa (Ojibwa) descent, he is the founder—and, as has been noted sardonically, the only Native member—of the nationally active Bear Tribe Medicine Society. According to Albanese, Sun Bear represents an eclectic New Age incarnation of traditional Native American nature religion. One of his slogans is the call for a return to "walk[ing] in balance on the Earth Mother" (cf. *Nature* 154-63). Aside from this, Anaya is another writer who simplistically refers to Einsteinian physics in an attempt to validate Indohispanic knowledge of the harmony of the universe. This strategy recurs among ecofeminists and New Agers, as already observed in Villanueva. "Everything is connected," the deceased don Eliseo's (improbably erudite) spirit tells Sonny in the final novel, "Just like Einstein said. His formulas tie the universe together. . . . The equations can be put on paper!  $E=mc^2$ . There's an order; we just can't see it" (62).

illustration of the wide range of sources used is the incorporation of Eastern/Far Eastern concepts—a great favorite in modern Western philosophies of various stripes.<sup>479</sup> Anaya is not the only Mexican American of his generation whose thinking reflects Euro-American/U.S. New Age and countercultural ideas. Other Chicano authors of the 1960s and 70s also betray a marked influence from these quarters in their own countervision to the U.S.—such as Alurista.<sup>480</sup>

I have demonstrated throughout this thesis that Mexican American ecopastoral follows in the U.S. pastoral tradition with its enduring Romantic legacy. In the pastoralism and nature spirituality of Anaya's writing, there are also immediate reminiscences of the American Romantics and Emersonian Transcendentalism. These of course left an imprint on twentieth-century Euro-American counterculture. Owing to his academic training, Anaya has acknowledged a debt to the influence of the Romantics, in particular Whitman (Interview with Bruce-Novoa 16).<sup>481</sup> Sonny's vision in landscape and the spiritual unity with the universe he comes to feel evoke for me the famous "transparent eye-ball" passage in *Nature* (1836). Emerson relates his mystical, pantheistic experience in the Concord woods in which he catches a glimpse of the "Universal Spirit," the "Over-Soul," God (441-42, 454). Both the terms "Universal Spirit" (*Shaman* 155, 160-61, 417; *Jemez* 278) and "Oversoul" (Interview with Johnson and Apodaca 45; *Jemez* 112) recur with Anaya and in the Baca novels, though not in the first. In *Jalamanta* the prophet expands on the

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<sup>479</sup> Fernández Olmos has pointed out thematic and formal commonalities between *Jalamanta* and *The Prophet* by the Lebanese American Kahlil Gibran (1923). In his book Gibran expounds a philosophy of love, beauty and redemption that gained cult status among U.S. college students during the 1960s (cf. Fernández Olmos 144-45). An Eastern influence also lies in what seems to be a Hindu concept: the belief in the divinity of the human soul (cf. Dunaway and Spurgeon 24). It is present in don Eliseo's sun ceremony (*Zia* 182, 183). Within the Asian context, the old Hispano is also compared with a Buddhist monk and other indigenous religious practitioners and shamans (266). Anaya's great interest in archetypal symbols and points of reference between world mythologies also shows in the parallels he draws in *Zia Summer* between Quetzalcóatl and the Chinese dragon (266). An elaborate exploration of similarities between Mexican American and Far Eastern myths may be found in his travel journal *A Chicano in China*. In the long narrative poem *Isis in the Heart*, he presents a fusion of New Mexican and Egyptian myths.

<sup>480</sup> In his Chicano indigenist poetry in a compilation like *Floriscanto en Atzlán*, Alurista also exploits U.S. counterculture as he advances a nature-oriented philosophy vis-à-vis the society in power—i.e. "américa" (qtd. from poem nine, "chicano heart"). Cf. also Bruce-Novoa, "Production" 80-81 on Alurista.

<sup>481</sup> He dedicated a poem to him, entitled "Walt Whitman Strides the Llano of New Mexico" (1994). "You spoke to me of . . . / . . . the pantheism of the Cosmos, the miracle of Word," the poetic persona and Anayan alter ego tells "don Walt" during an encounter on the New Mexico Plains (561). In this poem, as much as all through his writing, Anaya celebrates the Mexican American as part of the American cosmos and thus of the American epic, classically composed by Whitman in "Song of Myself" (1855). The first Chicano version appeared in Gonzales's nationalist epic poem *I Am Joaquín/Yo soy Joaquín* in 1967. Anaya's speaker declares in the closing lines of his poem that it is thanks to the great nineteenth-century poet that "I woke to write my *Leaves of Llano Grass* . . ." (562).

“‘Universal Spirit’”—the “Great Spirit” of many Native tribes (155). He refers to it as the ultimately transcendent and unfathomable divine soul of the universe that pervades all of creation and which the human soul may connect with in epiphanic nature experiences, especially sunrise worship (e.g. 43-49, 71-72). This is what Sonny experiences with don Eliseo when he finally “see[s]” the “Lords and Ladies of Light,” feeling the sunlight “penetrate[ him], a soft luminous ball glow[ing] in his chest, . . . envelop[ing] him” (*Zia* 184). Anaya’s vocabulary, too, resembles that of Emerson, who describes how he feels “[t]he currents of the Universal Being circulate through me . . .” During this vision, having become a “transparent eye-ball,” Emerson writes, “I am nothing. I see all” (442).<sup>482</sup>

Like the previous primary literature, then, *Zia Summer* shows that the Mexican American ecopastoral idea(l) is shaped both by its own ethnic paradigm and by the larger U.S. backdrop. This again stresses the necessity to read relationally. Rudolfo Anaya has again and again referred to the “traditional,” “old” rural Nuevomexicano view of the world in his works, here represented by don Eliseo. Nevertheless, already in the spiritual realm it must really be understood as a city-based Chicano intellectual and mythmaker’s neopastoral reinterpretation of the vanishing Hispano culture—with a strong injection of Euro-American ideas as well. “The Path of the Sun” and the “Lords and Ladies of Light” may in effect be called “pseudo-folklore,” as Raymund Paredes has done with the religion of the Golden Carp in *Bless Me, Ultima* (68). Anaya’s ethnic ideological particularism, indeed occasional secessionism, vis-à-vis the American mainstream and the express denial of a New Age influence on don Eliseo’s views constitute a phony pose—in tension with his claim of authenticity. C. de Baca’s Hispano pastoral already told her personal variant of New Mexican history. Yet, in comparison with this pre-movement, precontemporary writer with a lifetime of close contact with the countryside, Anaya’s construct is less genuine for its Chicano New Age superstructure. As for Villanueva’s Chicana ecofeminist model, it is, we have observed, far less tied to a specific region than that

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<sup>482</sup> In addition to the varied Chicano and Euro-American influences identifiable in Anaya’s pastoral concepts, there is also an important dose of Jung again. Underlying Anaya’s “epiphany” is his notion of modern humans’ need to recover the primal symbols from the Jungian collective unconscious. He believes these symbols are revealed in landscape and that they can help men return to original harmony with the universe, within themselves and with all of life (cf. “Epiphany” 99, “Mesa redonda” 446, 456; Interview with Martínez 124). Great significance is hereby ascribed to the “mythical dimension” in the human relationship to the land, in this case the southwestern landscape (“Mythical” 345 and passim; Interview with McIlvoy 76, also with Jussawalla 138).

of Anaya. Unlike Villanueva, the latter does have and maintain certain bonds with his people's rural culture.

Anaya's emphasis on "tradition" in *Zia Summer* also signifies an appeal in behalf of the environment, ecological sustainability and ethnic cultural survival. As in the Goddess theology, the veneration of creation as a sacred being conveys a sense of ethical responsibility. It is complemented by the sun devotee's recognition of the interrelation of all life. In the sunlit yard, the sunbeams are described as reaching "everywhere," "nourishing both corn and old man," as the narrator points out (181; 176).<sup>483</sup> As underlined by the application of the same verb to both nonhuman and human nature, a passage like this highlights the world's oneness as well as the shared dependence on the sun, the "grandfather of all" (158). This is a distinct ecological, egalitarian message of the novel.<sup>484</sup> "The ways of our ancestors were full of beauty," don Eliseo says shortly after sunrise, "They kept close to the earth, watched the sun and moon," thereby "keeping the universe in balance" (184). In view of the felt disarray of the world also in an ecological sense, Anaya has often declared that modern man had better "stand in front of the cosmos in humility," like the old Native and Hispanic communities of New Mexico and the Southwest ("Mythical" 349; 346). *Zia Summer* fictionally expresses the notion of a "love of the earth" like don Eliseo's (162).<sup>485</sup> In brief, Anaya stresses through the old man in *Río Grande Fall*, "We must . . . take care of [our madre tierra]. There is no other mother" (13). From his literary beginnings, the author has presented his Indohispano/New Age nature vision in his writings. The saving power of "love" for all of human and nonhuman creation, which is always depicted as "harmonious," "beautiful" and "sacred," has been his paramount moral lesson. "To walk on the path of the sun" is in fact to "love," as the reader was first told in the final novel of the New Mexico trilogy (e.g. 41-43, 150; also cf. *Jalamanta* 48, 136, 150).<sup>486</sup> In *Zia*

<sup>483</sup> Similarly, Sonny feels the light "penetrate[ ]" him in the same way in which it is "penetrat[ing]" the plants around him (183, 184).

<sup>484</sup> It is expressive of the author's conception of the universe as a "web of life" in which "we are all connected; from stardust to human flesh . . ." (cf. the 1992 essay "La Llorona, El Kookoóee, and Sexuality" 419).

<sup>485</sup> In *Jalamanta* an entire chapter deals with "love of the Earth" (152-56). According to the prophet, it is ancestral "Earth knowledge" of a Native character, a love that mirrors the "Divine Love of the Cosmos" perceived in solar epiphanies (154-56; 43).

<sup>486</sup> This includes, for example, "loving" the crippled children in *Tortuga* (e.g. 42). In *Bless Me, Ultima* the *curandera's* lesson of "sympathy" was neither explicitly political nor obtrusive, both of which can no longer be said about *Heart of Aztlán*. There "love" is offered as a solution to the plight of the Mexican American.

*Summer* the idea of the need for natural/universal “balance” and “love” in human existence has taken a pronounced socioenvironmental and ecopolitical focus in response to current issues of ecological deterioration in the 1990s. As noted before, Anaya’s longstanding theme may have inspired Villanueva in her own feminist pastoral conception of “balance” and “love.”<sup>487</sup>

Anaya proposes no wilderness vision like Villanueva, but it is evident that his ecopastoral code can itself be only of limited practicability for the Mexican American people and their environmental concerns today and to come. This has to do with its simpleness in its preoccupation with spirituality and ancient as well as not-so-ancient, atemporal myths and in its insistence on supposedly indigenous New Mexican land practices.<sup>488</sup> The “garden” pole also shows some ideological contention. Most interesting is the fact that there are patent parallels between don Eliseo’s customs and the satirized Euro-American ideas and spiritualistic doings, in particular Raven’s ecocult. The heterogeneous “Path of the Sun” is concerned with spiritual infusions of—in typical New Age lingo—“energy” from nature.<sup>489</sup> It is no less “curious [a] blend of mystical beliefs” than the pseudo-Pueblo religion practiced by the solar cult—which its adherents also call “the way of the Zia sun” (144). I have referred to other New Age influences in the Hispano “Path” above. Anaya certainly seems cognizant of these correspondences between his own concepts and the mainstream target of mockery in *Zia Summer*. He makes this clear in the second

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<sup>487</sup> Villanueva admires the New Mexican writer. I have also observed a shift towards a more modern Mexican American valuation of the beauty of nature in *We Fed Them Cactus*. It adumbrates this aesthetic dimension in the ecopastoralism and environmentalism of contemporary authors. On the evolution of U.S. environmental ethics, in which context Anaya’s ideas also belong, see ch. II.2.3.

<sup>488</sup> Anaya affirms, “. . . I know that I cannot return to the past of my childhood or the past that my grandfather knew, say in Puerto de Luna as a rancher, as a farmer, and as a complete communal man. But,” he continues, “that past does not have to be dead. I carry it in my memory. I write about it and I think it is a very useful element . . .” (Interview with Martínez 124-25). And elsewhere: “If we flee to the old communities in search of contact with the elemental landscape and a more harmonious view of things, we can return from that visit more committed to engaging the political process. We can still use the old myths . . . to shed light on our contemporary problems” (“Mythical” 350). Starting with his debut novel, Anaya has been frequently attacked by critics—and not without justice—for his fondness for advocating spirituality and myth as a means of dealing with modern ethnic sociopolitical and economic reality. Exemplary of this criticism is the “Mesa redonda con Alurista, R. Anaya, M. Herrera-Sobek, A. Morales y H. Viramontes,” chaired by José Monleón (1981). As with his social ecological protest, Anaya’s concern with the preservation of the Hispano rural way of life relates to Mexican American environmentalism. One of the movement’s demands is the maintenance of traditional agrarian practices linking ecological and cultural equity and survival (cf. Kirk 182; also Peña, *Mexican* xxv-xxvi). Even though Mexican American environmentalists may occasionally be dewy-eyed in their clinging to tradition, this is not to say that their vision is as impracticable as Anaya’s.

<sup>489</sup> The term is employed for Sonny at sunrise (183). Anaya also uses it in his description of epiphany quoted earlier. As mentioned in my discussion of satire, the California tourists derided in *Jemez Spring* are in search of a Native “energy place” in the Santa Fe mountains.

mystery, *Río Grande Fall*, where the protagonist has become a shamanic apprentice. The author has him poke fun at the New Age-style indigenous shamanism taught to him by the *curanderas*.<sup>490</sup> I would indeed argue that Anaya's satire on Euro-American culture and the ecoguru in *Zia Summer* becomes so vehement because he is aware of the close proximity of his own position to the mainstream ideology. On a semiconscious subplane of self-parody and self-subversion, the text thus gives expression to its tornness. It is a measure of ironic refraction of the own ideal that surpasses that of the ecofeminist project in *The Ultraviolet Sky*—although the fundamental pastoral conviction does not become dislodged here either.<sup>491</sup>

Concerning other sources of friction in the bucolic sphere, Anaya, like Villanueva, renders it plain that reality interferes. Throughout the novel this is emphasized by the storyline's and the detective's constant back-and-forth movement between don Eliseo's farm and the city. The latter is "'that other world,' . . . '[t]he world of the brujos,'" as the characters observe right after sunrise (185). In addition, the pastoral standpoint is again put in its place by the industrialist Morino. In their conversation he advises Sonny not to indulge in a "'utopia[n]'" dream of the past (270).<sup>492</sup> Both in the representation of the "garden" and the "machine," we have noticed ambivalences working against ideological closure in a sort of textual double structure. The ideal is revealed to be unrealizable, even somewhat ridiculous, which once more reflects the ancient pastoral tension between ideal and real. Yet again, however, there is no sustained interrogation of the dualistic pastoral scheme in *Zia Summer*. In the last analysis, the "garden" presents us, as in Villanueva's book, with a flight from reality. Anaya may not be an incorrigible pastoral dreamer, but in his novels this does not become sufficiently evident. Especially considering his recent ecopolitical purpose, this strikes me as a grave conceptual defect.

