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**RUDOLFO ANAYA'NIN *BLESS ME, ULTIMA* VE *TORTUGA*
ESERLERİNDE MİT, GELENEK VE KİMLİK**

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BİLGENUR AYDIN

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*In loving memory of mis Abuelas, Memnune and Zülfiye,
my favorite curanderas,
who left magical traces behind them*

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ÖZET

Bilgenur Aydın. Rudolfo Anaya'nın *Bless Me, Ultima* ve *Tortuga* Eserlerinde Mit, Gelenek ve Kimlik. Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü. Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı Yüksek Lisans Programı. 2021

Çağdaş 20. yüzyıl edebiyat araştırmaları ağırlıklı olarak sosyal, kültürel ve politik hareketlerle şekillenmiştir. Bu hareketlerden biri de, ABD'de yaşayan Chicanx'lerin azınlık olarak görülmesi nedeniyle Anglo-Amerikan statükosuna bir tepki olan 1960 ve 70'lerin Chicano Sivil Haklar Hareketi'dir. Bu nedenle Chicano Hareketi, 'Meksikalı-Amerikalılar' veya 'Hispanikler'in kendi Chicanx kimliğini haykırmaları için büyük bir adımdır ve bu da sadece İspanyol köklerini değil, aynı zamanda özellikle statüko tarafından göz ardı edilen yerli mirası geri getirir. Chicano Hareketi'nden doğan ve Aztek anavatanı düşüncesi içinde algılanan Aztlán Mit'inin kültürel çerçevesi, yerli kültür ve gelenekleri geri kazanma stratejisidir. Chicano hareketinin sosyal ve siyasal bağlamda yansıması olan bu tepkiler edebiyat dünyasında da karşılık bulmuştur. Bu harekette varlık bulan Chicanx edebiyat geleneğinin kurucusu kabul edilen Rudolfo Alfonso Anaya, Chicanx kurgusunda ve kültür eleştirisinde kültürel milliyetçilik duruşu sergiler. Bu nedenle Chicanx bilincinde Chicanxler için ideal vatanın sembolik bir temsili olarak kullanılan New Mexico'ya özellikle atıfta bulunarak, Güneybatı ABD'de gelişen kayıp ve bastırılmış yerli geçmişini, kültürünü ve geleneğini canlandırması Anaya için vazgeçilmezdir. Bu çalışmada, Mary Louise Pratt'in temas bölgesi (contact zone) ve Fernando Ortiz'in kültürlerin kaynaşması (transculturation) kuramlarından faydalanılarak, Anaya'nın *Bless Me, Ultima* ve *Tortuga* romanlarında Chicanx kimlik oluşumu incelenmektedir. Aynı zamanda, bu çalışma, eserleri Aztlán Mit'i ile ilişkilendirip romanların mitik geçmişe nasıl atıfta bulunduğunu göstermeyi hedeflemektedir. Birinci bölüm, Anaya'nın seçilen eserlerindeki ana karakterlerin Chicanx kimlik oluşumunda yaşadıkları kültür ikilemlerini sunmaktadır. Diğer bölümler de ise, kültürlerin kaynaşması genel çerçevesine bağlı kalınarak, İspanyol ve yerli köklerden edinilen kültürel mirası ortak kültürel bir potada birleştiren kavramlar ele alınmaktadır. Bu kavramlar sırasıyla mit, New Mexico ve şifacı kadın başlıklarıyla irdelenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Chicanx kimliği, Rudolfo Anaya, *Bless Me, Ultima, Tortuga*, yerli kültür

ABSTRACT

Bilgenur Aydın. Myth, Folkways and Identity in Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Tortuga*. Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü. Amerikan Kültürü ve Edebiyatı Yüksek Lisans Programı. 2021

The 20th century is marked by social, cultural and political movements which paved the way for new literary studies. One of these movements is El Movimiento, or the Chicano Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 70s, which was a reaction against the Anglo-American status quo due to the fact that Chicanxs were treated as minorities living in the United States. Therefore, the Chicano Movement was a big step for 'Mexican- Americans' or 'Hispanics' to cry out their own Chicanidad, or Chicane identity, which indicates not only Spanish roots but also particularly brings back the indigenous heritage that was disregarded by the status quo. Born out of the Chicano Movement, the cultural framework of the Aztlán Myth, which is the idea of an Aztec homeland, is the strategy to re-claim indigenous culture and traditions. These reactions which were practiced in the social and political arena of the Chicano Movement also found a place in the literary world. Rudolfo Alfonso Anaya, who is regarded the founder of the Chicane literary canon, participated in the Chicano Movement. He has been holding a cultural nationalist stance in Chicane cultural criticism and this stance is reflected in his fiction. Thus, in Chicane consciousness, it is essential for him to revive the lost and repressed indigenous past, culture and tradition that flourished in the Southwest United States with particular reference to New Mexico, which is used as a symbolic representation of the ideal homeland for Chicanxs. Based on this context, the aim of this study is to analyze the representation of Chicane identity formation in Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Tortuga* within the theoretical framework of Mary Louise Pratt's contact zone and Fernando Ortiz's theory of transculturation. This study also shows how Anaya deals with Chicane identity by applying the mythical past by means of the Aztlán myth, which exerts a healing and uniting power on Chicane people. Chapter 1 will illustrate how the protagonists represent the dualities of Chicanxs through the application of Pratt's theory to the lives of the protagonists. Later chapters within the framework of transculturation will demonstrate how the protagonists harmonize their bi-cultural heritage through myth, New Mexico's natural features and the curandera figure, which are three connected concepts that stand for indigenous traditions.

Keywords: Chicane identity, Rudolfo Anaya, *Bless Me, Ultima, Tortuga*, Native culture

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to analyze Chicana¹ identity formation in Rudolfo Alfonso Anaya's (1937-2020) *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972)² and *Tortuga* (1979)³ in the light of Mary Louise Pratt's and Fernando Ortiz's cultural theories with a specific focus on the Aztlán myth. Since Anaya portrays Chicano hybrid identities torn between their bicultural heritages in these novels, Pratt's theory of "the contact zone," which discusses respectively the encounter, interaction, power struggle, and negotiation between hierarchically defined cultures and languages in a liminal space at a specific historical moment, is employed as a methodological tool. The concept of the contact zone is useful to discuss the impact of this multicultural environment on the protagonists' societal, cultural, familial and individual lives. Besides, it provides a new perspective to reevaluate the historical past of the Chicana. On the other hand, since both novels depict the process of the protagonists' constant negotiation and attempts at reconciling with their dual heritage, Ortiz's theory of "transculturation," which is defined as the re-making of a new culture out of the blending of various cultures, is adopted. Transculturation draws attention to the specific cultural elements that contribute to the representations of this transculturation process in the novels. In addition, it is significant to note that Anaya wrote these novels in the activist milieu of the 1960s and 1970s, and he personally participated actively in the Chicano Civil Rights Movement. One of the outcomes of the Chicano Movement is the celebration of the Aztlán myth, which announces the Chicana's proud embrace of their indigenous roots. By using the Aztlán myth as a motif in *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Tortuga*, Anaya also contributes to this articulation of an authentic Chicana identity based on the indigenous past through his literary works. Thus, this thesis argues that in *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Tortuga*, Anaya reconstructs a new Chicana identity, based on the Aztlán myth, which subverts the power structures in the contact zone by its collective spirit and privileges the pagan indigenous past over the Anglo-American present by its healing power as a part of the transculturation process. This positively reconfigured Chicana identity formation is given a voice by the representations of the struggles the protagonists of both novels go through.

¹ Throughout this thesis, the gender neutral, Chicana, will be used to refer to the people of Mexican origin. Chicana and Chicano will also be used when it is necessary to indicate the gender of the characters within their literary context.

² This thesis will use Warner Books edition published in 1994.

³ The seventh edition published in 2000 will be used in this thesis.