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<sup>490</sup> As Lorenza's pupil, Sonny is told about her own initiation into the world of spirits among shamans in the Mexican Sonoran desert. His reaction is: "'Sounds like that guy, Don Juan. Yaqui magic,' he chuckled" (25). Basically, however, Sonny is already a believer. For information about U.S. New Age cult author Carlos Castañeda and his don Juan series, see my remarks on Anayan shamanism below.

<sup>491</sup> As also Paul Beekman Taylor has noted (212, n. 12), Anaya already casts an ironic eye upon his heroes' quests and their messages in the 1985 mock-epic poem *The Adventures of Juan Chicaspatas*. The poem is the parodic narration of the spiritual journey of "Johnny Smallfeet" and another *barrio* boy to Aztlán and their eventual return as folk heroes to teach their people about the homeland. In *Shaman Winter* Anaya has don Eliseo compare Sonny's adventures in the dream world not only to those of Odysseus but also to Juan Chicaspatas (129-30).

<sup>492</sup> The American pastoralist's taste for the pleasures of progress also appears in the "garden" here, as in Villanueva. Thus we see Sonny combine a later prayer to the sun with Walkman music, which he flips on immediately after (323-24).

As it meshes the genres of the detective novel and the didactic bildungsroman, *Zia Summer* evinces great strain between the two opposing narrative functions of entertainment and ideology teaching. In general, there is too much attention to the level of cultural discourse and the quest and too little of an ongoing mystery story. The sunrise interlude examined previously illustrates this. For the sake of detailing the ritual and the protagonist's mystical insights, the crime narrative is put on hold for too long in this digressive section only loosely related to the detective case.<sup>493</sup> Here and in other episodes of the book, I also perceive a clear imprint of the oral tradition not just in the folkloric content but in respect of the storytelling form. As in the present novel, Anaya has always interpolated self-contained, *cuento*-like passages of stories, dreams and visions into his literary works to transmit cultural and historical context.<sup>494</sup> These inserted episodes often beget a certain lack of coherence in the novelistic plots. This becomes particularly distracting in a detection novel like *Zia Summer*, required by definition to have a tightly organized plot.<sup>495</sup> The examples underscore how Anaya weaves his oral heritage into the ethnic formal construct shaped out of the mystery novel and the bildungsroman. He thereby deliberately overrides established generic categories.

Also owing to the oral influence, the author is more interested in the ecopastoral learning program and the evolution of the identity-seeking detective than in the search for the criminals. The received mystery formula, by contrast, being centered on plot, has no evolving sleuth.<sup>496</sup> As Flys-Junquera has correctly stated, the book's mystery story becomes "secondary" to its cultural, ideological interests ("Murder"

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<sup>493</sup> Other chapters with too much cultural message and too little mystery action are, e.g., chs. seven and nineteen.

<sup>494</sup> Other instances in the first Baca novel are a series of vignettes telling the story of the Estancia Valley and La Cueva (e.g. 126-28).

<sup>495</sup> We have observed the oral quality (Ong) of C. de Baca's episodic plot structure in her memoir. Reed Way Dasenbrock comments on the formal influence of the *cuento* legacy on Anaya as a bicultural southwestern writer. He studies the New Mexico trilogy and some of the short fiction (310-12). The oral also makes itself felt in the habitually simple style and diction of Anaya's prose (on orality, cf. Ong 37-38). An oral influence further shows in his didactic style in *Zia Summer* as much as all through his writings. As obvious in many places in my interpretation, Anaya uses this style to administer both halves of the pastoral statement. He seeks to heighten the pedagogic effect through repetition. Such rhetorical redundancy, I would say, also points to the oral tradition (cf. Ong 39-41).

<sup>496</sup> On this, see Flys-Junquera's comprehensive analysis of Anaya's "subversive" interventions in the detective genre for cultural reasons in his crime novels (e.g. in "Voice," "Murder"). I also discern ironization in his treatment of the Euro-American mystery's heroic private eye. This convention is parodistically undermined through the detective in *Zia Summer*. Sonny frequently shows clumsiness at work, makes many mistakes and keeps walking into traps (e.g. 134-35, 140, 150). He who likes to fantasize about being a "hero" "rescuing women from perilous situations" must himself be rescued several times. Rita and his octogenarian neighbor save him from becoming the cultists' next sun sacrifice (3; 294-302).

346-47). We have seen with the nuclear truck element how the environmental issue is subordinated to the crime thriller action; usually, though, the opposite is true. An important problem that stems from this is a neglect of the suspense convention. *Zia Summer* is quite predictable: little doubt remains about the murderers' and ecoterrorists' identity after two thirds of the text.<sup>497</sup> From the outset to the showdown, really, the entire detective plot is rather lame and flat.<sup>498</sup> I therefore wish to stress with regard to Anaya's utilization of a mystery frame in the novel that, in my opinion, he subverts too many of its conventions as genre fiction in the service of the ethnic discourse. His conflation of narrative forms and genres and his deviations from the detection formula are the cause of unbridgeable structural ruptures in this ecopastoral mystery novel as mystery. In other words, the audience's delectation is marred by the ideological motivation. My position here diverges from that of a critic like Flys-Junquera.<sup>499</sup> Unlike the freer forms of composition chosen by C. de Baca and Villanueva in their books, such fiction needs to stick to the pattern for it to work.

### 3.4.2. Farmers and *curanderas*

The ecopastorality of lococentric Nuevomexicano culture in *Zia Summer* is not only expressed in the sun religion but also in other, more practical elements of country life. This again goes along with certain character types. Don Eliseo and his North Valley farm, I have shown, embody the obsolescent Rio Grande farming ways. The old Hispano is closely connected to the valley by ancestry. As he proudly declares, "“Before Albuquerque was made a villa in 1706, the Romeros were already raising corn here”" (66). Shaded by the ancient tree, his adobe house dates from the late

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<sup>497</sup> During a meeting with the cult leader Raven, Sonny finds out that he is identical with the antinuclear activist Pájaro (215). It is consequently rather evident who commits the crimes.

<sup>498</sup> These flaws have been briefly noted by some reviewers. E.g. Streng: "The mystery plot fails to weave together a believable string of events, instead unraveling into inconsistency and predictability" (179).

<sup>499</sup> I contradict her claim that the reader of Anaya's detective novels "learn[s] inadvertently" his lesson ("Voice" 132; 133). Anaya is well aware of the difficulty of communicating political concerns in literature without putting the addressee off. As he said in an interview, "The reader wants story and you're talking message; the reader may quickly leave you" (with Crawford 112). He does not manage to solve this problem in his mysteries.

seventeenth century (163).<sup>500</sup> The agricultural practices used by this tophiliac (Tuan) are drawn as profoundly adjusted to the land. He, e.g., listens to “the heartbeat of the earth” in his cornfield, whose plants—“Indian corn”—he can assertedly “hear” grow (67; 59).<sup>501</sup>

“The old people like don Eliseo . . . had so much to share,” Sonny reflects at sunrise, “[the] old ways, the traditions the ancestors had honed to perfection in the Río Grande valley.” This includes the prayers to the “Lords and Ladies of Light,” which are “so old that now only the medicine men in the Indian pueblos remembered them. And don Eliseo” (184; 325; 183). The octogenarian is the pivotal figure in the novel’s idyll of rusticity. The sun worshipper with the Elysian given name, resident in the Hispano village of Ranchitos, is stylized into “a living symbol of the farmer of the valley,” in the words of the narrator (84).<sup>502</sup> He might be denominated the “Ecological Indohispano”—Anaya’s contemporary New Mexican rendition of the Mexican American cousin to the clichéd figure of the ecologically correct Native.<sup>503</sup> As manifest in aforementioned utterances of don Eliseo, he has a distinctly homiletic, sententious quality, in line with the narrative’s educative intent. One may describe this, with Dyan Donnelly, as a “tendency to sound like the ‘good Indian’ in a Hollywood western.”<sup>504</sup> The author adds to the mythification and mystification of don Eliseo through the device of representing him only from the outside, through his pupil’s eyes. We are given a near-hagiographic portrait of this telluric character, e.g.

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<sup>500</sup> The image of the Mexican Americans’ roots in New Mexico reaching as deep as those of the Rio Grande cottonwoods is a recurrent trope in their literature. It also comes up as the central image in Jimmy Santiago Baca’s poem “Roots” in the 1989 *Black Mesa Poems* (11-12). This collection conveys the strong sense of place of Baca, who lives on a small farm atop Black Mesa in Albuquerque’s South Valley. Like Anaya, he also addresses ecological issues affecting his region. For instance in his poem “Sparton Industry” (2001), which enunciates a sharp critique of the chemical contamination produced by the former Albuquerque high-tech manufacturer (282-83). For a study of analogies between the work of Anaya and Baca—*Heart of Aztlán* and *Albuquerque* as compared with Baca’s most acclaimed book, the poetry collection *Martín and Meditations on the South Valley* (1987)—, cf. Gish’s monograph (137-44).

<sup>501</sup> Don Eliseo’s life at one with nature’s cycle (59) also comprehends traditional seasonal activities like making *ristras* (strings) *de chile* and drying apples on the roof with his late wife in the fall (68). Reminiscences like these are evoked in set pieces in the style of New Mexican *costumbrismo*, which we already know from C. de Baca.

<sup>502</sup> *Rancho* means “small rural farming community.” Anaya increases the symbolic load by having don Eliseo live in “La Paz Lane” (58). As a whole, Ranchitos distinguishes itself through its “quiet,” “tranquillity” and “peace” (58; 4, 170), unlike the circumambient city.

<sup>503</sup> Krech’s Ecological Indian has already been related to characters like the Hispano rancher Graciano C. de Baca and the Native grandmother in Villanueva’s work. Anaya’s glorification of the “earth people” of the old Native and Hispanic Southwest (qtd. from the essay “Mythical” 347) is reminiscent of Villanueva’s primitivistic ecofeminist ideal of the “Native Person of the Earth.”

<sup>504</sup> Donnelly’s observation about the characters of *Bless Me, Ultima* (116-17) also fits don Eliseo. Another example is the old man’s jeremiadic ecowarning to Sonny, “If you move a blade of grass, you change the land. If you poison the water, someday you will have to drink it” (127).

at sunrise.<sup>505</sup> Don Eliseo is an Indohispanic literary variety of the many pastoral figures over whom hovers, in terms of Marx, an “aura of magic and enchantment, a quasi-religious metaphysical potency” (“Future” 212).

As an ethnic environmental “garden” type, the old Hispano on his farm is designed as a counterfigure to the Euro-American myth of “King Arthur’s Court” and its “machine” characters. Similarly monolithic as his analogues, don Eliseo perpetuates the time-honored Hispano model of community-based subsistence agriculture. He who still waters his field with the *acequia* irrigation system (178) is presented in stark antithesis to the exploitative, abortive Euro-American practices of land and water use on the Rio Grande and in other parts of New Mexico. He stands out against developers and industrialists like Dominic with his Rio Grande river vision or the new Plains homesteaders with their adverse farming and irrigation techniques.<sup>506</sup> Albuquerque’s Mexican American lower class is—like the Natives—normally relegated to the margins of U.S. society and literature. In the character of don Eliseo, Anaya has raised a representative of it to the dignity of literary portrayal and ecological moral superiority. As seen in the sunrise episode, among other sequences, the old man also takes the part of a pastoral “guide” (226) for the lead

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<sup>505</sup> He even acquires a suprahuman, “godlike” aspect during the sun ceremony, when he is suffused with what is taken to be the divine spirit of the universe (182, 183).

<sup>506</sup> There is also a deep contrast between don Eliseo—of whose “love of the earth” the North Valley’s new Euro-American inhabitants “knew little” (162)—and an arrogant young city constable over the issue of the dry cottonwood. Whereas the farmer listens to the tree “like a doctor listening to the heartbeat of a patient” (4), the official indiscriminately declares it a “public nuisance” and orders it cut (65). As shortly mentioned in connection with C. de Baca (note 176), not only the traditional Hispanic and Nuevomexicano Plains ranching culture is credited with a high degree of ecological adaptation. Opie and others have also described the Spanish-origin tradition of subsistence *acequia* (gravity-driven earthen ditch) farming in the Hispanic Southwest and New Mexico, which emphasizes communal land management and cooperation in an agricultural village, as well suited to the environment. It is a better adjusted and more successful system than the isolated, privately owned Euro-American family farms on the Plains run for individual profit and sure to fail with the eventual drying up of both groundwater tables and decades-long government aid (cf. Opie, *History* 311, 314; 310, 365). Also cf. Peña’s environmental history of the Hispanic Southwest on the Hispano model (*Mexican* 81-88). As Peña points out, the *acequia* irrigation system is rooted in late antiquity and has strong Arabic influences (82). It is not of Native American origin, as claimed in Anaya’s novel (208). For ethnophilosophical reflections on Indohispanic environmental ethics, see the article “Notes on (Home)Land Ethics” by Reyes García (1998); his Ph.D. thesis contains also an analysis of *Bless Me, Ultima*. A general history of *Acequia Culture* has been authored by José Rivera. *Zia Summer* further provides the ecopastoral ideal of Hispano Plains stockraising vis-à-vis a century of Euro-American land degradation. This occurs in the romanticizing depiction of La Cueva’s almost extinct communal lifestyle in concert with nature in the episodes set in the Estancia Valley. It is a working-class version of what C. de Baca told us, complete with the Hispano *ranchero* and *vaquero* type José Escobar (e.g. 126-28, 137-38, 204-07). Anaya has harked back to his native Plains landscape and its traditional culture in his first book as well as in many later works, e.g. also in the 1982 short story collection *The Silence of the Llano*.

character (and the reader). It is the accustomed Chicano/a bildungsroman pattern, and don Eliseo another ethnic grandparent teacher figure.<sup>507</sup>

Classic pastoral ideals resurge here in a contemporary fashion in the representation of the Hispano farm culture. Besides the harmony and love dealt with above, an important attribute of rural living is its being “simple” (170). “Beans, corn, calabacitas [squash], and chile, that’s all we need to survive . . .,” don Eliseo affirms (67). This is once again the rustic antipode to the materialism of the urban U.S., as with the preceding writers. Similar bucolic clichés can be found with don Eliseo’s octogenarian neighbors don Toto and especially doña Concha. These are secondary characters in a subplot overlapping with the master strands in the novel’s plot system. They also incarnate the regional tradition. Don Toto still cultivates one of the oldest of the once numerous North Valley vineyards established by the first Hispano settlers centuries before (253), and doña Concha continues to live on the remnants of the large acreage her family formerly owned (71). In a string of pastoral terms, the old woman’s present life is described, both by the narrator and herself, as (economically) “independent,” “free” and “happy” (71). It becomes, however, obvious throughout that doña Concha and the two other old-timers representative of the “simple” life on the land have long been reduced to very real “pobre[za]” (poverty) in Albuquerque society (e.g. 71, 127). As to the woman’s flaunted economic independence, she turns out to be a regular customer at Goodwill and similar stores (259, 343). It is interesting that in the name of the same pastoral ideal in C. de Baca’s narrative it was upper-class wealth that was disguised as rural simplicity.

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<sup>507</sup> He is a literary re-creation of the venerable elders—“los viejitos”—of Anaya’s childhood (cf. Interview with Crawford 106, “Magic” 275; also the essay “A Celebration of Grandfathers”). In this novel dedicated to “the old people who walk on the Path of the Sun” (n. pag.), don Eliseo may be considered a spokesman for the writer. Anaya views himself not just as a “storyteller” but by now indeed a “new elder[ ]” for his community (Interview with González 157)—much like Villanueva. Other works of Mexican American literature are better illustrations, yet there is in the relationship between Sonny and don Eliseo also some implication of what Berndt Ostendorf has noted about U.S. ethnic writing in general. Namely that it has recurrently represented a sentimental conspiracy between grandfather and grandchild against the already assimilated parent generation, which subordinated ethnic cultural identity to the struggle of survival in the new country (25). Sollors makes the same point regarding the ethnic generational conflict often found in American literature (“Literature” 659). Furthermore, Anaya’s work brings to mind the New Mexican Orlando Romero’s novel *Nambé-Year One* (1976). It is a formation narrative with a pastoral portrait of the fading Indohispano farming culture in the northern New Mexican (Upper Rio Grande) village of Nambé. The young I-narrator Mateo Romero is educated in the traditional way by his grandfather. Anaya has commended Romero’s book (Interview with Reed 7-8).

Pastoralist romanticism in picturing the old farming ways also appears in the scene in which Sonny finds don Eliseo and his neighbors hoeing and watering the *acequia*-irrigated cornfield one morning. Doña Concha not only “hadn’t forgotten how to use the hoe,” we read, but “[t]he viejitos could drink wine all night and still get up with the sun to work. Damn, Sonny thought, let me grow old like them” (85). In this rather bizarre eulogy to the old people’s backbreaking labor, the text draws a social ecological utopia of Hispano rurality. Hard physical work is made into a pastoral value opposed to the unstable, dissolute life of the young protagonist.<sup>508</sup> This depiction underlines that, as a pastoral author, Anaya is less occupied with a realistic, ethnologically exact “reflect[ion]” of his culture—his stated purpose in writing—than with creating an idealizing, at times heavily distortive “garden.”<sup>509</sup> The sublimation of farmwork in *Zia Summer* again highlights what Edmund Chambers formulated thus in 1895: “One must realize that pastoral is not the poetry of country life, but the poetry of the townsman’s dream of country life.”<sup>510</sup> Moreover, I would like to contend, Anaya’s idealizing appropriation of farm life and labor seems related to the farmworker ideal prized by the Chicano movement. It was of particular prominence in Luis Valdez’s *Teatro Campesino*. As Bruce-Novoa remarks about this Chicano ideal, “For a time many urban Chicanos indulged a nostalgia for a rural experience few of them had ever known . . .” (“Charting” 123).<sup>511</sup> To my mind, Anaya’s ideal notion of farmwork rests on unitary ideological principles comparable

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<sup>508</sup> He meets his neighbors when he gets up around noon after a night of partying and nightmarish dreams (81). It is a pastoral ideal that is again proposed later on. E.g. in the positive typing of the South Valley gentleman friend of Sonny’s widowed mother as an “hombre de la tierra” and “hard worker”—“Puro manito, puro Nuevo Mexicano” (108). It also shows, some pages down, with the Dominics’ old African American ex-gardener, another suspect. He explicitly contrasts his life of “hard work[ ]” with the ghetto youth’s fatal attraction to easy money from drugs (119).

<sup>509</sup> Similar tension between the mimetic and the message (Ickstadt) has been detected in *We Fed Them Cactus*.

<sup>510</sup> Qtd. from *English Pastorals* (cf. Ruhe 143 on Chambers).

<sup>511</sup> The Mexican American farmworker became a symbolic hero and identification figure in Valdez’s plays, which enacted the migrant farmworkers’ political protest on stage (cf. Bruce-Novoa, “Charting” 122-23). Recall Anaya’s reverence for César Chávez (cf. note 439 above). A prettified picture of (traditional) Mexican American farming is also projected in the writing of Cleofas Vigil, a northern New Mexican farmer, poet and folk singer of whom Anaya thinks highly (“[a man] who taught us a lot” (“Return” 279)). He even appears as a minor character in *Shaman Winter* (195). In the 1972 Chicano literary anthology *Aztlán*, edited by Valdez and Stan Steiner, Vigil is represented by the poem “Mother of All Life—the Earth” (1970) in the section devoted to “La Causa: La Tierra (The Earth).” In this poem the farmer-speaker—in the “pure” “simplicity of his *hispano* love of the land,” as Steiner puts it in his introductory note—enthusias pastoral-style: “Though barefoot we are happy / With our belly heavy / Full of green beans . . . / The poor man’s heart rejoices / When the fields are green . . . / . . . [in] his garden” (227-28).

to those underlying the Hispano elite idealization of the feudal rural order in C. de Baca's pastoral New Mexico history some decades earlier.<sup>512</sup>

More yet than in the Hispana *patrona's* account and far more than in Villanueva's individualistic wilderness story, communalism constitutes a cardinal social pastoral quality of Nuevomexicano culture in *Zia Summer* and Anaya's other works. In the detective novel, this expresses itself in an extolment of the family and community orientation in a village like Ranchitos. According to the narrator, "[f]or centuries the community was a *vecindad* [neighborhood] in which people took care of each other" (252-53). The New Mexican author thus reconnects with the old tradition of pastoral, from which European/Euro-American pastoralism and pastoral writing have long moved away.<sup>513</sup> Aside from the three *compadres'* (close friends) joint farm labor, this social cohesiveness now survives only in their nightly gatherings to talk and tell stories as in bygone days (72, 252-53). Except for doña Concha and don Toto, "all the old neighbors [of don Eliseo] were dead or gone to nursing homes" (253). The pastoral merits ascribed to old-time Hispano life in this narrative—such as simplicity, physical work and the community—bespeak a deeply sentimental yearning for an idealized past. Sometimes only covertly, Anaya thereby again articulates disapproval of the urban present and its disintegrative impact on the traditional culture. Concurrently, the ethnic ways become revalorized. As observed before, this critical aspect of pastoral goes back to Vergil. Like the aged ecopastoral characters of the other Mexican American works, the three old Hispanos again represent classical menaced shepherd figures à la Weatherley.

There is more to the old-timers in *Zia Summer*. Often together with don Eliseo, the old couple also serve as comic types.<sup>514</sup> Through the course of the book, notably

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<sup>512</sup> I have pointed out parallels between her Hispano myth of unity and the Chicano nationalist ideal of ethnic and cultural unity (see note 224).

<sup>513</sup> A desire for solitude in nature has been characteristic there (as in Villanueva). Citing Poggioli's 1975 book, Hess notes that in classical and early modern pastoral, until about the second half of the seventeenth century, pastoral figures were seldom solitary. Rather than being celebrated, solitude was perceived as deprivation or suffering (80).

<sup>514</sup> When the old woman is first introduced, we learn not only of her lost land but also of her continually skewed falsies, her hair dye turned orange and the nights she still spends barhopping with don Toto. He is an incorrigible womanizer who, at eighty, dresses like a 1940s *pachuco* and drives a customized car (72; 70-71). With don Eliseo in tow, they generate comic through their grotesque appearance and their behavior. A repeatedly used (self-)reference to the three is "Snap, Crackle, and Pop" (e.g. 258, 284, 288)—actually the names of Kellogg's cereal cartoon characters popular for decades in the U.S. Their boisterous, burlesque comic includes lots of bawdy remarks and jokes. It is illustrated in a number of humorous, teasing conversations they have among themselves and with the protagonist, especially about erotic matters. Thus the threesome spoil a schmaltzy love scene between Sonny and Rita in bed by rapping on the window with news about the criminal case (283-88).

doña Concha and don Toto have the function of providing comic relief and temporary release from the somber, heavy fare of the overemotional, moralistic story of the “machine” in the “garden”—the pastoral message they themselves embody on a different plane. This contrapuntal humor lends a certain tragi-comic tone to the text. Like the detective framework and the device of satire, the comic episodes featuring the bifunctional old characters are intended for the reader’s enjoyment and to help increase his willingness to swallow a lesson thus comically pepped up. Such a use of humor—and its expression through the old couple—is clearly another instance of how the oral storytelling tradition has acted on Anaya’s writing.<sup>515</sup>

The ecopastoral idea of the Indohispano Rio Grande mode of life close to nature is also enacted through Sonny’s girlfriend Rita and her friend Lorenza. Two important young practitioners of the old ways, these characters are largely typifications of the folk traditions of *curanderismo* and shamanism. They assist and direct the protagonist on his search for his heritage and, on the investigative level, for Raven. Rita Lopez is another of Anaya’s many *curandera* figures, a staple of his work since *Ultima*. Herself a Zia sun follower (106-07, 327), Rita “knew the old traditional world of the Nuevo Mexicanos.” She has grown up “in the tradition of the last curanderas who practiced in the valley” and taught her their healing methods (56). She also attends to the detective’s troubled soul (e.g. 55-56, 174). She “didn’t need Freud” for this due to her knowledge of centuries-old folk psychiatry (56). In effect, she tells Sonny in the second mystery novel, modern medicine is generally incapable of taking care of spiritual health (22). It is one of Anaya’s repeated pastoral

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<sup>515</sup> The author himself mentions the effect of oral humor on his literary work (Interview with Martínez 118). In my view, don Toto and doña Concha may well have been inspired by comic stock figures of the northern New Mexican *cuento* repertory. There is a certain resemblance between them and don Cacahuete (Mr. Peanut) and doña Cebolla (Mrs. Onion), a comic, stupid couple with a motorcycle, as re-created in writing in Ulibarrí’s short story “Mano Fashico” (118/120). It forms part of the 1977 collection *Mi abuela fumaba puros/My Grandmother Smoked Cigars*, to which Anaya contributed the introduction (cf. also R. Ruiz 261, 266 on Ulibarrí’s literary treatment of this piece of folklore). In this and other compilations, Ulibarrí’s nostalgic, frequently moral stories pastoralizing New Mexico’s rural Hispano heritage are lightened by a persistent vein of sometimes ribald humor. Anaya praises this *cuento* technique in his introductory remarks (9). The introduction of comic elements and episodes for comic relief is a procedure Anaya has employed throughout his oeuvre. This is also the case of the hilarious parody of the school Christmas play in *Bless Me, Ultima*. Originally composed as a separate story (published as “The Christmas Play” in *The Silence of the Llano*), the episode counterbalances the succeeding murder scene, as Anaya explains (“Notes” 55). A writer like Anaya reflects the Mexican American/Hispano legacy of U.S. southwestern humor. Americanist scholars have traditionally focused on the important Euro-American male practice of humor, both folkloristic and literary, in the Southwest, which had its heyday in the decades prior to the Civil War. Cf. the essay by Anne Goodwyn Jones on old Southwest humor. A German study by Hans Bungert, *William Faulkner und die humoristische Tradition des amerikanischen Südens* (1971), also centers on the Euro-American tradition of humor in the old Southwest.

barbs aimed at a rationalistic, scientific medicine and in favor of the holistic practice of *curanderismo*. Such a binary distinction has often recurred in connection with the archetypal *curandera* in Mexican American literature.<sup>516</sup> As a female pastoral character, Rita also evokes the figure of the Earth Mother.<sup>517</sup> Although a main character, she is hardly more than a cardboard figure. This is typical of Anayan women characters, whether minor or major, good or bad.<sup>518</sup> As for Rita, she is not only conceived as a narrative representative of *curanderismo*, but also subject to a mostly very conventional and frequently highly sexist portrayal as a woman. Here and in other writings, such a flat, sexist presentation of female characters is a deficiency Anaya critics have properly found fault with.<sup>519</sup> It evinces the traditional *machismo* of the first generation of contemporary Mexican American writers, which feminists like Villanueva have been seeking to deconstruct since the 1970s. Anaya, for all feminine pastoral harmony with the earth in his work, can hardly be imagined giving us a Hispana character masturbating in the wilderness.

Lorenza Villa is a related, even more anemic Nuevomexicana “garden” woman and *curandera*. In contrast to a less powerful healer like Rita, Lorenza possesses knowledge of shamanic practices (242). She has learned the craft of “indigenous shamanism” from shamans in Mexico (106, 174, 242). Lorenza extends don Eliseo’s teachings about the spirit world as the basis of a balanced relation to nature in Anaya’s philosophical and fictional vision (cf. *Jalamanta* 159-62). In *Zia Summer* she begins to instruct Sonny how to exploit the shamanic powers tied to his *nagual*,

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<sup>516</sup> Cf. also Anaya’s essay “Curanderas.” Written upon the completion of *Zia Summer*, it calls for the recognition of *curanderismo*’s spiritual healing potential alongside modern medicine. A similar accolade for the *curandera* appeared in C. de Baca’s *The Good Life*. Ecofeminist pastoral medicine criticism has been advanced by Villanueva.

<sup>517</sup> A “woman of the valley [who] knew the ways of the earth” (*Río* 92), Rita’s body is described in terms of earth images. She is, e.g., “brown, a soft, sexy tan, like the earth of the valley after rain” (*Zia* 3; similarly 173). She is the positive opposite to the women competing to be the “Earth Mother” in the satirized cult. In addition to *curanderismo*, Rita symbolizes other qualities of the rural culture, like traditional Mexican food—as served in her own restaurant (52). On Mexican American food and its substantial role for C. de Baca and other Mexican American writers, see note 237 herein. Rita stands also for the “sense of familia” (162; 2) as a major conservative value in Anaya’s rural set of principles. His essayistic work underscores his faith in the vital contribution of the family unit in the continuation of Hispano customs in today’s cities (cf. “Crossroads” 337-38).

<sup>518</sup> His best-known female figure, Ultima, is no exception to such shallow characterization.