Anaya⁴ is considered to be the founder of Chicana literature particularly due to his novels that have introduced Chicana culture, folklore and traditions to the international arena. Coming from a Mexican origin, he was born in the rural part of New Mexico, the village of Pastura in Llano Plains, located in today is Southwest United States. Until he got a university education in Albuquerque at the UNM, he had experienced village and communal life at first hand (Fernández Olmos, 1999). Raised in a small enclosed community, he observed and also practiced the traditions, customs and rituals of his cultural environment which had been strictly preserved⁵. Anaya was aware of the influence of this rural culture upon his upbringing and he expresses this: “The landscape changes man, and the man becomes landscape” (Anaya, 1977, p.99). Knowing that one’s sense of belonging is closely connected to the sense of place, he depicts landscapes in his novels to highlight the unbreakable bond between human and nature. In addition, he also knew how the familial life shaped one’s identity. His parents, having different religious and cultural backgrounds, enriched his perspective, yet this exclusive family background caused difficulties for him to adapt himself to his parents’ diverging attitudes. His Catholic mother, Rafaelita Mares, came from a settled farmer society, whereas his father, Martin Anaya, maintained a *vaquero*, or cowboy, lifestyle. This contrast created an opportunity for Anaya to pursue his sense of belonging and identity in *Bless Me, Ultima*, which involves autobiographical references to his own childhood that was torn between but also developed by his bicultural heritage (Fernández Olmos, 1999).

Anaya also contributed to Chicano literature with a wide scope of literary works composed in the forms of various genres such as detective novels, historical fiction, fantasy fiction, travel journals, children’s literature, poetry and published or performed plays⁶. He also wrote critical essays by holding a cultural nationalist position in Chicano cultural criticism. Some of the titles listed here also show his concern for the relation between earth and human, place and identity: “Writer’s Sense of Place,” “Writer’s Landscape: Epiphany

⁴ Anaya is also referred to as the “Godfather and guru of Chicano literature,” “one of the founding fathers of Chicano literature,” “the most acclaimed and universal Chicano writer,” and the “poet of the Llano and the barrio” (Dick & Sirias, 1998, p.ix).

⁵ In his interview with Bruce-Novoa (1980), in regard to his childhood, Anaya says: “The sense of culture, of tradition, of history was always around us” (p. 186).

⁶ Some of his literary works are as follows: His collection of short stories, *The Silence of the Llano* (1982); his travel journal, *A Chicano in China* (1986); his tales, *Lord of the Dawn: The Legend Quetzalcoatl* (1987) and *Serafina’s Stories* (2004); his historical fiction, *Albuquerque* (1992); his detective novels, *Zia Summer* (1995), *Rio Grande Fall* (1996) and *Shaman Winter* (1999); and his fantasy fiction *Jalamanta: A Message from the Desert* (1996).

in Landscape” and “Aztlán: A Homeland without Boundaries” published in *The Essays* (2009). His interest in the Aztlán myth can also be observed in *Aztlán: Essays on the Chicano Homeland, Revised and Expanded Edition* (2017), of which he is the co-editor and the contributor. This collection of essays reflects Anaya’s aspiration to create a positive and collective spirit of Chicana culture by gathering Chicanos around shared values supported by the Aztlán myth.

The reason Anaya holds such a unique place in Chicana letters stems from the fact that he is a pioneering figure who inspired the other figures of Chicana letters in the 1970s, marked by the Chicano Civil Rights Movement. In those times, Chicanos, being an ethnic minority group of people, were treated as second-class citizens by the Anglo-Americans (Omi & Winant, 1986). In reaction, they tried to show their cultural heritage, thereby creating cultural awareness both within their community and in the Anglo-American society. Anaya, as the political and literary voice of the Chicanos, was among the literary figures who had faced many obstacles during the publishing process of their novels. *Bless Me, Ultima* was published by an independent press, Quinto Sol. After receiving positive remarks on it, he published *Heart of Aztlán* (1976) and then *Tortuga* which consolidated his place in the literary world. These three novels form a trilogy⁷ that reflects the common Anayan themes: the revival of pagan myths and Native American spirituality that gives voice to Chicana culture emerged from the Chicano Civil Rights Movement. Bringing back the ethnic other through his art was a part of his project⁸.

This trilogy presents the Chicana identity formation of the protagonists set in New Mexico. The storyteller and healer figures are used to give support to these characters during their identity formation process. Only *Heart of Aztlán*, different from the other two in certain aspects, “is not a strictly coming-of-age novel⁹” according to Fernández Olmos (1999, p.18). It deals with the sociopolitical side of Chicana identity formation and therefore delivers a type of hard realism in its representation. Centering on Chicano immigrants and workers living in the industrialized *barrios* (neighborhoods) of Albuquerque, New Mexico, the novel displays their conditions, conflicts and experiences within the Anglo-American mainstream

⁷ Some critics think that *Bless Me, Ultima, Tortuga* and *Heart of Aztlán* are loosely connected to each other even though Rudolfo Anaya regards these three novels as “New Mexico trilogy” (Fernández Olmos, 1999, pp.13-18).

⁸ This project will be discussed in detail in relation to the Aztlán myth.

⁹ The term coming-of-age novel is often used interchangeably with the term *bildungsroman*, which is defined by M.H. Abrams (1999) as follows: “The subject of these novels is the development of the protagonist's mind and character, in the passage from childhood through varied experiences—and often through a spiritual crisis— into maturity, which usually involves recognition of one's identity and role in the world” (p.193).

society of the 1970s. Also, the introduction of the *bruja* (a witch) figure, a negative figure rather than a positive one like the healer, is combined with the negative portrayal of the city setting of Albuquerque and serves to make the novel darker and “less lyrical” in tone (Fernández Olmos, 1999, p.18).

These negative representations are not found in the mythic bildungsromans: *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Tortuga*. They are both written in the same genre and they both make use of magic realism¹⁰ to create a Chicana consciousness. Also, these two novels speak in a metaphorical idiom that addresses the psycho-spiritual state of an alienated people. They portray Chicano protagonists’ struggle for their identity formation by making use of their pagan heritage that encompasses Native myths and folk healer figures of small rural communities in New Mexico. Thus, positive meanings are attached to the healers and communities in *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Tortuga*. The reason why this study is primarily built on the comparison of *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Tortuga* is that both novels show the rich mythic symbolism which becomes the most essential tool the protagonists need in confronting social evils and changing their consciousness. In other words, the Chicana community achieves harmony and balance through embracing this rich mythic symbolism.

*Bless Me, Ultima*¹¹ revolves around a Mexican-American family, Márez, who live in a small community in Guadalupe, New Mexico, in the 1940s. It focuses particularly on the maturation process of Antonio, who starts to take catechism, basic religious lessons. The story opens with the arrival of the old folk healer and midwife Ultima to their house. In Antonio’s maturation process to manhood, Ultima plays an important role. She teaches him and guides him with certain ways to handle internal and external conflicts.

Antonio’s inner conflict mainly stems from his parents’ opposing views on lifestyle and religion. While his mother, Maria, expects him to adopt the lifestyle of farmers and Catholicism, his father, Gabriel, imposes a vaquero, cowboy, lifestyle, and pagan beliefs on him. Following events exacerbate this situation and shake his belief in Catholicism as he witnesses them. He sees four violent murders, which negatively affects him and makes him

¹⁰ Emerging from Latin America, magic realism is a mode of writing that presents an “amalgamation of realism and fantasy” (Flores, 1955, p.189). Stephen Slemon (1998) considers magic realism as a part of post-colonial discourse: “Magic realism can be seen to provide a positive and liberating response to the codes of imperial history and its legacy of fragmentation and discontinuity” (p. 21). For more information, see Roland Walter’s *Magical Realism in Contemporary Chicano Fiction* (1993).