<sup>519</sup> Like Sonny, Anaya’s male characters all too often display an ingrained taste for “[h]ot, spicy, good-looking mamasotas [beautiful women],” to be “pick[ed like] apples” and “sweet to eat” (79). For critical voices in reference to *Zia Summer*, see Fernández Olmos 108, Flys-Junquera, “Shifting” 112, and Dunaway and Spurgeon 24. Cf. also Herrera-Sobek’s article on the unidimensional representation of women in Anaya’s second novel.

the coyote, and to even assume its shape (194-96, 242).<sup>520</sup> Thanks to his supernatural gifts, the detective can prevail in the fight against the evil shaman Raven and his crimes here and in the subsequent volumes.<sup>521</sup> Lorenza's shamanic guidance plays a crucial part in Sonny's ripening. The young man's true identity is that of a "good brujo," a fledgling, as yet untrained shaman of the Zia sun, now initiated by the *curandera* (195-96, 324).<sup>522</sup>

Let me emphasize that there is again a fair amount of New Age pastoralism in the "indigenous" shamanism from Mexico performed in these novels. Shamanic initiation in Anaya and a journey like Sonny Baca's bear strong resemblance to portions of the don Juan books authored by the U.S. New Age guru and self-proclaimed shaman Carlos Castañeda. Anaya even expressly refers to don Juan in *Río Grande Fall*, we have found.<sup>523</sup> Sonny's shamanic trip grows more and more ridiculous over the course of the series. As noted above, Anaya does introduce some irony vis-à-vis such shamanism and shamanic journeys in his writing.

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<sup>520</sup> The belief in the the *nagual*—man's animal guardian spirit according to Native American tradition in this New Mexican novel (106, 195)—is in fact a Náhuatl concept. Cf. Thomas Bauder's examination of black and white magic in *Bless Me, Ultima*, in which he identifies similarities between Hispano witchcraft and *curanderismo* as depicted by Anaya, and Náhuatl beliefs. For a monographic investigation of witchcraft, Hispanic and Native, along the Rio Grande, see Marc Simmons, *Witchcraft in the Southwest*. As with Raven, Sonny's coyote *nagual* obviously also derives from the U.S. Native trickster figure.

<sup>521</sup> On the disruption of the mystery convention through an element like the spiritual layer of Anaya's books, cf. again Flys-Junquera's essays.

<sup>522</sup> "Good *brujo*" is an oxymoronic phrase, *brujo* being a pejorative term Anaya has reinterpreted.

<sup>523</sup> The Peruvian American anthropologist Castañeda described his purported, nearly twenty-year-long apprenticeship with don Juan, a Yaqui shaman from Sonora, in a sequence of books launched by the immensely popular *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* in 1968. Castañeda influenced a whole generation of countercultural seekers. The don Juan books were exposed as a great hoax by Richard de Mille in *Castaneda's Journey* (1976). De Mille also edited a second volume on this topic, *The Don Juan Papers* (1980). For a reading of Anaya's New Mexico trilogy through the work of Castañeda, cf. Margarita Nieto's essay. Castañeda has not just left his mark on Anaya—as well as on Villanueva, in whose writings he is present both implicitly and by name a number of times. He also inspired other first-wave Chicano authors like Alurista (*Floriscanto en Aztlán* starts with an epigraph from *The Teachings of Don Juan*). On the significant influence of Castañeda on Alurista, see Bruce-Novoa, "Production" 81, and his 1980 essay in De Mille's collection, "Chicanos in the Web of Spider Trickster." Besides Alurista, the latter piece makes mention of Anaya. Bruce-Novoa therein also points out the genuine Yaqui Miguel Méndez's literary indictment of Castañeda and his don Juan Yaqui sham (in his epic poem *Los criaderos humanos (épica de los desamparados) y Sahuaros* (1975)).

### 3.4.3. The Rain Motif

The physical landscape occupies an essential position in the novel. A lead motif in this pastoral nature imagery is the rain.<sup>524</sup> Rain and the lack thereof decisively impact the land and the people in the New Mexico depicted by Anaya. The environmental effects of the drought have already been dealt with. As for humans, the weather is shown to be a determining factor in their physical and psychic well-being. In this regard, the narrator observes, “[e]verything changed according to the weather. . . . Men and women lived in harmony with the rains that washed across the [Rio Grande] valley” (282). Even in a modern metropolis like Albuquerque, Anaya takes care to stress, the meteorological influence cannot be escaped, “the moods of the city sw[i]ng[ing] to the moods of the weather” (199-200). Indeed, as the protagonist reflects in a different context, “Landscape dictates character [i.e. that of everything in it]” (198). This urban narrative here shares another feature with C. de Baca’s nature writing and a wilderness novel like Villanueva’s: the representation of the rain and people’s relationship with it is a metaphor of ecological unity with nature. The New Mexican Hispano is described as having lived this way by tradition.<sup>525</sup>

The great meaning of the rain is underlined by the catalog of names used by the interlingual Hispano folk culture to refer to different kinds of rain over the year. This makes one think of the Inuit and the snow. “Each rain had a name,” the narrator tells us,

Manga de lluvia, falling dark and straight down like a sleeve. Or una manguita, a small sleeve. Lluvia de los corderos, the cold, spring rain of lambing season. In summer the monsoon that came to relieve the dry summer, and which sometimes turned into the ‘pinche rain’ because it ruined cut alfalfa in the field, or a picnic, or a baseball game.

In July the tempestas de lluvia, lluvias fuerte [sic], the thunderstorms of the summer, which came quickly and dumped everything in a few minutes. . .

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<sup>524</sup> In her article on the importance of water in Anaya’s novels, Flys-Junquera does not study the role of rain in *Zia Summer*.

<sup>525</sup> For don Eliseo the cycle of human lives is “like the cycle of the seasons” (59). He regards the rain as “alive” and endowed with a “spirit” (66). It is venerated as “sacred” and traditionally prayed for by the Hispano, as among the Pueblo people (208, 282).

In September showers moved in as sure as the state fair came around, and so people joked and called it state fair rain. There was a rain for every season, because rain was sacred, life-giving. (281-82)

As we will go on to see in the present chapter, the New Mexico desert environment takes center stage in this ecopastoral Albuquerque novel, as in most of Anaya's works. To speak with Flys-Junquera, nature is "given the central voice" in *Zia Summer*, being "one of the main protagonists" ("Voice" 128; 134). This, it ought to be emphasized, is not only unusual in the classic detective story but also in contemporary U.S. fiction. Owing to its urban orientation, nature has there dwindled to a sporadic, interchangeable backdrop to the main action. I have also mentioned the century-old tradition of desert celebration in U.S. culture and literature, of which C. de Baca was an early Mexican American female exponent. Anaya is an important ethnic contributor in our time.<sup>526</sup>

The portrayal of the landscape is again marked by stylistic overindulgence here, showing a surfeit of rain imagery throughout the first murder mystery. This becomes apparent in Anaya's deployment of the summer monsoon in structuring the criminal plot's evolution so as to draw attention to the environmental theme. The New Mexico rain has already been put to similar, though less consistent use as an organizing force in the Hispana folk autobiography. Here too the long expectation and gradual buildup of the rains is dramatized over much of the text and intertwined with the detective story. Simultaneously, the tension of the hot weather and the gathering storm becomes a symbolic meteorological reflection of the (moderately) rising suspense of the action revolving around Raven and the nuclear waste truck. Illustrative of the role of the rain are the numerous references to the issue on the part of the narrator and in Sonny's conversations with don Eliseo and others.<sup>527</sup> At long

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<sup>526</sup> See ch. II.1.6 on desert writing. Concerning contemporary mainstream American fiction, cf. also Scott Russell Sanders's ecocritical complaint about the customary absence of nature from it (esp. 190-95). Flys-Junquera refers to Sanders's piece too ("Voice" 120). The land has already played a leading narrative part for the foregoing authors—more on this environmental literary strategy in their analyses, especially that of C. de Baca.

<sup>527</sup> To give some examples: From the start the atmosphere is tense as there is long no prospect of rain to relieve the dry spell in the Rio Grande valley (49 (ch. 6)). On the mystery level, the increasing suspense during Sonny's first round of investigations at Raven's mountain compound is accompanied by a few early clouds, albeit thin and without rain yet (141 (ch. 14); similarly 155-56 (ch. 15), 157 (ch. 16), 176 (ch. 17)). At a later point, parallel to the crime narrative's progression, the investigator perceives a scent of rain in the air—"There was nothing like that smell in the high arid plateau" (281). Clouds are moving in now that might bring the first rain or are its harbingers (199, 207 (ch. 19)). Finally, rain is on the way (242, 249 (ch. 23)), and soon after, rain clouds begin to rise around the city

last, at the close of chapter twenty-five, the first of the longed-for monsoon rains breaks loose as the climactic point of the book's environmental-meteorological action. After an almost three-hundred-page wait for rain, the drought is broken. When the rainstorm starts, Anaya writes,

The roar of thunder filled the valley, and everywhere a sigh of relief went up. The ozone of the lightning flashes across the valley mellowed the tensions that had been so high. Hurried rain, falling fast and furious and sending people jumping across gutters suddenly full, and hurried flashes of welcomed lightning. The streets wore a sheen of neon lights as the summer rain covered the asphalt, and the people of the valley hurried home to find relief in love. . .

Sonny smiled, then grinned, then laughed. He rolled down his truck window and let the cool rain splash against his face. 'Gracias a Dios!' he cried. Rain had come. (278)

In this extract a variety of images—auditory, visual, tactile—of sudden, rapid movement represent the mightiness of the rain, which charges in like a kind of live, “furious” creature. They suggest its enormous effect on an urban landscape whose residents hurry home through overflowing streets. The sense of the rain's incessant beating is acoustically reinforced through the onomatopoeic reiteration of single words (such as “hurried”), of -ing participles (“falling . . . sending . . . jumping”) and of certain consonants and vowel sounds in alliteration (e.g. “falling fast and furious”) and assonance (e.g. “streets . . . sheen . . . neon”) respectively.

Subsequently the first summer rain serves as accompaniment for the action-packed scenes that mark the peak of the crime plot (chapter thirty). In the process there is a demonstration of the rain water's power in causing a flash flood in the dry gulch where Raven wants to sabotage the truck. It is “a six-foot wall of water com[ing] crashing down the arroyo,” capable of “rolling [the pursuers' abandoned truck] down the arroyo like a toy.” It “swallow[s]” the fake environmentalist (319; 324), who presumed to seek world dominion by abusing nature for his criminal ends.<sup>528</sup> Anaya means to remind his audience of the agency of the weather and the

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(257 (ch. 24)). They eventually gather force during the illuminating conversation Sonny has with the suspect Morino, at the end of which he has almost solved the case (269-78 (ch. 25)).

<sup>528</sup> A similar manifestation of the “power” of nature and of Anaya's “awe” of it may be found in his nonfictional literary work: in the description of a boat trip on the Yangtze River in the journal of his trip to China (127-31). Hispano land knowledge is also set off from the Euro-American developers' ignorance of the rain's force in *Zia Summer*. As they keep erecting new subdivisions and entire cities on the sand of Albuquerque's West Mesa, the old arroyos are “disturbed.” The new houses and streets

land in that region by giving such narrative weight to the monsoon in the summer novel of his seasonally arranged detective quartet. The seasons may take on great structuring significance in environmental writing, Buell has pointed out (cf. ch. II.1.6 herein). It is a technique assiduously applied by Anaya.<sup>529</sup>

#### 3.4.4. *Zia Summer* as an Ecopastoral Mystery: Concluding Observations

In my third close reading, the author has presented a Chicano indigenist New Age realization of “traditional” Nuevomexicano values of ecological and social “balance” and “love” for the earth. They counter the “machine” mastery over New Mexico and the Southwest, their lands and ethnic rural denizens. Within the “garden” I have discussed Anaya’s solar epistemology as mirrored in *Zia Summer* and his representation of Hispano communal life practices. At the center of attention has been the farming culture of don Eliseo. Anaya has also depicted it in terms of U.S. counterculture-inflected *curanderismo*. A harmonious coexistence with nature has further been expressed through the rain motif.

The quester and detective, we have seen, has begun to grasp the ecopastoral truth. He is recuperating the spiritual perception and what he calls the “old ways” of his people with the help of the old farmer and the women healers. Sonny has become reintegrated with the nonhuman world. Not only his soul’s “equilibrium” is returning (326),<sup>530</sup> he is also shown to have acquired a profound esteem for nature. His new reverence for the Zia sun is accentuated near the close of the narrative when he prays

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will “buckle” in the wake of flooding through the summer rains, the author has Sonny announce (327). Anaya also likes to provide the rain image with insufferable sexual significations. Thus with respect to the protagonist, whose crisis comprises also a spell of sexual impotence (he has even somatically “dr[ie]d up”) (254; 345). His vigor is renewed in the first rainy night, which he spends with the “earth”-like Rita (282-83). The correlation between bodily health and a rural environment is, as said earlier, another pastoral notion from antiquity.

<sup>529</sup> The presence of nature in *Zia Summer* is also evoked through frequently recurring references to other characteristics of the Albuquerque summer. Instances are the Rio Grande cottonwoods, with their drifting cotton and rich smell (e.g. 60-61, 66; 170, 241-42, 326), and the drone of the *grillos* (crickets) and cicadas (e.g. 58, 176, 242; 73, 196, 249).

<sup>530</sup> As noted in the introduction to Anaya, he sees a “heal[ing]” function in his writing. Villanueva also used this metaphor for Rosa’s development in her book. A similar purpose appears in *Ceremony*, with which *Zia Summer* dialogues. Tayo’s search and the curative ceremony he undergoes with the assistance of guides bring about his physical and spiritual regeneration. He goes back to the traditional Native culture in touch with nature (which enables him to bring back the rain and save the land and his community).

to the rising sun on his own, “g[i]v[ing] thanks to the old Abuelo Sol as don Eliseo had taught him” (323). Besides, he has entered into a close relation with the world of animal spirits. As regards the focal nuclear issue, the protagonist’s critical stance on nuclear power and the military and industrial production of radioactive waste has been philosophically underpinned and thoroughly enhanced in the course of the novel by don Eliseo’s lessons about creation and the need for human respect for it. In the face of environmental contamination by nuclear refuse accumulating around New Mexico (322), the pastoral communication is repeated by Sonny near the end. Following immediately after the barely thwarted catastrophe, it is a passage of blunt moralizing: “I don’t want it in my state, Sonny thought. Not in this land that nurtured my ancestors, nurtured the dreams of don Eliseo. If there was one thing don Eliseo had taught him, it was that the Earth was alive. . . . [Its] soul should not be burned and shriveled by the works of man. But,” he continues, “the deadly waste was here, and it was here to stay. . . . His children’s children would live with the consequences. Somewhere it had to stop. Somewhere men and women had to come to their senses and stop producing what they could not control” (322). “The goal was to stop the creation of the poison,” he again stresses a little further down in his final statement on the topic (326). I have argued that, coupled with satirical attack, the text clearly distances itself from environmentalist radicalism and its terrorist means. Still and all, the idea of antinuclear criticism *is* narratively endorsed and once again uttered by Sonny here. As it embodies a contemporary environmental articulation of pastoralism, *Zia Summer* is a nuclear-age pastoral.<sup>531</sup>

The book’s pastoral upbraiding in its different aspects is essentially justified. Upon closer examination Anaya’s represented political message of dissension and an alternative set of ideas for the Southwest has, however, been found to be wanting. Particularly troublesome is his concentration on spirituality, mythology and tradition. The “garden” ideal has been checked by an undertone of irony through the caricaturization of related Euro-American concepts, but not as thoroughly as one would wish. The nuclear question again highlights the difficulties immanent in this

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<sup>531</sup> Like Rosa before him, the pastoral hero Sonny also qualifies as a literary “eco-hero” in Tim Poland’s sense. In his 1991 article, Poland conjoins Joseph Campbell’s tripartite paradigm of the mythical hero’s journey with deep ecological notions to study the figure of the “eco-hero” in western American literature, Euro-American and Native. Masculinity and nature in U.S. and other cultural and literary representations is the subject of the essays assembled in Mark Allister’s edited *Eco-Man* (2004). In this volume important ecocritics link their critical practice with men’s studies to respond to the prevalent ecofeminist viewpoint in the ecocritical investigation of male relations with nature.

bucolic creation. The problem of waste and pollution will not be solved through don Eliseo's ways and his notions of "good" and "evil" in today's world. I therefore concur with Ralph Rodriguez's critical comment on *Zia Summer* and the novels that follow. Rodriguez reproaches the author for asking us to believe that Sonny's metaphysical victory over evil can be of use for the real threats confronting New Mexicans, such as nuclear poisoning (122). "[Anaya's] strategy," he writes, "founders on its own mysticism and its quest for spiritual answers to material conundrums" (108).

Much as in *The Ultraviolet Sky*, the ultimate retreat to Shangri-la is also practiced on the narrative's final pages. Anaya has always had a penchant for emotionalized endings, and this also shows here. *Zia Summer* terminates on don Eliseo's old cottonwood, which eventually greens up again. One big branch, he elatedly tells Sonny, has put out new leaves (344). The coda reads: "Many would remember the summer as the Zia Summer, and they would tell stories of the terrible murder of Gloria Dominic. But the viejitos of the valley would remember it was the summer when don Eliseo's tree recovered miraculously and offered forth its green leaves" (346). Within the overbearing symbolic imagery, the tree to be felled at the outset is invested with conventional symbolism of new green in this paradise regained. The novel's ending exemplifies how, to take up Buell, pastoral may be "all sugar and no pill" (*Environmental* 41-42). In persevering with his traditionalist model, Anaya differs considerably from his literary antecedent C. de Baca. At the close of her pastoral memoir, she chose to look to the future, instead of tarrying in the lost rural past. It is definitely unfair that a pre-movement Nuevomexicana writer like C. de Baca has borne the brunt of Chicano censure of elitist regressivism.<sup>532</sup>

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<sup>532</sup> The prominent Anaya scholar César González-T. views Anaya's vision in literature as a "refreshing respite from the despair of postmodernism" (Foreword xviii). Sure, but such hope, or even optimism, can only be had at the price of an inordinate measure of escapism. As to the symbolism in *Zia Summer*, I have traced the thick imagery of heat, drought and dryness in the present-day Southwest, besides the tree/roots symbols. At the novel's end, after the first summer rain, not only the cottonwood greens up but Sonny himself has recovered his vitality. Like don Eliseo, the old tree stands for the Hispano tradition. The protagonist, who has started to recapture his heritage, is now no longer like a dry "tumbleweed" but, as he long desired to be, "more like a tree" (70). Just like Anaya, Silko has not been able to resist finishing her 1999 novel *Gardens in the Dunes* on a note of ecopastoral harmony restored. Set in the protagonist Native sisters' Arizona desert garden, the closing section includes an apricot tree stump with new green shoots (474-77). This ending does not live up to the rest of the book, which is another Silkoan refashioning of the universal pastoral ideal. It combines the stories of a variety of cultures and their gardens in the New World and the Old around the turn of the twentieth century.

Anaya's universal intention in writing also encompasses the Hispano ecoideal put forward in a work like *Zia Summer*. It has global implications for him. I.e. the regional, rural conception is offered to an environmentally and socially oppressive modern world at large. Such generalism does not redeem the vision's problematic nature but rather increases it. The author lends expression to his idea in the essay "Aztlán: A Homeland without Boundaries" (1989). Overflowing with idealism, he suggests that the Indohispano/Mexican American people of New Mexico and the Southwest are, thanks to their ancestral knowledge and "love" of the homeland, able to point the way to "sav[ing]" their own region as well as the Americas and the planet earth. Anaya sees them as the "new guardians of the earth and of peace." It is, he concludes, the "legacy" and "promise" of Aztlán to thus evolve from an ethnic homeland in the U.S. Southwest into a "homeland without boundaries" in a world in crisis (239-41). Anaya thereby updates and transcends the Chicano nationalist concept of Aztlán, which I have interpreted as part of the Mexican American pastoral myth of Mexico. Some two decades after its emergence, he adds a distinct ecological and global scope to it.<sup>533</sup> Like the ecofeminist Villanueva, Anaya hopes to contribute to the planet's rescue through writing. Both are ethnic representatives of what is now termed the "glocal" outlook prominent in the new regionalism of contemporary southwestern literature.<sup>534</sup>

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<sup>533</sup> "El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán" (Denver, 1969), the ideological program of the *Movimiento*, was the first Chicano document to proclaim the American Southwest, i.e. the territory ceded by Mexico in 1848, to be the ancient Aztlán. This cooptation of the mythical Aztec land of origin provided Mexican Americans with an identity *inside* the U.S. as descendants of the Aztecs. The Chicano myth of Aztlán—an "imagined community" in Benedict Anderson's definition of the nation (5-6)—developed into a central symbol in Chicano culture and literature in the late 1960s and early 70s. Reflections of this are the poetry of Alurista (who was instrumental in establishing the concept of Aztlán) and Méndez's 1974 novel *Peregrinos de Aztlán*. See Leal's essay on Aztlán; it appears, along with "El Plan Espiritual" and Anaya's Aztlán piece, in the important collection *Aztlán: Essays on the Chicano Homeland*, edited by Anaya and Lomelí in 1989. Within the New Mexican's literary writing, Aztlán comes up particularly in his second novel. For a recent evaluation of the myth of Aztlán, its fictional character, its negative implications in terms of Chicano nationalism and a romanticization of the Aztecs, as well as its enormous influence in Chicano thought, including Anaya's, cf. Grewe-Volpp, *Ökokritische* 335-39, Davis-Undiano 125-30, Porsche 165-70 and Cooper Alarcón's extended commentary in his book on Mexicanness (ch. 1). On C. de Baca's preliminary form of the Chicano topos of the homeland in her Hispano history, cf. ch. II.1.3.

<sup>534</sup> In his recent essay on today's southwestern literary regionalism, Arno Heller draws on German sociologist Ulrich Beck's term "glocal" (local and at the same time globally informed) (qtd. from *What Is Globalization* (2000) in Heller 225). Heller shows the significance of a "glocal" perspective, also in ecological respects, in writers of Euro-American, Mexican American (briefly Anaya's first two novels) and Native (Silko) extraction. Cf. also Marc Priewe's article on the glocal dimension in Silko's fiction. The revival of the regional in U.S. culture and academe has been addressed in my introduction to ecocriticism (ch. I.1).

I have further pointed out that aesthetically Anaya's novel is not without fault either. As with its ideology, many of these shortfalls have resembled those of the ecopastoral writings studied before. The detective at the center of the bildungsroman layer has turned out to be less shrill and melodramatic and somewhat more relaxed in his attitude than Villanueva's heroine. Sonny is therefore arguably the more engaging pastoral protagonist. When we look back over Anaya's literary works, Sonny and don Eliseo constitute—for all their insufficiencies in characterization—the best-drawn disciple-teacher pair since Antonio and Ultima twenty years earlier. Sonny is the most fleshed-out figure in the book, whose other characters are generally mere vehicles of ideas and structural instruments in his advancement. Yet, more than Rosa even, Sonny's portrayal suffers from the tension between the individual, realistic and the symbolic traits Anaya gives to this contemporary ethnic character. Being cast as a good shaman who keeps restoring the balance of the universe in his combat against the archenemy, Sonny has more allegorical baggage than he can carry. This is especially true of the sequels, where Lorenza and don Eliseo train the neophyte to become a full-fledged shaman, and he becomes heir to the old man.<sup>535</sup>

My analysis has also treated *Zia Summer's* ecopastoral remaking of the U.S. mystery genre, which is linked up with the formation plot. Moreover, the narrative has been shown to be indebted to orality. I have said that the introduction of nuclear concerns into the criminal story in the shape of the effect-seeking truck does not do justice to the theme of environment. Even more seriously—*Zia Summer* is after all a work of literature—the focus on ecological and identitarian issues has been to the detriment of the book as a detection novel. The mystery plot, we have noted, moves into the background, and indispensable formulaic conventions like the maintenance of suspense are disregarded. Anaya has in fact evinced far greater interest in the “mystery” of nature than in the mystery surrounding the crimes.<sup>536</sup> Due to these imbalances within its structure, the text ultimately falls apart into its different formal and generic levels. It does not function as a whodunit and a pleasure read on account

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<sup>535</sup> Don Eliseo is killed by Raven in a decisive battle in the spirit/dream world at the end of the third volume, *Shaman Winter* (395-96). That the pupil will eventually assume the instructor's function is the usual pattern also in Anaya's novels of education.

<sup>536</sup> The novelist may be punning on the word “mystery.” The “mystery” of nature is revealed to Sonny at sunrise (226). It is also invoked in reference to the newly verdant tree. The “mystery” of its recovery “couldn't be explained; it didn't need to be explained, as many other miracles in the history of the valley didn't need explaining” (345-46).

of its overriding cultural-ideological orientation, which reduces the chance of getting across an in and of itself already disputable pastoral message.<sup>537</sup>

This mystery-cum-bildungsroman's failings in its concepts and making lead me to a similar judgment as in Villanueva's case. As an expression of ecoethnic literary pastoralism, *Zia Summer* can only very imperfectly serve the environmental political cause it aims to further. The author selected the detective formula so as to achieve a more effective transmission of his ideas. His initial crime novel suggests, however, that such genre writing is not particularly well suited to his purpose—less suited, in any case, than the more flexible bildungsroman format of his earlier works. Nonetheless, it is important to stress the rising significance of environmental issues in the American ethnic novel and short fiction as well as in the ethnic detective genre today, as seen with Villanueva and Anaya. This underscores the previously cited ecocritical call for scholarly attention to such environmental fiction within “nature-oriented literature” (Murphy) (cf. chs. I.3 and 4). It means a turn away from the longstanding focus on nonfictional nature/environmental writing.

### 3.5. Survey of the Ensuing Sonny Baca Novels

I have identified a third kind of ecopastoral in Rudolfo Anaya's first detective novel *Zia Summer*. It is a contemporary Hispanic New Mexican use ideologically framed by the Chicano and New Age movements. A comparative assessment of the primary authors' texts in their rendition of the pastoral will follow in my general conclusion. In closing the present inquiry, I will give an overview of the other volumes of Anaya's mystery tetralogy, which has earned him great recognition as a Mexican American exponent of the detective genre.

These novels continue the narrative set in modern-day Albuquerque during one year. Dealing with crimes and murders related to up-to-date political issues such as international drug smuggling (*Río Grande Fall*) and ultraright-wing terrorism within

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<sup>537</sup> Again, I cannot join the ranks of critics who have expressed a favorable view of the book as a detective novel adaptation, like Flys-Junquera (“Voice,” also “Murder”) and Geuder. Geuder finds that “the plot of *Zia Summer* integrates the mystery level with the sociopolitical, cultural, and historical levels successfully. . .” (“Marketing” 85).

the U.S. (*Shaman Winter*), their mystery plots again center on the battle between the investigator and the evil Zia shaman Raven. The bildungsroman strand proceeds, through much of the series, with the story of Sonny's search for "the Path of the Sun" and self-identity under the mentorship of characters like don Eliseo and Lorenza. He eventually becomes himself a shaman and takes over from the old man after his death. The ecopastoral topic is present in all sequels, but again has special salience in the fourth and final book, *Jemez Spring* (2005). It is set on a single day, the spring equinox, and revolves around the murder of the governor of New Mexico and a nuclear bomb threat, crimes again perpetrated by Raven. This plot is joined with a castigation of continually increasing land development and the exploitation of the earth in the region. The issue of water in its various facets is central here. Particularly with respect to the water problem, the novel draws a rather pessimistic picture of the future of Albuquerque and the urban Southwest (e.g. 17-18).<sup>538</sup> The communities described as hardest hit by the developers' activities are, once more, the rural Native and Hispano villages. Anaya now puts the accent on the question of ancestral water rights.<sup>539</sup> In the North Valley, the old Hispano farming culture has all but disappeared, and don Eliseo's land and house are up for sale (16). *Jemez Spring* thus gives another pastoral critique of the incursion of the "aggressive Anglo world" into the "once-bucolic Indo-hispano world of the [Rio Grande] valley" (43). The ideal placed against the former is, again, the perceived ethnic state of oneness with nature.<sup>540</sup>

In general, the author's message remains largely the same throughout the series. The aesthetic flaws increase in the later books. In *Jemez Spring* the pastoral denunciation has grown even more virulent than before. As for the "garden," Anaya has elaborated first and foremost on shamanism, starting in *Río Grande Fall*. In the third and fourth volumes, the feud between Sonny and Raven has assumed such proportions as to overshadow everything else. Fought in the real and above all the spirit/dream worlds, this struggle often becomes utterly ludicrous.<sup>541</sup> As he has been

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<sup>538</sup> The silvery minnow, which has almost become extinct in the Rio Grande, is a prominent symbol of environmental deterioration (e.g. 18, 44, 199, 296). Nuclear dangers are again addressed in giving major importance in the story to the menace of a bomb explosion, as in *Shaman Winter* too.

<sup>539</sup> This involves a group of Pueblo environmental activists who fight against the privatization of those rights by Dominic's corporation.

<sup>540</sup> Anaya now has his young protagonist's return to the "old ways" comprehend also sporadic farming activities at a rural cabin in the Jemez Mountains (e.g. 133).

<sup>541</sup> Thus in the final combat in *Shaman Winter*, in which don Eliseo is killed (chapter twenty-seven). Although somewhat ironically, Anaya does not even spare us a dreamcatcher made by the old man to

swept away by his fondness for spirituality, myth and shamanism during the course of the sequence, Anaya has increasingly neglected the plots' mystery elements. While losing significance, the crime action grows ever more forced. The outcome is that in *Shaman Winter* and *Jemez Spring* there is, as Ann-Catherine Geuder has remarked about the penultimate novel ("Marketing" 85), no real mystery left to be solved. At the same time, the nuclear bomb threat becomes more and more perfunctory in its recurrence as an action-centered thriller device in the last two installments. Since *Zia Summer* the novelist has not added much to the issue of nuclear energy and its risks.<sup>542</sup> All in all, Anaya stages his ethnic ecological theme in a less and less satisfactory manner as the series progresses. In particular *Shaman Winter* and *Jemez Spring* have little to commend them and rank, in my view, among his weakest books.