¹¹ In one of his interviews, Anaya states that his writings are autobiographical (Johnson & Apodaca, 1998). The protagonist of *Bless Me, Ultima* can be associated with Anaya, who has experienced similar difficulties in his childhood because of his bicultural parentage. Anaya says: “In *Bless Me, Ultima*... I looked at my childhood through the eyes of a novelist. . . . I explored childhood experiences, dreams, folklore, mythology, and communal relationships that shaped me in my formative years. Writing became a process of self-exploration” (Anaya, 2009, p.162).

question concepts of God, justice and conscience. In addition, his friends tell the polytheistic Native story of the golden carp, which is a challenge to the Catholic belief. This situation adds to Antonio's anxiety and disorientation spiritually and physical problems such as headache, fever and nightmares. Antonio's perplexed state of mind is implied to be resolved when he accompanies Ultima on the trip to other communities for healing purposes. One of them is a visit to Luna, a farming community where Antonio's uncle, Lucas, is on his deathbed. Trementina sisters, who are witches, curse him because he sees their satanic practices. Modern doctors and priests fail to cure him. Therefore, Lucas's family asks for Ultima's help. Ultima firstly demands the witches' father, Tenario, to break the spell cast upon Lucas, but he does not acknowledge his daughters' guilt. Ultima performs a healing ceremony that takes three days and Antonio is involved in this process like Lucas. Despite suffering in this process, Antonio and Lucas heal physically and find themselves renewed spiritually. Antonio is surprised that Ultima has more healing power than the priest and modern doctor. At the same time, one of the witches becomes ill and Tenario blames Ultima for this. As time passes and healing rituals continue, the witches die of illness. Thus, Tenario seeks revenge for these deaths and has several attempts to kill Ultima. When he realizes that the owl is Ultima's spirit, he shoots it and Ultima dies. In return, one of Antonio's uncles shoots Tenario, as well. The end implies Antonio's entrance into manhood.

On the other hand, *Tortuga*¹² centers on a sixteen-year-old boy nicknamed Tortuga¹³. He is a disabled young Mexican-American adolescent who has a physical disability. The story begins with the ambulance scene in which Tortuga is in a lot of pain with his paralyzed body. During their trip to the Crippled Children's Hospital, the ambulance driver, Filomon, tries to soothe him by relating the curative power of the Tortuga Mountain with its healing spring. The myth of Tortuga Mountain, which different characters tell throughout the story, concerns a sea turtle that transforms into Tortuga Mountain. When the ocean gets dry and becomes a desert, the sea turtle immigrates to the North and turns into Tortuga Mountain.

The name of the mountain derives from the shape of the turtle. Likewise, the protagonist Tortuga is named after this turtle tied to the land as a mountain. Similarly, Tortuga's bodily movements are limited because of the turtle-shaped cast. Filomon thinks

¹² Like *Bless Me, Ultima*, *Tortuga* can also be claimed to be autobiographical in certain aspects. Anaya had a similar accident during his adolescence which resulted in paralysis. Like Tortuga, he stayed in a hospital for a long time (Fernández Olmos, 1999, p. 5).

¹³ The critical references point out that the protagonist Tortuga is in fact Benjie Chavez from *Heart of Aztlán* and *Albuquerque*. In *Heart of Aztlán*, he was shot, fell from there and became paralyzed at the end (Anaya, 2015).

that one day the land-bound turtle free itself. However, Tortuga's hopelessness and pessimism are followed by the dark, cold desert setting. He remembers his parents' religious tendencies, but he does not believe either.

After he is admitted to the Crippled Children's Hospital, he goes through a challenging process that tests his strength, durability and patience both physically and mentally. He describes his room and other wards as dark, isolated, and terrifying because he observes the patients with twisted bodies, deformities, polio, iron lungs, and comatose patients called "vegetables". In this process, Tortuga heals gradually; that is, he is transferred from body cast to wheelchair and lastly crutches. It is not a smooth process, though. The bookworm Salomon, who is in a coma, communicates with Tortuga telepathically and guides him with his own pathetic yet promising life stories. He also teaches Tortuga "walking and singing on the path" to get rid of his paralysis. Other characters who take care of Tortuga are the physician Dr. Steel, the physical therapist KC, the aides and folk healers Josefa and Ismelda. Dr. Steel sometimes visits Tortuga and checks his bodily improvements and KC applies therapy to his body. In addition, Josefa and Ismelda, who inhabit the nearby village, share the origin of the Tortuga myth, its remedial power and offers its spring to him as a drink. Tortuga falls in love with Ismelda, who returns his love and he is drawn to her sexually. With the arrival of spring, Tortuga's last dream pictures his regained health. Ismelda wants all the patients to leave their crutches and wheelchairs and she takes all the patients to the mountain. While they dance and sing together, the mountain joins them by liberating itself from the land. Simultaneously, they ascend to the luminous and glittering sky at night. While he is making some preparations to be discharged from the hospital the next day, he receives a letter from his mother and blue guitar, which the poet Crispin demands him to play. On his way home, he stops by Ismelda and makes love in front of Tortuga Mountain. The story comes to an end with the bus scene in which he sings the song of love.

This thesis situates these two novels within the context of the representation of hybrid Chicana identity formation. In order to explain how the hybrid Chicana identity is reconstructed through these texts by the representation of the protagonists' reconciliation with their bicultural heritage through Native myths, New Mexico and the curandera figure, the following theoretical framework is used.

There are many important cultural and literary theorists whose discussions and opinions have contributed to postcolonial studies at a large scale. Frantz Fanon¹⁴, as a black intellectual, showed how the colonizer/colonized relationship in a white dominated society is normalized in psychological terms. Influenced by Fanon, Edward Said discussed how colonialist discourses are constructed to oppress the colonized other in his widely known work *Orientalism* (1978) (McLeod, 2010). In the 1980s, Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri C. Spivak¹⁵ approached the issues of colonialism from a poststructuralist perspective. While Spivak, being a feminist, was more concerned with the representations of women within the context of colonialism, Bhabha¹⁶ was well-known for his concepts of hybridity and mimicry (McLeod, 2010).

More recently, the concept of “transculturation” has regained attention and been developed by various theorists among which there are ethnographers and anthropologists from different historical periods. This theoretical discussion process begins with the studies of the Cuban anthropologist, Ortiz, who first coined the term “transculturation” in *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*¹⁷ (1940). As his contemporary and recognized as the founding figure of British social anthropology, the Polish scholar Bronislaw Malinowski, in *The Dynamics of Culture Change: An Inquiry into Race Relations in Africa* (1945), argues there are three phases of cultural change: “impinging culture, receiving culture, compromise and change” (Coronil, 2003, p.xxxiii). While discussing these issues, he critically evaluates the term that Ortiz coined. The Uruguayan literary critic Angel Rama applied the term to Latin American narratives within literary studies in *Writing across Cultures: Narrative Transculturation in Latin America*¹⁸. Later, Mary Louise Pratt also developed her own understanding of transculturation by coining the term “contact zone” in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* in 1992.

¹⁴ Fanon’s ideas of national consciousness and national culture presented in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) and then its reprint edition (2005) are taken as the basis for this comment. For more information, see Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952).

¹⁵ See Spivak’s “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography” (1985) and “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988)

¹⁶ See Bhabha’s idea of imaginative border identity in his “Introduction” to *The Location of Culture* (1994). In “DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation” (1994), Bhabha discusses hybridity as a “performance” and argues that hybridization is an ongoing process in which a subject gives meanings to the past knowledge, adopts it and performs it in “incommensurable cultural temporalities in which the difference between cultures cannot be pointed”.

¹⁷ This thesis will use its fourth English printing published in 2003.

¹⁸ Rama’s work was originally published in Spanish in 1982 and later it was translated into English in 2012.

In *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, Ortiz focused on the role of different cultures that have shaped Cuban identity throughout history as well as the impact of basic agricultural products, tobacco and sugar, on the formation of cultural identity. Although he used “transculturation” to explain the experiences of a specific culture, that is, Cuban culture, he claimed that this term is applicable to American culture as well. In addition, Fernando Coronil (2003), in his introduction to *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, also underlines how the idea of transculturation can be used to explain the processes of cultural change: “[Ortiz] left it for others to apply this concept to societies in which native peoples remained an important sector of the population” (p. xxvi). It is in this respect that this thesis adopts Ortiz’s understanding of transculturation to analyze the formation of Chicano cultural identity. Ortiz defines transculturation as follows:

[T]he word transculturation better expresses the different phases of the process of transition from one culture to another because this does not consist merely in acquiring another culture, which is what the English word acculturation really implies, but the process also necessarily involves the loss or uprooting of a previous culture, which could be defined as a deculturation. In addition it carries the idea of the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena, which could be called neoculturation. (Ortiz, 2003, pp. 102-103)

Ortiz draws attention to the indication of the loss of either culture in the use of the terms of “acculturation” and “deculturation” and proposes “transculturation” as an overarching term that equally encompasses cultures that interact with one another. However, in the past, some scholars put more emphasis on either “acculturation” or “deculturation” which is limited to only acquiring the dominant ideology’s culture by losing one’s own authentic, marginal culture in colonial terms. Yet Ortiz’s “transculturation” has been quickly employed by the theoretical discourse because it does not refer to the negative constructions of cultural identity through “acculturation” or “deculturation,” but to a birth of a new pluralistic culture defined as the process of “neoculturation” (Ortiz, 2003, pp. 102-103).

Since the idea of “transculturation” is regarded as “a phenomenon of the contact zone” (Pratt, 2008, p.7), Pratt’s definition of the “contact zone,” which sets a stage for the encounters of different people with different cultural backgrounds, contributes to the detailed understanding of what transculturation is. As the United States – Mexico border is itself a fluid and ever-evolving construct, it is possible to see how the contact zones between American and Mexican culture change rapidly. Retrospectively, as far as Chicano identity formation is concerned, the historical Native American and Spanish engagement also forms

a zone of cultural hybridity¹⁹ in Mexico. However, later on, with respect to the Mexican-American people whose land was annexed and who immigrated to the United States, the Spanish- Native conflict alters to Anglo-Chicanx addressing the contemporary contact zone.

In her article entitled “Criticism in the Contact Zone”²⁰ (2008), Pratt defines the contact zones as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination- such as colonialism and slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today” (p. 7). Thus, Pratt extends the power dynamics and effects of the contact zone to the historical periods that come after the colonial period and applies them to Chicane culture and depicts how border encounters can be positively productive in terms of the formation of cultural identity.

According to the anthropologist-historian James Diego Vigil (2012), the Spanish colonial period (1521-1821) can be considered as the cornerstone in forming the Chicane identity which is called *mestizaje* or hybrid. Unequivocally, since identity formation is thought to be an ongoing process, there is always an opportunity for Chicane to identify and define themselves in positive terms. However, the Chicane identity was not fully formed or defined during the Spanish colonial period.

As history is a chain of events which follow each other in a cause and effect relationship, the historical events have an impact on one another. In this regard, it would be appropriate to bring Pratt’s theoretical concept of the current contact zone of Anglo-American – Chicane to understand the creation of the Aztlán myth as well as the literary value of Anaya’s novels, *Bless Me*, *Ultima* and *Tortuga* which were written at the time of constantly developing Chicane Movement. Before the Chicane Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, there had been some historical and political events that triggered the Chicane Civil Rights Movement. With respect to the conflict between the United States and Chicane, one of the major events was the Mexican-American War that took place between 1846 and 1848, which resulted in the Treaty of Guadalupe in 1848. This Treaty led to the annexation of Mexican territories by the government of the United States and therefore to the expatriation and exile of Chicane from their lands (Vigil, 2012). Also, Chicane were excluded from

¹⁹ To understand transculturation with respect to Chicane, one needs to refer to the Spanish colonial period in the New World. Since the first time Native Americans were confronted with Spanish conquistadors, there have been reciprocal relations between them through marriage which is a signifier of “genetic unions.” As a result of such unions, there will be Mestiza/o descendants (Vigil, 2012, p. 102).

²⁰ The concept of contact zone was established and coined by Mary Louise Pratt in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992) and later in the revised edition in 2008. This thesis will use the revised edition.

education and the politics of the United States (Blea, 1988). They were treated “as a kind of subclass, as peripheral beings outside of mainstream American society” (Lomelí, 2017 p.6). For example, they had some labels like “Hispanics” or “Mexican-Americans,” which meant that their Mestizo identities were reduced to one category defined by Anglo-American society. For these reasons, they demanded rights such as the restoration of their lands and an education capable of defining their identity (García, 2002). They had a chance to voice these grievances and reacted against the policies of the government of the United States in the Chicano (Civil Rights) Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. This movement can be regarded as an outburst of what Chicaxs had experienced up until those times.

Fighting against the policies of the government of the United States with the spirit of the Movement can be thought of as a big step for Chicaxs in their struggle for attaining their cultural identities in those times. Yet what is more revolutionary is that Chicano met on a common ground which they identified as Aztlán, referring to the homeland of the Aztec civilization which reigned during the Pre-Columbian period (30,000 B.C. - A.D.1519) preceding the Spanish colonial period (1521-1821)²¹. In this way, Aztlán has become a mythical concept that envelopes the mythical homeland and spiritual union²² within the cultural context of the Chicano Movement (Leal, 2017). Originating in the declaration of “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán” (The Spiritual Plan of Aztlán) written by the well-known Chicano poet, Alberto Urista, Aztlán was used to symbolize the new Chicano identity and its cultural awareness for the first time at the Denver Youth Conference in 1969 (Lomelí, 2017). This revolutionary document enabled Chicaxs to create a collective spirit that sets itself against the assimilation by Anglo-American culture and helped them present themselves as the descendants of the Aztecs, thus boosting their sense of pride and their indigenous identity which had been disregarded for a long time (Anaya, 2017). Remembering, nurturing and celebrating the heroic Aztec heritage was the agenda declared in “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán: “We, the Chicano inhabitants and civilizers of the northern land of Aztlán, from whence came our forefathers” (Anaya, Lomelí, & Lamadrid, 2017, p.27).

Furthermore, in their effort to define themselves, this declaration led Chicaxs to claim a physical territory for their past heritage in order to provide a sense of belonging. This place

²¹ Anthropologist-historian James Diego Vigil states this timeline in his anthropological study *From Indians to Chicanos: The Dynamics of Mexican-American Culture*, which was originally published in 1980, but this thesis will use its third edition in 2012.

²² Spiritual union can also be regarded as a “collective unconscious.” Carl Jung (1875-1961), in his *Archetypes and Collective Unconscious* (1959), defines collective unconscious as consisting of primordial images, archetypes and mythologies which are shared by members of a culture and all humanity.

is assumed to be located in either northwestern Mexico or the southwestern United States and regarded as the center of Aztec civilization. However, such a claim has remained controversial due to the uncertainty emerged by the notion that it is impossible to know whether this location is a mythical construction or a historical fact.

Fray Diego Durán, who records Aztec legends and stories, describes Aztlán as a symbol of immortality, abundance, and spiritual unity (as cited in Elzey, 1991) and thus Chicano cultural nationalists endeavor to revive this myth. Stating such a geographical location was important for them to draw attention to the existence of the Aztecs and to claim them as their ancestors in the American Southwest. Since Chicanos were believed to be in a limbo status with regard to their in-between situation between Mexico and the United States (Lomelí, 2017), they wanted to change their image in the eyes of Anglo-Americans. Therefore, they invoked Aztlán which “is the closest thing to a physical reference of origins, a real homeland under their feet something they could claim as their own” (Lomelí, 2017, p.2).

This reaction which was practiced in the social and political arena of the Chicano Movement also found a place in literary and artistic works. In other words, the Aztlán myth has become one of the most popular research fields in cultural and literary studies, and has been adapted and applied as a cultural framework by Chicano writers since the 1960s. Furthermore, in the following years, works such as *Aztlán: Essays on the Chicano Homeland* (1989) were published.²³ This work aims “to gather the works of a wide variety of scholars and writers whose thoughts were key to exploring, explaining, defining and setting the parameters for the vision of Aztlán” (Lomelí, 2017, p.2). It deals with the Aztlán myth from multidimensional perspectives. Nevertheless, this thesis particularly focuses on the cultural nationalist point of view. Cultural nationalists defend the Aztlán myth as “cultural nostalgia” (Lomelí, 2017, p.9). They try to “recover, reclaim, and regain much of what had been lost” (Lomelí, 2017, p.5). They romanticize lamented losses in Mexican-American culture (Lomelí, 2017). They endeavor to promote this myth since they believe it will “satisfy the longing for a homeland and for belonging to a place and a culture through the acknowledgement of indigenous ancestry” (Lomelí, 2017, p.6).