*Zia Summer*, the first mystery novel, represents the New Mexican Chicano engagement with the U.S. detective tradition in the mid-1990s. It is also an important generic departure in Anaya's ecopastoral writing. The book distinctly reflects his environmentally oriented position in the past two decades. Among the four mysteries, it has the most literary merit. For these reasons, it was chosen as the object of scrutiny in studying this author's literary production. In all of his novels and many other works since *Bless Me, Ultima*, Anaya has proposed to convey what he labels the traditional Nuevomexicano/Chicano view of life over against a citified and industrialized modern America. In keeping with his deepening anxiety about the earth, its inhabitants and ethnic cultures, his pastoralism has greened.

It seems likely that in future writings Anaya will once again imagine "a new story, [while] all the stories are bound to the same theme."<sup>543</sup> New stories and aesthetic forms have been plentiful in his long and prolific career as a writer. It

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serve as Sonny's shamanic "shield" (385). Especially in the closing novel, the spiritual-mythical discourse is also cluttered with analogies between Hispano New Mexico and world cultures and mythologies in innumerable passages with little or no bearing on the detective story. In connection with this, don Eliseo is no longer the unpretentious farmer telling stories beneath his tree in *Jemez Spring*. Instead, he has turned into an—even by magic realist standards—highly contrived, incredibly book-learned spirit, who is capable of conversing about universal cultures, myths and symbols ranging from the Golden Fleece to the Rosetta stone (e.g. 61-62, 120-22).

<sup>542</sup> Concerning the detective's quest for knowledge and shamanic might, this story has also been worn down, and is in fact largely completed by *Jemez Spring*. There it is no longer of great import to a plot focused on the battle between two equally powerful shamans.

<sup>543</sup> He does so much like his fictional character Salomón, Tortuga's quadriplegic spiritual guide in the desert hospital. All of Salomón's stories are about "love." The quotation is from *Tortuga* (42).

remains to be seen what new stories, forms and genres he will come up with in coming years to communicate his message—its ecological dimension included.



## General Conclusion

The relationship between nature and culture  
is the key intellectual problem of the twenty-first century.  
—Jonathan Bate, Foreword to *The Green Studies Reader*

This Americanist study has used an ecopastoral thesis for inspecting the prominent nature-culture topos in Mexican American literature, and its metamorphoses from pre-movement times until today. In part one I have explained my critical approach in dialogue with the burgeoning practice of environmental literary and cultural criticism, with Chicano/a studies and with pastoral scholarship. A discussion of these fields' interests has revealed their lacunae. There has been a lack of attention to questions of ethnicity, class and urbanism as well as to the fiction genre in ecocritical and ecopastoral research, and a disregard of the environment in the study of Mexican American culture and literature, where ecological discourse has acquired great importance. Building upon the environmental restoration of U.S. pastoral as a literary and cultural mode in the work of Leo Marx and ecocritical practitioners like Lawrence Buell and Glen Love, my nonecocentric analytic method has brought the three aforementioned disciplines together. It has expanded the investigation of ecopastoralism to Mexican American writing, nonfictional and especially fictional. I have thereby sought to broaden and complicate prevalent scholarly perspectives in what is also the first extended ecocritical inquiry into this ethnic literature in Germany. There has previously been only scant if any ecocriticism on my primary writers. Within the particular neglect of the literary history, Fabiola C. de Baca has not been considered by environmental critics, nor in German Chicano studies. In exploring the authors' usage of pastoral, I have also engaged in an explication and evaluation of the individual texts within their literary oeuvre.

The interpretive second part has furnished in-depth readings of varieties of environmental pastoral by C. de Baca, Alma Luz Villanueva and Rudolfo Anaya. The Hispana Plains ranching memoir *We Fed Them Cactus*, Villanueva's Chicana ecofeminist formation novel of the California mountains, *The Ultraviolet Sky*, and *Zia Summer*, the opening novel of Anaya's Albuquerque-set Chicano New Age detective quartet, have represented sundry nature ideals, southwestern regions and narrative forms. A comparative summary will highlight recurrences and points of

conjunction as well as divergences and changes in the works' semantic and formal-technical conception.<sup>544</sup> C. de Baca has been a significant forerunner of the contemporary writers. Diverse U.S. literary genres have been bent to ethnic ideological purposes. The Hispana straddles the confines of autobiography and nature writing. Villanueva's bildungsroman exemplifies an environmental/ecopastoral application of this important Mexican American compositional template. This use is also found with numerous other authors in the last decades, such as Estela Portillo Trambley, Alfredo Véa or Helena María Viramontes.<sup>545</sup> Anaya has further integrated the identity quest model with the mystery genre.<sup>546</sup> Like C. de Baca's memoir, his writing also shows a Spanish-Mexican oral influence. Mexican American literature has a mixed identity in form as much as in its pastoral thinking. This has been my contention throughout the trajectory of this study. In their ethnic peculiarities and alterity, the texts have been viewed within the Euro-American and Western cultural scaffold in which they are embedded. With regard to America's pastoralism as a traditional American studies subject, such contextualization has been precisely underpracticed by an oftentimes still self-absorbedly cultural nationalist Chicano studies.

I have found the environment and the circumstances of the people tied to it to be a substantial aspect of Mexican American cultural resistance against the reigning society. In their concern with providing guidance and uplift for the collective, the literary works examined have given "new," environmental pastoral "machine-in-the-garden" narratives. They have created a polarity between an urban-industrialist, materialistic Euro-American/white world that subdues and degrades nature, ethnic cultures and the female sex, on the one hand, and an ethnic ecological ideal on the other. These narratives have employed structural and stylistic melodramatization. Expressive of kindred ideologies, the three texts thus evince similar deficits in their concepts and aesthetic constitution. As to the adversarial pastoral statement, it is

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<sup>544</sup> I have summarized the findings of my analyses in detail in the respective chapters of part two.

<sup>545</sup> I have referred to these writers' environmental bildungsromans from the 1980s and 90s at various points in my study. Of a Chicana feminist orientation are Portillo Trambley's *Trini* as well as the coming-of-age novella *Daughter of the Mountain* by Edna Escamill. Similar emphasis on indigeneity as in these women's books appears in Véa's *La maravilla*. His novel deals with the education of the boy protagonist by his Yaqui grandfather in 1950s southern Arizona. *Under the Feet of Jesus*, by Viramontes, is another ecofeminist maturation narrative, taking place in California's migrant farmworker milieu.

<sup>546</sup> Besides the Sonny Baca sequence, the detective form is also used for ecoethnic interests in Lucha Corpi's previously mentioned ecofeminist California novel *Cactus Blood* (1995).

important that the nostalgic Hispana author has already objected to environmental and sociocultural decline. Her early environmental justice viewpoint is a prefiguration of the discourse favored in much of Mexican American culture today, thus in Villanueva's ecofeminism and particularly in Anaya's portrait of 1990s metropolitan New Mexico. Among the rhetorical stratagems recurrent in the writers' critiques, we have noticed their efforts at the emotional involvement of the reader. This has also occurred in the pastoral celebration; in both cases, there is, for instance, a shedding of tears. Such sentimentalization has a long tradition in U.S. reform literature.<sup>547</sup> Another emotive textual means used for moral instruction is imagery of ecological apocalypse. In reflection of contemporary apprehensions, it has attained a nuclear signification in *The Ultraviolet Sky* and *Zia Summer*, along with literary censure of science and technology. Within their reductionist and hyperbolizing strategies of ecopastoral opposition, the authors—notably Anaya—have further introduced satire. This classical pastoral device and traditional Mexican American cultural mode has also turned green.<sup>548</sup>

The environmental “garden” has been rendered as glorifyingly as the opposite side becomes negativized. I have observed a major ideological evolution from the depiction of the Spanish-Catholic Nuevomexicano culture in *We Fed Them Cactus* to the eclectic philosophies enunciated by Villanueva and Anaya. In their novelistic and other writings, the pastoral questers have arrived at an indigenist Chicana ecofeminist Goddess vision and an Indohispano New Age understanding of New Mexico's rural heritage respectively. Both epistemologies bear the imprint of contemporary Euro-American environmentalism and related countercultural pastoral ideologies like ecofeminism and the New Age. These ideas, we have seen, have influenced many other Chicano/a writers as well. The ecofeminist creed, which takes different shapes also in this ethnic literature, has further been anticipated by C. de Baca's portrayal of woman and nature. In their cultural syncretism, Villanueva and Anaya are found to have blended mainstream ecoprimitivism with their own ethnic inheritance as well as a distinctly Chicano/a indigenist reinterpretation of the same.

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<sup>547</sup> It should be stressed once more that sentimentalism is—like a melodramatic pattern—intrinsic to pastoral and added to through the authors' ethnic, environmental and feminist perspectives. This produces double and even triple self-victimization. Sentimentality is therefore not just one of the appellative procedures—albeit further reinforced in this way.

<sup>548</sup> These and other narrative elements and techniques I have looked at—such as Villanueva's quest plot with its different strands—are frequently also utilized in a highly iterative fashion in relaying the pastoral message. Villanueva and Anaya share their ideological commitment and aesthetic handicaps with much contemporary environmental literature.

Cultural nationalist *indigenismo*, which here too goes along with an elevation of aboriginal religious beliefs over the Christian faith, is a preponderant trait of Mexican American culture and writing to this day. Mesoamerican indigenism is one expression of the deep-seated bucolic fantasy of Mexico among this ethnic group. Anaya, as an older present-day New Mexican author, has been called by David King Dunaway “an important bridge between the urban Chicano experience and the rural Hispanic tradition unique to New Mexico” (qtd. in Cline 1). As I see it, the ecopastoral vision of the Baca series takes such an intermediate position between the women writers’ ideological constructions. This has to do with the three pastoralists’ personal lives. C. de Baca was still profoundly connected to the old country culture. Her folk autobiography—though a subjective account of regional history—has turned out to offer a more authentic image of New Mexico than Anaya’s representation of “tradition” in his movement- and New Age-informed work. By comparison, a yet lesser reflection of her community’s actual ways than in Anaya has appeared in the Chicana ecofeminist novel. An immigrant-descended city-born author, Villanueva derives her thought wholly from 1970s/80s urban California ideas while idealizing the vestiges of a Mexican rural legacy she never knew herself. Anaya’s pastoralism thus occupies a middle ground between Mexican American tradition and present. All the narratives have carried a message of sustainable environmental adaptation and social justice among humans. In the contemporary writers, we have moreover perceived some measure of ecocentric thinking. Moving beyond the more utilitarian land values of C. de Baca’s stock culture, it draws on Euro-American ecological ethics from recent decades.

Mexican American ecopastoral reproduces and formulates anew a whole set of ancient and U.S. bucolic notions and ideals as it taps this heritage. As I have shown throughout my analyses, these are especially harmony and love, the idea of freedom, bounty and simplicity as well as the general superior morality of life in nature vis-à-vis the urban mode of living. The New Mexican works, in particular Anaya’s, have also invoked old-time Hispano communitarianism.<sup>549</sup> Besides, an important feature of ecofeminist balance with the natural involves corporeality and eros.<sup>550</sup> From their ecoethnic standpoint, the authors have punctured beloved aspects of the Euro-

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<sup>549</sup> This Mexican American social pastoral value, I have noted, recovers an older tradition long gone from European and Euro-American pastoral.

<sup>550</sup> Villanueva has thereby given a radical Chicana ecofeminist redefinition of the U.S. and universal pastoral conventions.

American—Jeffersonian and Turnerian—pastoral master tale of the West and Southwest. Chief among these are the belief in the unlimited yielding capacity of nature and its resources and the dream of individualism and self-reliance of people on the land. The dominant order's lack of sensitivity to and its maltreatment of the natural world—the “machine” in the ethnic perception—have been counterweighed by ecologically equilibrated Mexican American pastoral practices. In the texts these qualities are emblemized by certain characters in both camps, as will be summed up below.

I have further pointed out the various pastoral models' epistemological limitations in their totalizing, emotionally charged assumptions and their focus on traditional, spiritual and mythical concepts. The wild and rustic nature ideals projected for humanity and the global biosphere in the contemporary works have only moderate value to environmental actuality. Independently of the pastoral criticism articulated by the three writers, the escapist element of their “gardens” has become obvious. Villanueva and Anaya maintain wish images for the future, a form of avoidance of reality I judge to be more severe than that found in the Nuevomexicana's reminiscences of the past.<sup>551</sup> The books' ideological evasiveness partakes in the pastoral doubleness between nostalgic escapism and the expression of dissent. The assessment of this classical paradox, I have said, has always been in the eye of the beholder in pastoral scholarship. In the foregoing literary interpretations, we have seen the old pastoral ideal-real conflict also in the interplay between the poles by which the basic binarism is qualified. Salient examples of such conceptual ambivalences—indissoluble but deliberated upon in the texts—are, for one thing, the positive valuation of aspects of modernity and progress by C. de Baca and Anaya.<sup>552</sup> Mexican American pastoralism here shares the contradictory stance towards the counterforce that characterizes Euro-American pastoral and neopastoral (Marx). Second, the “garden” has been put into perspective in and of itself as an ideal in these narratives. Anaya's detection novels best instantiate this. They incorporate an

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<sup>551</sup> C. de Baca has idealized the imperialist Hispano subjugation of the Plains indigenes, a practice familiar from Euro-American pastoral. She has also drawn a mostly rose-tinted portrait of the oppressive *patrón* system through her upper-class lens—in analogy to traditional European pastoralists.

<sup>552</sup> In *We Fed Them Cactus* this has been more marked than in the postmodernist Anaya. Villanueva remains more monolithic in her profound misgivings about progress and science. Hers and the other works have also shown that ideological tensions may go unpondered or be toned down in the service of the pastoral myth.

underlying self-parodic level of meaning in the shape of overlaps between the ethnic philosophy and the satirized ecospiritualistic mainstream.<sup>553</sup>

Ecopastoral character topoi have abounded in all the works. Major instances of (arche/stereo)types in the Euro-American “machine” indictment are the cattle ranchers and old and new homesteaders in New Mexico. Anaya adds figures like developers and spiritualists. The cowboy comes up in all three books, while men are the special target of Villanueva. Mexican American pastoral victims and land-conscious, eco-friendly countertypes have been, among others: Hispano ranchers, *vaqueros* and farmers in C. de Baca and Anaya, the *curandera* as a significant specifically Mexican American bucolic figure for all three authors and women in Villanueva. These “garden” figures, I have stated, are modern descendants of the threatened, wise shepherd of old. The writers ascribe central consequence to characters advanced in years: C. de Baca’s ranching father, the Yaqui grandmother in Villanueva’s work and Anaya’s farmer don Eliseo. In accordance with the texts’ pre-movement and contemporary pastoral ideas, one discerns a progression from the idealized figure of whom I have termed—with a nod to Krech—the “Ecological Hispano” in C. de Baca to the “Ecological Mexican American/Native Woman” in Villanueva and to Anaya’s “Ecological Indohispano.” In the novels the old-timers have also acted as grandparent guides for the questing protagonists, as in so much Mexican American literature since the 1960s.<sup>554</sup> The “machine” and “garden” types illustrate the symbolic pattern behind the depicted ethnic reality. The Euro-American farmer and the cowboy serve to shatter icons of U.S. western pastoral mythology. In turn, the Mexican American—absent or maligned in the official story—has been validated as a kind of ecosaint. In their mythopoeisis as ethnic ecological pastoral allegories, the three narratives have shown ethnocentric, nationalist leanings that

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<sup>553</sup> In spite of such structural strains and cleavages, none of the texts under discussion has chosen to consistently undercut the pastoral dichotomy. In *The Ultraviolet Sky* and the Baca novels, the ideal is exposed as unattainable, criticized and—especially in Anaya—also turned into an object of some ridicule yet finally upheld as an alternative. With respect to C. de Baca, I would like to emphasize a point made before. Namely that her ideological ambiguities, including her turn towards the Plains’ actual future at the end of her pastoral history, refute the early Chicano critical attack on her as a reactionary.