Within the socio-political context of the time, it is easier to understand Anaya, his view of the Aztlán myth and his aim within the framework of the Chicano Movement from

²³ In 2017, with the contribution of re-evaluated appendices and six new articles, the revised and expanded edition by Rudolfo Anaya, Francisco A. Lomelí, and Enrique R. Lamadrid was published.

the perspective of his famous essay “Aztlán: A Homeland without Boundaries,” which is the re-evaluation of the Chicano declaration “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán.” This essay paved the way for Chicano cultural critics, artists and writers contributing to the Aztlán myth. In his article, Anaya (2017) aligns the Aztlán myth with the Chicano Movement:

[T]o revive our connection with our Indian past, and to seek a truer definition of that past. This meant reviving the history, myths, spiritual thought, legends, and symbols from Native America that were part of the Chicano’s collective history. The search found the umbilical cord which led to Indian Mesoamerica and the pueblos of the Rio Grande; that is, in the act of declaring our identity and nationality, we acknowledged our Indian American parentage. (p. 35)

Apart from Anaya’s spiritual understanding of the Aztlán myth (Davis-Undiano, 2008), the evaluation of Athena S. Leoussi’s understanding of the concept of the cultural nationalist gives a better insight into the position Anaya takes in writing his novels, *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Tortuga*:

Cultural nationalists rely on symbols to form a collective personality in an effort to preserve common cultural and historical characteristics and regenerate the nation as a distinctive moral community in an effort to counteract social degeneration that results from a disconnection from national heritage. (Perkins, 2012, p.75)

As is clear from the quotations above, Anaya, who informs Chicanos about their pre-Columbian and Native American ancestry in his article “Aztlán: A Homeland without Boundaries,” plays an important role as a cultural nationalist. Also, rather than being called Hispanics—as he speaks for his own community—he says they prefer to name themselves, Chicano, which includes a Native American and Pre-Columbian past, particularly one identified with the Aztecs. Anaya feels that it is a mistake to be associated solely with European origins, Spanish or Hispanic, which causes them to be alienated from their indigenous past (Anaya, 2017). He also thinks that indigenous roots can be seen as a kind of protective wall for Chicanos against assimilation in America (Anaya, 2017). Based on his stance in the Chicano Movement and his ideas in this essay, it can be concluded that Anaya reflects his ideology as a cultural nationalist in his novels *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Tortuga*, through which he aims to promote the cultural elements of his ancestry, thereby gathering Chicano people around a common past. In addition, *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Tortuga* serve for the “El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán” within the Chicano Movement because Anaya brings about the indigenous past of Chicanos through the concepts of myth, the land, and the figure

of the healer. He emphasizes the indigenous past and, in so doing, he tries to form a culturally conscious Chicana who knows he descends not only from Hispanics, but also from native peoples (Davis-Undiano, 2008). For these reasons, Chicana cultural studies allow the application of the term Aztlán to literary studies wherein the concept of homeland becomes “an imaginative project of the movement” (Caminero-Santangelo, 2004, p.124). Considered in the light of Chicano cultural nationalism, or “Chicanismo,” how Anaya advances the Aztlán myth project in *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Tortuga* will be presented in this study.

Considering all of these points mentioned above, this thesis asks the following research questions regarding Chicana identity formation in *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Tortuga*: What produces the conflict of the protagonists? Does Pratt’s contact zone serve the purpose of reevaluating the historical past of the Chicanas? How do the novels relate to the current contact zone of Chicanas and Anglo-Americans? Is the metaphorical association with the past a reaction to the government of the United States? Which cultural elements contribute to the process of transculturation in the novels? Why are pagan roots preferred to Spanish roots for bringing back the past? If the category of the colonizer includes Spanish and then Anglo-Americans historically, does the writer show a common attitude towards them? In what ways is female power necessary to the development of cultural consciousness? Considering these questions will help the development of this thesis and will lead to understand the writer’s ardent aim of reconstructing a new Chicana historical and cultural consciousness which were undermined by the white dominant culture in the United States. In conclusion, within the theoretical framework of Pratt’s contact zone, Ortiz’s transculturation and the cultural framework of the Aztlán myth, this thesis will examine how the conflicts of Chicana protagonists are resolved and therefore, how they come to terms with their hybrid identity in the following four chapters.

Chapter 1, “The Role of Dual Heritage in Chicana Identity Formation” will concentrate on how the protagonists represent Chicana duality in the process of identity formation by applying the theory of the contact zone. In *Bless Me, Ultima*, Antonio’s duality, represented by his parents, reveals an imbalanced power relation between Native and Spanish people by referring to the Spanish colonial period as the “childhood” of Chicana identity formation. The representation of identity in *Bless Me, Ultima* turns into a metaphoric representation of the body as a “crippled” identity in *Tortuga* by focusing on the period of the Mexican Independence and Nationalism, which represents the “adolescent” stage.

Chapter 2, “The Role of Mesoamerican and Pueblo Native American Myths in Chicana Identity Formation,” applies the theory of “transculturation” to the novels to show

to what extent myths serve as a strategy for negotiation in the contact zones and how protagonists find their own ways to form their identities. Also, those myths serve the function of giving the Chicana community an identity at the macrocosmic level.

Chapter 3, “The Role of the Land in Chicana Identity Formation,” will employ the Aztlán myth to show to what degree the real historical places in New Mexico are re-mythicized in protagonists’ imaginations and how the construction of such a homeland, New Mexico, with its diverse natural environment, transforms the protagonists through transculturation and helps them embrace their dual identities. Also, it is claimed that the concept of New Mexico is an example of a homeland for Chicana who seek to unite in such a land at the macrocosmic level.

Chapter 4, “The Role of the Curanderas in Chicana Identity Formation,” focuses on the concept of the curanderas, who are representatives of the pagan culture. This chapter claims that Anaya synthesizes various qualities to portray the powerful feminine images of the curandera who guides the protagonists in their search for identity. In a way, the writer deconstructs the concept of machista, a binary opposition between extreme male power in Spanish culture and the feminine power of Indian culture. Besides, he gives power to these females to stand against the Anglo-American male dominance.

Conclusion arrives at the argument that Anaya revives pagan culture in *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Tortuga* on purpose. He aims to re-create balance between disparate and conflicting contact zones so that the protagonists can find who they are. Therefore, he deconstructs the power of the mainstream culture by presenting Chicana identity through the concept of myth, land and curandera.

CHAPTER 1

THE ROLE OF DUAL HERITAGE IN CHICANX IDENTITY FORMATION

This chapter attends to the “contact zone” as a theoretical concept to show the representation of the duality²⁴ that protagonists experience in the process of their identity formation. The child Antonio is mainly torn between the institutional religion, Catholicism²⁵ and spiritual pagan belief. In *Bless Me, Ultima*, this duality is brought to focal point via the protagonist Antonio’s parents. However, Tortuga’s situation seems one of largely refusing to choose either of these. He is internally in conflict because he resists. Tortuga, who is a rebellious teenager by nature, represents this duality by the virtue of his crippled and rigid body.

This chapter highlights a common strand detected in Anaya’s fiction. It is observed that characters’ developmental stages of life are associated with that of Mexican history, culminating in the development of Chicax consciousness in the 1970s. Aiming at offering a new and deeper understanding of Anaya’s fiction, this chapter will refer to the stages of Mexican-American history marked by the stages of human maturation as a model which is established by the anthropologist-historian James Diego Vigil. As Vigil (2012) states in *From Indians to Chicanos: The Dynamics of Mexican-American Culture*, the Spanish Colonial Period (1521-1821) represents the childhood stage of Mexican-Americans and the period of Mexican Independence and Nationalism (1821-1846 (1910))²⁶ represents the adolescent stage (pp. XV-XVI).

It is important, therefore, to state at this initial stage of the analysis that the protagonists can be identified with the stages of such historical periods since the child Antonio in *Bless Me, Ultima* and the adolescent Tortuga in *Tortuga* evoke those periods respectively. For example, the different cultural roots of Antonio’s parents represent the historical contact zone which was played out in the Spanish colonial past, whereas Tortuga’s

²⁴ Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) defines such a torn and in-between position of Mestizas as “the state of mental nepantilism” (p.78). This idea is also valid for Mestizos because they share the same ethnic background. Vigil talks about this term.

²⁵ It is important to note that the issues of Catholicism here must be evaluated from the perspective of Chicax or Mestiza/o identity as it is represented in both novels. That is, Chicax Catholicism refers to the hybrid religion of Chicaxxs.

²⁶ Vigil (2012) explains that the historical period 1821-1846 refers to the history of Mexican immigration to the United States during those times. Yet, 1821-1910 is specifically for the Mexicans who lived in Mexico. This thesis will refer to the former.

crippled body stands for his cultural disability which is the representation of the period of Mexican Independence and Nationalism.²⁷ The representations become a life cycle since the protagonists symbolize different stages of life and also different stages of Mexican-American history.

At this early stage of the analysis, it is important to emphasize that the religious “tension”²⁸ or “crisis”²⁹ is shown through Antonio’s and Tortuga’s hybrid or *mestizaje* parents who have already completed the transculturation process and *syncretism*³⁰. Since one of the periods is the Spanish colonial period, which has a direct connection with Antonio’s and Tortuga’s parents’ past, it is clearly seen that the parents blend Spanish Catholic tradition and Native ways of living, like Aztec spirituality. This means that each parent shares her or his Native American and Spanish heritage in one way or another in terms of religion. As Marta Caminero-Santangelo (2004) confirms: “A hybrid religion is a reality for Mexicans and Mexican Americans, who routinely incorporate aspects of belief systems inherited from Native American ancestors with the Catholicism imposed by the Spanish conquerors” (p. 118). Although the parents’ identities are fluid and transparent, it still allows readers to find out their different religious tendencies, which create a clash that is conveyed through nightmares, dreams, internal monologues, memories, and flashbacks of the protagonists. For example, the mother figures represent the influence of Spanish Catholicism, whereas the father figures depict their Native ways in the form of paganism³¹, which is absolutely the case with *Bless Me*, *Ultima* and *Tortuga*³². Such a division of their beliefs makes it clear that the dichotomies are originally inherited in a contact zone dating back to Spanish colonial times.

²⁷ Although the focus of this thesis is the historical stage of Mexican Independence and Nationalism (1821-1846) in reference to *Tortuga*, it is necessary to go back and forth in the timeline of Mexican-American history for the better understanding of the Chicana identity formation (Chicanidad) process in relation to those historical periods.

²⁸ In the interview, Anaya uses the word “tension,” caused by the encounters of two different cultures (Johnson & Apodaca, 1998, p.34).

²⁹ Anaya’s word, “tension” is replaced by the term “crisis,” used in *the Location of Culture* by Bhabha.

³⁰ According to Vigil (2012), “Syncretism is a process whereby different cultural elements are combined into an entirely new system” (p.61).

³¹ The term paganism will be used with Native spirituality interchangeably.

³² *Bless Me*, *Ultima* and *Tortuga* give clues about Antonio’s and Tortuga’s parents’ Chicana ethnic background. They try to illustrate this identity as complex and multiple by introducing this duality of their parents. The word “complex” was used for positive connotation which refers to cultural richness. Anaya aims to draw attention to such a rich Chicana culture via the protagonists’ parents who are not stereotypes. Such an aim serves for promoting Chicana identity. In addition, by putting the parents into the contact zone at the microcosmic level, this chapter demonstrates the author’s aim which is to draw attention to the origin of the Chicana identity crisis which seems to be originally linked to Spanish colonial times.

In *Bless Me, Ultima*, each member of Antonio's family has different religious and cultural tendencies. Antonio's mother and his wife Maria Luna, for instance, are explicitly "devout Catholics" and the descendants of "a community of farmers" (Anaya, 1994, p.29). However, Antonio's father, Gabriel Márez who appears to be the descendant of vaqueros or cowboys, is described in the novel as "not a strong believer" in the first place because he does not practice some principles of Catholicism. For example, before the Communion, Maria fasts and does not eat anything. On the other hand, Gabriel and the folk healer Ultima³³ do not care about fasting, and therefore they break the traditional rules (Anaya, 1994). In this respect, Gabriel and Ultima share similar worldviews. Holly E. Martin (2011) considers Antonio's mother and her relatives as Catholic and his father and his father's side as the embodiment of paganism based on the Golden Carp Myth³⁴.

As is clear from the discussion above, Gabriel is not as much a religious person as his wife. It can even be argued whether he believes in the Catholic God and religion at all. For example, Antonio wonders what his father's definition of evil is, and asks him about it. He does not answer that question the way the priest does. Instead Gabriel insists: "I think most of the things we call evil are not evil at all; it is just that we don't understand those things and so we call them evil" (Anaya, 1994, p. 248). Gabriel's definition of evil is juxtaposed with the priest's in one of Antonio's dreams: "the priest of the church said, and you will understand good and evil when the communion is placed in your mouth and God fills your body" (Anaya, 1994, p.71). It can be readily seen that Gabriel is represented as the father figure who does not use religious discourse, unlike the priest and Antonio's mother.

After hearing his father's definition of evil, Antonio expects to have such understanding and says: "But I took the holy communion! I sought understanding!" Gabriel answers: "Understanding does not come that easy, Tony—". Antonio gets confused and says: "You mean God doesn't give understanding?" Gabriel continues to talk to him in a philosophical way as Ultima talks to Antonio: "Understanding comes with life." He says: "as a man grows he sees life and death, he is happy and sad, he works, plays, meets people-

³³ This thesis regards Ultima as offering a representation of Paganism, or Native spirituality which is part of Native culture. Since Chicanxs share common Indian ancestry, the Native culture is already embedded in them. The fourth chapter of this thesis deals with the curanderas in both novels intensively. Some sources discussing Ultima as a representative of Native culture and paganism are listed below. See Portillo, F. (1988). *Syncretism in counter-hegemonic literature by Latinos in the United States* in which Ultima is representative of Aztecs and Mayas. Also, in, Zoltán Abádi-Nagy's article, "Positioning Analysis of Intercultural Information Processing in a Multicultural Borderland: Rudolfo A. Anaya's *'Bless Me, Ultima.'*" (2015), Ultima represents Native American perspective and "Native American wisdom" (2015, p.16) and "ancient Aztec wisdom as the third culture" (2015, p.20).

³⁴ The Golden Carp myth will be the concern of the second chapter.

-sometimes it takes a lifetime to acquire understanding, because in the end understanding simply means having sympathy for people—”. He continues: “Ultima has sympathy for people, and it is so complete that with it she can touch their souls and cure them—” (Anaya, 1994, p.248). This dialogue between Antonio and his father Gabriel shows that Gabriel does not associate evil with the Catholic God and religion, but associates it with fear we do not understand. He suggests that Antonio should look for the answers to his questions in life. This is the reason why he gives Ultima, the embodiment of paganism, as an example who understands life and people.

In contrast to Gabriel, Maria, as a devoted Catholic, practices every detail of ritual that Catholicism demands her to do. She praises the figure of God and the Virgin of Guadalupe, who is a Mestiza hybrid version of the Virgin Mary. For example, she has an altar for Guadalupe in a private room in their house, and praises this motherly Virgin figure. As a demonstration of her faith, Maria goes to communion every Sunday, which is a reminder of the sacrifice of Jesus. There is a ritual she follows before joining the communion; she does not eat anything. Maria obeys the rules of institutionalized religion. Quite different from Maria, Gabriel does not practice the ritual because he is not a strong believer. In fact, he is more of a pagan believer. In this respect, both Maria and Gabriel are offering conflicting messages to Antonio in terms of religious practices, which are the remnants of the Spanish colonial period. Thus, the mother seems to be more connected to her Spanish past than the father because she identifies herself with Catholicism. In contrast, the father is closer to his Native American past in terms of paganism. One of Antonio’s dreams informs about the discussion of his parents which reveals Gabriel’s pagan tendency and Maria’s Catholicism. In his dream, his mother speaks: “*It is the sweet water of the moon, my mother crooned softly, it is the water the Church chooses to make holy and place in its font. It is the water of your baptism.*” His father reacts: “*Lies, lies, my father laughed, through your body runs the salt water of the oceans. It is that water which makes you Márez and not Luna. It is the water that binds you to the pagan god of Cico, the golden carp!*” (Anaya, 1994, p.120). The Catholic religion of his mother is situated in contrast to the pagan spirituality of his father. Therefore, it would be proper in that sense to regard him as the symbol of paganism because of the representation of Gabriel³⁵ who is more on the side of Ultima and paganism.