<sup>554</sup> Grandparent characters are actually in demand as an ethnic exoticism among mainstream publishers of Mexican American writing. Autobiographer Richard Rodriguez mentions his New York editor’s insistent suggestion “‘Let’s have more Grandma’” (instead of abstract issues), which he refused to comply with (*Hunger* 6-7). Rodriguez is an author much berated by Chicano commentators for his U.S. assimilationism. *Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez* (1982), from which I have quoted, is the first volume of a major Mexican American trilogy of memoirs; the sequels are *Days of Obligation* (1992) and *Brown* (2002).

invert those of Euro-American pastoral self-definition. If we extend Bruce Kuklick's critical label for traditional American studies scholarship to this ethnic literature, we might indeed speak of a Mexican American/Chicano ecopastoral "myth and symbol" school of writing.

In opposition to the urban areas and their ghettos, the natural settings represented have been the New Mexico Plains, the Sierra Nevada and, Anaya's focus, the Rio Grande valley of Albuquerque. The biophysical landscape has been subject to romanticizing rhetoric like all of the "garden." It is a powerful, not always idyllic main character in the different genres, even in the city novel. This is, with *Grewe-Volpp*, an important literary technique for conveying an ecological position. The desert has taken the place of the verdant world of classic pastoral in the work of the New Mexicans, which also mirrors U.S. cultural tradition in the Southwest. Furthermore, I have noted that *The Ultraviolet Sky* bespeaks a transformation of the ecopastoral *locus amoenus* against the background of the shift away from intermediary, rural pastoral spaces in environmentally concerned contemporary U.S. culture (Love). It is a relocation from pastoral sites like C. de Baca's and Anaya's into the wilds. In this way Villanueva has not only amplified the Mexican American literary "garden," but also recast Euro-American wilderness pastoralism ethnic ecofeminist-style. In addition to age-old values and standard formal elements like specific character types and spatial locations, Mexican American ecopastoralists have redeployed traditional literary pastoral language of nature encomium.<sup>555</sup> With relation to American pastoral narrative practice, I have also identified further characteristic structures of pastoral in the Marxian interpretation in these ethnic writings.<sup>556</sup>

Over the past half century, then, environmental pastoralism and the ecopastoral ideal have been a recurrent motif in Mexican American literature and undergone significant modification. Like numerous other writers referred to in the course of this study, C. de Baca, Villanueva and Anaya have presented ecoethnic revisionary reconceptualizations of the U.S. and universal cultural archetype of pastoral. Two thousand years after the poets of ancient Greece and Rome, these intercultural

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<sup>555</sup> It has included stock phrases repeated verbatim throughout these Anglophone works of pastoral, such as the "abundance," "freedom," "happiness" or "harmony" of rural and natural living.

<sup>556</sup> Distinctive episodes of the Euro-American pastoral retreat reappear with the Mexican American authors. In the first place, this is the protagonist's numinous experience of natural harmony in all the texts. Moreover, Villanueva's and Anaya's bildungsromans have adapted the three-part pastoral narrative model of withdrawal, quest and return.

versions of pastoral have also underscored the productive field of tension that lies between Euro-America's cultural and literary tradition and the cultural expression of Mexican Americans in its midst. Marx has called attention to the ideological continuity in the national pastoralism from the major nineteenth-century authors up to our world of ecological deterioration with its reinvigorated pastoral zeitgeist. The old European mode of thought and writing has not lost its hold on America's cultural imagination, and Mexican American ecopastoral literature is proof of it, as demonstrated in my dissertation. The ideological-political potential of pastoral concepts is of central interest to the ecocritical recuperation of pastoralism and pastoral writing. I have, however, reached the conclusion that the unfortunate philosophical and literary imperfections of Villanueva's and Anaya's modern-day envisionments restrict their usefulness in the environmentalist endeavor. What has struck me as particularly problematic in Mexican American literature, as in much ethnic culture, is the authors' proneness to melodramatic black-and-white portrayal and sentiment in their self-indulgent posturing as the downtrodden of America, whether or not in conjunction with environmental matters.<sup>557</sup> This is certainly not the case in all environment-minded writing. Literature, it ought to be underlined, may well pursue a social, ethical commitment and still be "good" writing. Regarding the old divide between art and politics, I wish to reiterate what I observed early in this thesis. Environmental critics must—like scholars of ethnic culture—avoid falling prey to the temptation of championing aesthetic (or intellectual) mediocrity for the sake of a worthy cause.

As mentioned, previous critics have shown that, notwithstanding its weak spots, the pastoral mode can be highly sophisticated in content and narrative embodiment as it imagines a better relationship between humans and the nonhuman world. In a future plagued with environmental troubles, Buell points out, pastoralism is "sure to remain a luminous ideal and to retain the capacity to assume oppositional forms" (*Environmental* 51). Further ecological manifestations of pastoral will indubitably arise. The current ecocritical revisitation of the mode constitutes a fruitful instrument for understanding the great possibilities of pastoralism—American, ethnic American

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<sup>557</sup> In a rather acerbic critique of *Chicanismo*, Serge Ricard has not unfittingly spoken of the Mexican American's "propensity towards scratching rather than nursing his wounds" (120). He sees this inclination still thriving among the Chicano intelligentsia these days. Ricard's essay is part of a French and German Americanist collection—*Crossing Borders*, ed. Ickstadt (1997). Its articles explore the transgression of boundaries in U.S. culture and literature, particularly in the present multiculturalism.

and other—as an ideological force in cultural and literary representation. In this connection I should also like to reaffirm my conviction that, in order to become more efficacious as a political practice beyond the realm of culture, today's pastoralism must, like environmentalism and ecocriticism, not neglect to take into account the human/ethnic component of the environment to be preserved.

My case studies have been complemented with references to other works of Mexican American environmental/ecopastoral literature of varied genres. Many of the ideas and formal structures used by the three focal authors are in fact found across the environmental writing produced by this ethnic community. The material landscape and a deep human affinity with it as well as preoccupation over harm to the earth and its dwellers have a long history as a literary subject in the Hispanic Southwest. During the last decades, this ecological and ecopastoral sensibility has grown especially strong, whether it be in the guise of Chicana ecofeminism, Chicano/a indigenism or some other U.S. environmentalist philosophy. Let me adduce some further short contemporary examples. With regard to fiction as a major genre of Mexican American environmental expression, we have noted the adoption of the novelistic subgenres of the education novel and the mystery, as well as the short story form. Villanueva, Anaya and a few others have also exploited the popular U.S. genre of ecodystopian science fiction, in both a short and long format. Alejandro Morales's 1992 novel *The Rag Doll Plagues* is a prime instance. A writer of environmental fiction who has come to the fore in recent years is the Texan novelist Ito Romo.<sup>558</sup> The poetic genre is another literary form of import to environmentally inclined Mexican American authors. I have briefly looked at some of Villanueva's ecofeminist poetry since the late 1970s. Many other poets have written about nature and the environment in the past decades. Thus there is the feminist work of the Texan Pat Mora, whose desert-inspired poems and prose have been repeatedly brought up in my discussion, and that by the New Mexican poet Jimmy Santiago Baca. A new poetic voice is the young Californian Chicana María Meléndez.<sup>559</sup> As for the notable dramatic output by Mexican Americans since the

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<sup>558</sup> See note 285 herein on Morales. I have also named Villanueva's antiutopian short story "The Sand Castle." Anaya's novella *Jalamanta* is an environmental dystopia as well, and so is *Bardo99*, a self-termed "mononovel" by Cecile Pineda (2002). In his debut novel *El Puente/The Bridge* (2000), Romo weaves together the story of the pollution of the Rio Grande on the South Texas border and portraits of a variety of women.

<sup>559</sup> On Baca's place-centered, environmentally engaged poetry, cf. note 500 in the chapter on Anaya. Meléndez's pronounced interest in the natural world and ecological issues manifests itself in the

Chicano movement, reference has been made to plays by Luis Valdez and, more recently, the Chicana ecofeminist Cherríe Moraga.<sup>560</sup>

Besides, Mexican American authors have taken up nonfictional writing on nature and environment as a hybrid narrative genre combining elements of nonfiction and fiction. C. de Baca's memoir *We Fed Them Cactus* is, we have found, also a precontemporary ethnic woman's work of nature-oriented nonfiction. In the context of the bloom of nature/environmental writing in U.S. letters, this generic form has been on the rise in Mexican American literature in recent times, though hardly mentioned by scholars. A central exponent is the Texan Arturo Longoria. *Adiós to the Brushlands*, from 1997, is an elegy of the brushlands of the Lower Rio Grande Valley of South Texas.<sup>561</sup> His second work of nature writing, *Keepers of the Wilderness* (2000), resumes the story of the diminishing brushlands south of the border with Mexico. These two narratives supplement Villanueva's ecofeminist view of untamed nature. They are contemporary South Texas Mexican American inscriptions of the national wilderness myth and further additions to its long (non)fictional literary history.<sup>562</sup> Literary nonfiction on America's nature has also been composed by Luis Alberto Urrea, a Tijuana-born second-generation Chicano writer celebrated for his nonfiction books about the border misery, his fiction and his

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environmental poems of her first compilation *Base Pairs* (2001) and the succeeding one, *How Long She'll Last in This World*. She has just published a new book of poetry, *Flexible Bones* (2010). Cf. also the recent interview with her from which I have taken one of my epigraphs.

<sup>560</sup> Valdez is the author of the *acto* "Vietnam Campesino;" Moraga, with "Heroes and Saints," one of his dramatic heirs. Both raise socioenvironmental protest over the pesticide contamination of farm laborers. See note 439.

<sup>561</sup> I want to express my gratitude to Juanita Luna Lawhn for referring me to this book. Longoria, a trained biologist and one-time environmental journalist, denounces the deforestation of the vast woodlands by "[h]umankind and its machines" (107), which began with the Euro-American inflow in the late 1800s and has been nearly completed in his day. The narrator rhetorically punctuates the ecopastoral arraignment with sharp counterpoint, e.g. in his relation of a series of adulthood retreats into the remains of the forest. In contrast to this study's primary literature, Longoria's deep ecological, Leopoldian wilderness pastoralism (110-11) evinces a far greater Euro-American environmentalist influence than characteristic Mexican American notions. There is an ethnic ingredient in both its critique and nature ideal, but generally ethnicity plays a minor role here as compared with C. de Baca, Villanueva, Anaya and most Mexican American environmental literature. In his conversation with the U.S. ecoliterary tradition, Longoria's anchoritism in the woods also resonates strongly with Thoreau and a text like *Walden* (1854), the quintessence of American nature writing.

<sup>562</sup> In a short commentary on *Adiós to the Brushlands* as environmental border literature, Terrell Dixon already relates Longoria to classic American nature writing. His works also form part of a body of Mexican American literature about nature in southern Texas during the course of the last century—Texas being, like New Mexico and California, a state with a major Hispanic cultural and literary heritage. Cf. "Borderlands as Bioregion" (2009) by ecocritic Ybarra on the tradition of environmental writing on the Texas borderlands; it briefly mentions Longoria's first book (187). His literary representations of a brushland ecosystem transcending the political boundary may further be seen as an ecological contribution to the ample Mexican American/Chicano cultural discourse on the U.S.-Mexico border and its overstepping.

poetry. *Wandering Time: Western Notebooks* (1999) consists of pastoral vignettes on his hiking and automobile trips in the Colorado Rocky Mountains and across the desert West. Urrea situates the text in a continuum with U.S. literature and understands it as a self-conscious ethnic response to it.<sup>563</sup> Contemporary Mexican American women authors who dialogue with mainstream ecopastoral nature writing are Terri de la Peña and Denise Chávez.<sup>564</sup> Nature/environmental nonfiction has become a significant practice in Mexican American literature in the final decade of the twentieth century and at the beginning of the twenty-first. It is an ethnic type of nature writing that has developed within the preeminent American tradition of nature literature. This tradition does not commence with Thoreau, but, as noted early on, may be traced to Hispanic origins in Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's 1542 *La relación*.

In Mexican American nonfiction as well as in other environmental literary genres, the ecopastoral ideal of wilderness is assuming ever greater importance. This trend

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<sup>563</sup> He displays great disaffection with modern citified America as a society alienated from nature. What is unusual for a nature-based literary work today is that ecological degradation and environmental advocacy are not of concern to the author. All through the book, he cites a panoply of U.S. (as well as East Asian) writers who have left a mark on it. Central to him is the Euro-American environmental literary production; Edward Abbey's works have most appealed to him (e.g. 4-5). Urrea makes similar remarks about American nature literature ("all white guys") and its profound influence on him in an interview with Aldama (268-69); see too his essay "Down the Highway with Edward Abbey." He also notes the relationality between *Wandering Time* and the old American tradition of travel writing (e.g. 8-9). Since the colonial days, this genre has often merged with nature literature (as in Cabeza de Vaca or Longoria). Prior to this book-length publication, Urrea already authored a literary nature essay called "Tortuga" (1997). It was inspired by his visits to Walden Pond (where he had an encounter with a turtle—hence the Spanish title) and underscores also Thoreau's significance for his writing. Aside from his poetry collections, the Texas-New Mexico border desert and other southwestern landscapes are also important pastoral loci in the nonfictional literary work of the Texan author Ray Gonzalez. Such environmental writing is found in his autobiographical book *Memory Fever* (1993) and the essayistic volumes *The Underground Heart* and *Renaming the Earth*.