³⁵ This thesis regards Gabriel as pagan for the reasons and associations made above. For more information about this, see the article: Marta Caminero-Santangelo (2004) “‘Jasón's Indian’: Mexican Americans and the Denial of Indigenous Ethnicity in Anaya’s *Bless Me, Ultima*.”

Setting out from this instance, this family institution and their home can be regarded as the stage on which the submerged and unresolved contact zone of Spanish colonial times, unfolds. Pratt (2008) defines the contact zone as

the space of imperial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict. (p.8)

In this regard, *Bless Me, Ultima* demonstrates the representation of the historical conflict between the Aztecs and Spanish conquistadors in the Spanish colonial period in which there was a highly asymmetrical relation of power, wherein Spanish colonizers used the tool of Catholicism which was intentionally blended with Indian practices (Gibson, 1966) and furthered the subordination of paganism. Both of Antonio's parents carry the effects of this struggle unconsciously and attempt to resolve the opposed cultural elements in different ways.

The novel under discussion also reflects that the parents come from different traditional lifestyles, namely Luna and Márez. These lifestyles are deeply connected to the religious background of the characters, and integrated into the cultural one. In order to address the question as to how the protagonist, Antonio, was born into the conflict in *Bless Me, Ultima*, it is necessary to refer once again to the dream narrated in the very beginning of the novel. This dream is related to Antonio's birth ceremony in which his extended family, his mother and father's sides, are involved. Immediately after his birth, the mother's side, the Luna family and community, wants to practice a ritual that is different from the one that his father's side wants to practice. His uncles and mother want Antonio's umbilical cord to be buried under the earth while the Márez faction, his father and his cowboy friends, want it to be scattered by the winds of the Llano. The clashes between the opposing ideas of his parents begin to flourish during this time (Anaya, 1994). These two contrasting ceremonies establish the contact zone in terms of lifestyles practiced by each group at the very beginning of the novel. When analyzed closely, the burial image secures a connection to earth. It connotes becoming fixed, rooted, and stable. This ritual has an apparent connection with Maria's expectations from Antonio. She practices this ceremony because she wants her son to be a priest or farmer. She does not want him to pursue an adventure like her adventurous husband, who dreams of Antonio wandering like a cowboy. In this dream episode in the novel and the rest of the novel, Gabriel, as a promoter of cowboy life, is an allegorical

expression of early Spanish explorers (Fernández Olmos, 1999, p.39). Debra B. Black (2000) associates these cowboys with the wind which “forever sweeps across these wide plains” (p.151). Also, the concept of wind and sea evokes words such as waves, roughness, restlessness, fluctuation metaphorically, and they can give clues about Gabriel’s restless cowboy personality in contrast with his wife’s more stable life and settled character.

Maria’s settled and stable personality is traced back to the history of her family who lives in a small community. The small community was colonized for the first time and governed by a Catholic Luna priest. El Puerto de los Lunas, which represents Maria Luna’s³⁶ side, was named after the priest. The Luna community consists of dedicated farmers who are tied to the earth and the piece of land (Anaya, 1994). The name Luna means moon, which is important for these farmers because “They planted their crops and cared for their animals according to the cycles of the moon” (Anaya, 1994, p.90). Also, in *Bless Me, Ultima* (Anaya, 1994), the Moon³⁷ concept of Lunas can be associated with the Virgin of Guadalupe figure who is shown as standing on a horned moon throughout the story: “Virgin's horned moon, the moon of my mother's people, the moon of the Lunas” (p. 23). On the other hand, Gabriel Márez comes from the small village called Las Pasturas on the Llano plains where vaqueros or cowboys wander around. For him the meaning of life is hidden in the Llano Plains, in which he finds “a power that can fill a man with satisfaction” (Anaya, 1994, p.229) unlike his wife who is trying to seek satisfaction through her Catholic faith. His surname, Márez, also reveals his family tradition which is based upon the concept of the ocean, the sea underlying its active, unstable and dynamic nature (Anaya, 1994, p.6). Frederick S. Holton (1995) makes an analogy between the concept of the sea and the Llano. Also, the famous Chicano literary critic Ramon Saldívar (1990) describes Llano as “oceanlike plains” (p.106). Described as a free thinker by his wife, Márez is shown to be fond of his freedom in the novel. Also, this gives a clue about his ideas on religion. He does not believe in institutionalized Catholicism; he even makes fun of the priests with skirts (Anaya, 1994). As clearly stated in the above descriptions, the conflicting lifestyles³⁸ are emphasized throughout the narration. Maria and Gabriel are representatives of different world views and

³⁶ Zoltán Abádi-Nagy (2015) shows that Maria is the representative of the farming tradition and Spanish Catholicism while Gabriel is the representative of the culture of vaqueros who are free-spirited (p.16).

³⁷ Frederick S. Holton (1995), in his article “Chicano as ‘Bricoleur’: Christianity and Mythmaking in Rudolfo Anaya’s *Bless Me, Ultima*,” also makes this association: “The moon -- Luna -- is a traditional symbol of the Church, reflecting the light of the Christ, who is the sun, and associated with the Virgin Mary” (pp. 24-25).

³⁸ Frederick S. Holton (1995), in his article “Chicano as ‘Bricoleur’: Christianity and Mythmaking in Rudolfo Anaya’s *Bless Me, Ultima*,” examines these two conflicting family traditions.

their contact zone encompasses their home in which they argue, discuss and disagree with each other.

Since Antonio was raised amid a still-contested power relation, these different traditions, lifestyles and different understandings of religion induce the parents to expect of their son Antonio differently. That is to say, Antonio's mother, Maria, wants him to be a farmer or a priest simply because her own priorities are exclusively on leading a religious life. In contrast, his father demands that he not be tied to a land or any religion but rather wander in places such as California. The imposition of such opposing ideas upon his life makes Antonio feel rather uneasy, nervous, stressed, tense and excited. Thus, he is trapped between these two contrasting poles. Anaya, on the other hand, pays a particular attention to Antonio, by focusing on Chicano family values, and by going back to that particular historical period which is important for the Chicano identity (Chicanidad) formation. As a child, Antonio is not in a position to make his own choice yet. As Juan Bruce-Novoa (1980) highlights, "Antonio is not torn between an Anglo and a Chicano world, but between two ways of being Chicano..." (p.183). That is, Antonio imposes limits upon himself by confining himself to be Indian or Spanish. Although there may be some references to Anglo-American and Chicano clashes in the novel, the novel mainly centers on two historical roots of being Chicano. In other words, the family dynamics mirror the historical contact zone in which the cultural elements of Aztecs and Spanish people first began to clash.

Having grown up in Catholic tradition because of his mother, Antonio is in the process of learning the rules and tends to practice what Catholicism requires such as catechism, a kind of Christian religious teaching of children. Though his father makes fun of it, he does not question institutionalized religion a lot at the very beginning. Since his father cannot develop a reasonable counter-argument against this style of religious teaching, Antonio cannot understand what his father's point is. Although Antonio seems to be more inclined towards Catholicism, as instructed and encouraged by his mother, he cannot understand what lies behind this kind of religious instruction at the beginning of the novel. As a result, he is torn between these two opposing ways. Speculating on the different characteristics of the tradition of Antonio's parents, Frederick S. Holton (1995) discusses the duality Antonio faces: "The changeableness of life in this world is in opposition to the apparently unchanging dogma of the Catholic church, and Antonio, as he grows up, must constantly deal with the tension between the two" (p.24). Because of this tension, Antonio cannot be sure whether he should take sides with his mother or his father. He says: "I love them both, and yet I am of neither. I wonder which life I will choose?" (Anaya, 1994, p.41).