<sup>564</sup> De la Peña, a Chicana lesbian fiction writer from California, has presented a literary account of her birdwatching expeditions to the Malibu Lagoon: "Pajaritos" (1994). It connects the point of view of a descendant of the region's Californio settlers with the traditionally very Euro-American outdoor activity of birding—which has spawned a lot of nature writing since the early nineteenth century. Chávez, who is well-known for her fictional prose and plays, is the author of the 1998 piece "Crossing Bitter Creek: Meditations on the Colorado River." While it is customarily her native southern New Mexico desert landscape that makes itself strongly felt in her works, she here recounts her raft ride down the Colorado into the Grand Canyon. On John Wesley Powell's classic 1875 book *The Exploration of the Colorado River and Its Canyons*, cf. note 241. I have also cited (note 242) Anderson and Edwards's anthology of U.S. multiethnic female writing on nature, which contains the pieces by De la Peña and Chávez, besides C. de Baca. To this feminine tradition we should add Eva Antonia Wilbur-Cruce's aforementioned memoir *A Beautiful, Cruel Country* (1987). It is another Mexican American work of nature writing—as in *We Fed Them Cactus* the two genres again mingle. Written in her old age, Wilbur-Cruce's narrative is a pastoral portrait of her prosperous Anglo-Mexican family's cattle ranching in the southern Arizona Territory and of her upbringing as a cowgirl in close touch with the Sonoran desert environment. She bemoans the demise of this way of life with the increasing Euro-American presence and the fencing of the range in the early 1900s. Her text shares many commonalities with C. de Baca's New Mexican ranch recollections and is a further instance of the variant of environmental pastoral that is focused on traditional living on the land.

will surely continue to grow with the advancing shrinkage of wild spaces and with the vanishing of the old rural cultures retrospectively sung by C. de Baca, Anaya or Eva Antonia Wilbur-Cruce (while becoming a more and more rudimentary memory with present writers). Across the genres in Mexican American literature—each with its own procedures for enacting the environmental theme—, much ecocritical investigation yet remains to be made. Not only in today's environmental literature (Murphy) but also in respect of the literary and cultural tradition prior to recent decades of acute ecological concern. I have proposed to counteract this latter gap in my opening analysis.

Throughout Mexican American literature and other forms of cultural expression (for example mural art), ecological—and what I have treated as ecopastoral—ideas will predictably gain further weight in the future. Also and especially they will be projected from a social ecological angle that takes in urban landscapes as well.<sup>565</sup> It is an expanding area of scholarly inquiry in which only the foundations have been laid; my own study has aimed to add to this groundwork. In devising a pastoral *modus operandi* for reading narrativizations of environment and ecology in Mexican American literary writing, I have intended to advance the ecocritical discussion, Chicano criticism and pastoral studies, also in German scholarship. My theoretical cogitations on ecocriticism, ethnic ecocriticism, Mexican American environmental writing and ecopastoral, and the interpretive model I have subsequently put into practice moreover lend themselves to being applied to the exploration of other U.S. Hispanic/Latino and ethnic literatures and cultures concerned with nature. In the literary imagination of other ethnic groups—be they Native, African or Asian American—, the environment is also increasingly being thematized in our age, as in American culture at large.<sup>566</sup>

In view of the vitality of environmental cultural representation in the U.S. and other parts of the world today, the investigation of literature, culture and environment may be expected to further grow and mature as an academic pursuit in American studies and other literary and cultural research. In Europe and Germany, the promising beginnings that have been made need to be built upon in order to bring

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<sup>565</sup> Under the direction of the renowned Chicana muralist Juana Alicia, the True Colors Mural Project of Berkeley, California, has created a number of environmental justice murals in the past few years.

<sup>566</sup> Widely known, interesting works are the transethnic, transnational novels of the Japanese American Karen Tei Yamashita, to give just one name. E.g. her *Tropic of Orange* (1997).

green literary-critical practice further to the fore.<sup>567</sup> I here reassert the significance of literary and cultural studies and the humanities as a complement to the sciences in addressing the ecological predicament and in acting upon environmental attitudes and deleterious anthropocentric behaviors. Environmental ills have become omnipresent in the early years of the twenty-first century and will likely deepen in coming decades. So will the rift between an ecologically irresponsible Western hemisphere and a subdeveloped world suffering the consequences in increasing and disproportionate measure. This thesis has examined one of the pivotal cultural tropes of “nature’s nation” in its ecological fabrications in Mexican American literature—ethnicity in the American garden. I hope to have thus made a contribution to the ecocritical enterprise. More than two millennia after its emergence, Vergil’s *Arcadia* truly has come a long way.

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<sup>567</sup> For Buell’s optimistic assessment of the future of environmental criticism, cf. his observations in the fifth and final chapter of his 2005 book (esp. 133).



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## Abstract

This Americanist dissertation analyzes the ecopastoral motif and its evolution in Mexican American literature from before the Chicano movement until today, with the focus on the work of Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, Alma Luz Villanueva and Rudolfo Anaya. Part one expounds my critical approach in dialogue with the burgeoning young practice of environmental literary and cultural criticism, with Chicano/a studies and with pastoral scholarship. There has been a lack of attention to issues of ethnicity, class and urbanism as well as to the fiction genre in ecocritical and ecopastoral research. Critics have also disregarded the environment in the study of Mexican American culture and literature, where ecological discourse has a long history and grown especially strong in the last decades. Building upon the environmental reclamation of U.S. pastoral as a literary and cultural mode in the work of Leo Marx and ecocritical practitioners like Lawrence Buell and Glen Love, my nonecentric analytic method conjoins the three aforementioned disciplines and responds to their lacunae. To my knowledge, this study constitutes not only the first ecopastoral inquiry into Mexican American writing, but also the first monographic investigation of this ethnic literature from an ecocritical perspective in Germany.

The second part offers close readings of different versions of environmental pastoral in Cabeza de Baca's early Hispanic New Mexican memoir *We Fed Them Cactus* (1954), in the 1988 bildungsroman *The Ultraviolet Sky* by Villanueva, an important California representative of Chicana (eco)feminism, and in the detective novel *Zia Summer* (1995) by the most acclaimed Chicano writer, the New Mexican Anaya. My analyses examine these manifestations of the ecopastoral trope in their ideological and aesthetic conception, including their internal tensions and ambivalences. Throughout, Mexican American ecopastoral writing is read both in its ethnic difference and alterity and in its interrelation and exchange with Euro-American cultural practice and the specific U.S. and Western tradition of pastoral. As they inscribe themselves in the larger bucolic tradition, the texts provide ecoethnic revisions of America's pastoral mythology of the West. In addition to their points of conjunction, the three narratives evince significant divergences and developments over the decades. Within the message of ecopastoral cultural critique, for instance, Cabeza de Baca's nostalgic Plains ranching memoir anticipates the contemporary

environmental justice discourse found in the ecofeminist novel and in the Albuquerque-set murder mystery. Central rhetorical strategies employed by the authors are emotive means like imagery of ecological apocalypse and the classical pastoral device of satire. In their ethnic mythopoeic imaginings of alternative pastoral ideals of socioenvironmental harmony, there is a major ideological evolution from the pre-movement portrait of Spanish-Catholic Hispano culture in *We Fed Them Cactus* to the indigenist Chicana ecofeminist philosophy of Villanueva and Anaya's Indohispano New Age interpretation of New Mexico's rural heritage. In their transcultural syncretism, these fictional epistemologies amalgamate U.S. mainstream environmentalist concepts with Chicano/a cultural nationalist *indigenismo*.

Mexican American literary ecopastoral has not only adapted classic universal and U.S. bucolic ideas and values, it also recasts age-old formal conventions in its representation of characters and spatial locations. Salient examples in the three books include character types like the deconstructed Euro-American pastoral icons of the farmer and the cowboy and the celebrated Mexican American *curandera* figure. As to ecopastoral setting, the traditional *locus amoenus* is extended to the New Mexican desert as well as to a wild landscape in Villanueva's ethnic ecofeminist rewriting of the national wilderness pastoralism in her Sierra Nevada narrative. This study's general conclusion adds some remarks about nonfictional Mexican American writing on nature and environment, of which Cabeza de Baca is an early female exponent. A growing ecopastoral literary practice among Mexican Americans particularly since the 1990s, this variety of U.S. nature writing is represented by authors like Arturo Longoria and Luis Alberto Urrea. My ethnoecocritical, ecopastoral reading of Mexican American literature also lends itself as a starting point for inspecting other U.S. Latino and ethnic literatures and cultures concerned with nature and ecology. In an increasingly significant, underexplored area of humanistic inquiry in times of environmental decline, this investigation aims to contribute to the groundwork.

## Kurzfassung

Diese amerikanistische Dissertation analysiert das ökopastorale Motiv und seine Entwicklung in der mexikanisch-amerikanischen Literatur von der Zeit vor der Chicano-Bewegung bis heute, mit Schwerpunkt auf dem Werk von Fabiola Cabeza de Baca, Alma Luz Villanueva und Rudolfo Anaya. Teil eins erläutert meinen kritischen Ansatz im Dialog mit der aufstrebenden jungen Praxis der umweltorientierten Literatur- und Kulturkritik, mit Chicano/a-Studien und mit der Pastoralforschung. Fragen der Ethnizität, der Klasse und des Urbanismus sowie dem Genre der Fiktion ist in der ökokritischen und ökopastoralen Forschung nicht genügend Aufmerksamkeit gewidmet worden. Ebenso hat die Kritik die Umwelt im Studium der mexikanisch-amerikanischen Kultur und Literatur vernachlässigt, in der ökologischer Diskurs eine lange Geschichte und besonders in den letzten Dekaden stark zugenommen hat. Meine nichtökozentrische Analysemethode baut auf der umweltorientierten Neubewertung der US-Pastorale als literarischem und kulturellem Modus im Werk von Leo Marx und Ökokritikern wie Lawrence Buell und Glen Love auf und verbindet die drei zuvor genannten Disziplinen, auf deren Lücken sie reagiert. Meines Wissens stellt diese Studie nicht nur die erste ökopastorale Erforschung mexikanisch-amerikanischen Schreibens dar, sondern auch die erste monographische Untersuchung dieser ethnischen Literatur aus einem ökokritischen Blickwinkel in Deutschland.

Der zweite Teil bietet *close readings* unterschiedlicher Versionen der Umweltpastorale in Cabeza de Bacas frühen hispano-neumexikanischen Lebenserinnerungen *We Fed Them Cactus* (1954), im Bildungsroman *The Ultraviolet Sky* (1988) von Villanueva, einer wichtigen kalifornischen Vertreterin des Chicana-(Öko)feminismus, und im Detektivroman *Zia Summer* (1995) des meistgefeierten Chicano-Schriftstellers, des Neumexikaners Anaya. Meine Analysen untersuchen diese Manifestationen der ökopastoralen Trope in ihrer ideologischen und ästhetischen Konzeption, einschließlich ihrer inneren Spannungen und Ambivalenzen. Mexikanisch-amerikanisches Schreiben wird durchweg sowohl in seiner ethnischen Differenz und Alterität gelesen als auch in seiner Interrelation und seinem Austausch mit der euro-amerikanischen Kulturpraxis und der spezifischen US- und westlichen Tradition der Pastorale. Während sie sich in die weitere

bukolische Tradition einschreiben, liefern die Texte ökoethnische Revisionen von Amerikas pastoraler Mythologie des Westens. Neben ihren Verbindungspunkten zeigen die drei Erzähltexte signifikante Divergenzen und Entwicklungen über die Jahrzehnte. Innerhalb der Botschaft ökopastoraler Kulturkritik beispielsweise antizipieren Cabeza de Bacas nostalgische Erinnerungen an die Viehkultur der Great Plains den zeitgenössischen *environmental justice*-Diskurs, der sich im ökofeministischen Roman und in dem in Albuquerque spielenden Kriminalroman findet. Zentrale rhetorische Strategien, derer sich die Autoren bedienen, sind emotive Mittel wie ökoapokalyptische Bildlichkeit und das klassische pastorale Stilmittel der Satire. In ihren ethnischen mythopoetischen Imaginierungen alternativer pastoraler Ideale von sozioökologischer Harmonie zeigt sich eine bedeutende ideologische Entwicklung von dem vor der Chicano-Bewegung entstandenen Porträt der spanisch-katholischen Hispano-Kultur in *We Fed Them Cactus* zur indigenistischen chicana-ökofeministischen Philosophie von Villanueva und zu Anayas indohispanisch und New Age-geprägter Interpretation des ruralen Erbes von New Mexico. In ihrem transkulturellen Synkretismus verschmelzen diese fiktionalen Epistemologien Konzepte der US-Mainstream-Umweltbewegung mit dem *indigenismo* des Chicano/a-Kulturnationalismus.

Die mexikanisch-amerikanische literarische Ökopastorale hat nicht nur klassische Ideen und Werte der universalen und der US-Pastorale adaptiert, sie gestaltet auch uralte formale Konventionen neu in ihrer Darstellung der Figuren und räumlichen Lokalitäten. Herausragende Beispiele in den drei Büchern sind unter anderem Charaktertypen wie die dekonstruierten euro-amerikanischen pastoralen Ikonen des Farmers und des Cowboys und die gefeierte mexikanisch-amerikanische *curandera*-Figur. Hinsichtlich des ökopastoralen Schauplatzes wird der traditionelle *locus amoenus* auf die neumexikanische Wüste ausgedehnt sowie auf eine wilde Landschaft in Villanuevas ethnischer ökofeministischer Neuschreibung des nationalen Wildnis-Pastoralismus in ihrem Erzähltext über die Sierra Nevada. Der Schlussteil dieser Studie fügt einige Bemerkungen zu nichtfiktionalem mexikanisch-amerikanischen Schreiben über Natur und Umwelt an, in dem Cabeza de Baca eine frühe Vertreterin darstellt. Diese Variation des *US-nature writing* gewinnt als ökopastorale literarische Praxis besonders seit den 1990er Jahren unter Mexiko-Amerikanern an Gewicht und wird repräsentiert von Autoren wie Arturo Longoria und Luis Alberto Urrea. Meine ethnoökokritische, ökopastorale Lesart mexikanisch-

amerikanischer Literatur bietet sich auch als Ausgangspunkt für die Untersuchung weiterer Latino- und ethnischen Literaturen und Kulturen in den USA an, die sich mit Natur und Ökologie beschäftigen. In einem zunehmend bedeutsamen, ungenügend untersuchten Gebiet geisteswissenschaftlicher Forschung in Zeiten des ökologischen Niedergangs strebt diese Studie einen Beitrag zur Grundlagenarbeit an.



## **Vorveröffentlichung/Prior Publication**

Teile der vorliegenden Dissertation sind zur Vorveröffentlichung vorgesehen/  
Portions of the present dissertation have been selected for prior publication:

Luckas, Edda. „Mexican American Literature and the Ecopastoral: Alma Luz Villanueva’s Ecofeminist Fiction“. *The Space of U.S. Latino/a Culture Revisited: Essays in Honor of Juan Bruce-Novoa*. Hg. Astrid M. Fellner und Horst Tonn.  
In Vorbereitung.



## **Lebenslauf**

Der Lebenslauf ist in der elektronischen Version aus Gründen des Datenschutzes nicht enthalten.