This sincere revelation of his inner world explicitly shows his incapability of choosing either side.

Different from *Bless Me, Ultima*, *Tortuga* reflects the bi-cultural ethnic identity of Tortuga's parents through the memories, dreams, nightmares, flashbacks and letters which also give clues about the opposing ideas of his parents. As William Whittier Finlaw III (1993) argues, these opposing ideas of each parent "created the heart of the conflict in a younger boy, Antonio, in *Bless Me Ultima*" (p.184). Unlike *Bless Me Ultima*, in *Tortuga*, the whole event revolves around the hospital experiences of Tortuga, who is Benjie Chávez from *Heart of Aztlán*, the second book of the trilogy (Perkins, 2012, p.71). In *Heart of Aztlán*, he climbed on a water tank by gun force. He was shot, fell from there and became paralyzed at the end (Anaya, 2015). The last book of the trilogy, *Tortuga*, opens with an adolescent boy later nicknamed Tortuga, who has left his family behind. It is clear that his parents do not play an important on-stage role in the novel since they are represented as part of Tortuga's past. Sometimes the parents make themselves felt by sending letters to their son in the hospital. Although the parents are portrayed through Tortuga's memories, and they can only support him by letters, their characteristics are conveyed to the reader through Tortuga's memories of the past days that he himself spent with them. At the beginning of one of those recollections, the hospital's receiving room setting gives background information about the religious ideas of his parents as well as Tortuga's loss of faith in what each member of his parents is standing for. While he is waiting in the receiving room, he falls asleep and dreams about his parents. The dream involves contesting religious views, and ultimately shows the confusion of Tortuga's mind as to what or who to believe. His dream reflects his parents' different viewpoints on life as well as religious creeds.

[S]he said that all was the will of God and could not be questioned...then my father appeared, and he said that each man was forced to live by his destiny and there was no escaping it and I was about to curse both views which sought in vain to explain my paralysis when someone touched my shoulder. (Anaya, 2000, p.10)

While Tortuga's mother seems to believe in a monotheistic religion, as understood from the above statement, his father appears to have a more fatalistic belief that can be traced back to Native spirituality. Therefore, it can be argued that the mother is a person who is closer to her Spanish heritage in terms of religion. However, the father can be portrayed as a person who looks like the folk healer, Ultima and Antonio's father, Gabriel, in *Bless Me, Ultima* and the folk healer, Ismelda in *Tortuga*. These figures are apparently the

embodiments of pagan culture, and share nearly the same belief, a strong belief in destiny. For example, in *Bless Me, Ultima*, Antonio explains Ultima's perception of destiny: "a man's destiny must unfold itself like a flower, with only the sun and the earth and water making it blossom, and no one else meddling in it—" (Anaya, 1994, p.223). Similarly, Gabriel says: "A man cannot struggle against his own fate" (Anaya, 1994, p.54). Ismelda, the folk healer in *Tortuga* says: "Every person has a destiny which follows him like a shadow. And every destiny must be fulfilled" (Anaya, 2000, p.103). From these examples, it can be suggested that in both novels, the fatalistic view of life is associated with the characters who have Native American and pagan tendencies. Therefore, Tortuga's father can have such tendencies although it is hard to find a clear-cut description of his tendencies in the narrative.

Another significant evidence that shows Tortuga's mother's religious inclinations is her letter to her son in which she makes important revelations. Tortuga reads out one of these letters which shows how much she prays for her son: "She prayed to the Holy Mother of God and all the saints that I would be returned safely to her" and she continues: "Each day I go to church and on my knees I make my way from the door to the altar of the Virgin, and there I pray for you" (Anaya, 2000, p.88). Apparently she begs to the Holy Mother of God and Virgin who are associated with Virgin Mary in Christianity. On the other hand, she identifies herself with a Mestiza, and believes in the Virgin of Guadalupe, who is the Mestiza version of the Virgin Mary. This duality shows that Tortuga's mother is Catholic like Antonio's mother in *Bless Me, Ultima*. Also, it is clearly seen that like *Bless Me, Ultima*, *Tortuga* carries the traces of the Spanish colonial past because of the representations of Tortuga's parents. Yet what is more important is that Anaya moves the historical contact zone one step further from where Tortuga left off, who in some ways embodies the period of Mexican Independence and Nationalism. This particular historical era, which marked the break-up of Mexico by US's seizure of land, once again comes to represent a metaphorical contact zone through the image of Tortuga's crippled body. Tortuga's crippled body is demonstrated in the novel within the context of the hospital and ambulance settings, which provides the reader with a better understanding of his confused mental state.

Tortuga starts in a dark, rainy, gloomy desert, in which crippled and bandaged Tortuga is in the ambulance, about to be admitted to the hospital. The surrounding atmosphere is portrayed as dreary and desolate, and the inner world of paralyzed Tortuga is synchronized with such pessimism and gloomy condition. This pessimism is put into words in the novel such as "bone-chilling cold," and literally reflected with the image of a disabled body which struggles for the ability to move (Anaya, 2000, p.1). Metaphorically, the

landscape, weather and Tortuga's traumatized body represent his struggle to form his identity which was crippled, too. The atmosphere constantly causes Tortuga to get depressed, even though Filomon, the ambulance driver, tries to console him with stories about a magic mountain. Filomon's efforts are in vain because Tortuga expresses his hopelessness in depressive words: "my faith in magic had drained out the night the paralysis came and in the ensuing nights and days which I spent without movement on the hospital bed" (Anaya, 2000, p.3). It is significant to note that the ambulance driver constantly talks about the magic and power of Tortuga Mountain, the symbol of Native spirituality, the equivalent to the God of Catholicism. The protagonist and the mountain have the same name. Tortuga is named after this mountain by Danny, one of his peers at the hospital. Danny draws a connection between the casted protagonist and the turtle Mountain and indicates that the turtle is covered with a shell and the cast encloses Tortuga's body. The state of passivity and inactivity can be observed both in the protagonist and the mountain.

On the other hand, such identification replaces the condition which provides both Tortuga and the mountain to use the power within themselves. The power lies in the mountain and its water resource, which are entrenched in Native origin. It can be inferred that the secret healing power hides behind the name Tortuga which explores Native ancestors and the process of recuperation in *Tortuga*.

However, Tortuga does not believe what Filomon tells about Tortuga Mountain. Instead he expresses that he has lost all his belief and the only thing that remains is his pain of paralysis. "The sea would never return. The earth was drying up and dying. Even the rain which pelted us during the trip fell hot and boiling on the empty desert. I had no faith left to believe his crazy story. Already the paralysis seemed to have gripped me forever" (Anaya, 2000, p.7). It is clear that his unfavorable descriptions of nature and the weather go hand in hand with his pessimism which clarifies his disbelief of Native spirituality and of Catholicism. He further maintains: "I had long ago lost the faith in my mother's gods" (Anaya, 2000, p.8). Therefore, forming a Chicano identity is hard and challenging for him in the hospital environment, which is metaphorically "the microcosm of the larger Chicano culture" (Perkins, 2012, p.72). At the same time, there is no hope for the Chicano community who desperately need to reconcile with their identities on the macrocosmic level.

While crippled Tortuga is experiencing hard times in the hospital, his internal conflicts and nightmares inform about his hesitations in God, religion and myths. The bodily deformities are synchronized with similar dualities and inner conflicts that affect his psychology at the same time. His unhealthy body can, therefore, be interpreted as the

representation of his indecisive position; he cannot fully submit himself either to the will of God or other spiritualities. Unrelenting process of conflict between religion and spirituality fills *Tortuga* as it does *Bless, Me Ultima*. In both novels, the protagonists have difficulty grasping, understanding what Catholicism and Native spirituality mean, but in different ways. In the beginning of *Bless, Me Ultima*, Antonio, led by his Catholic mother, starts religious education of Catechism according to Catholic principles, and he also observes, learns and practices one by one what Catholicism requires every individual Christian to practice. At the same time, Antonio expects God Himself to listen to him and answer his questions. Sometimes, he thinks that God does not care at all and questions the institutionalized religion of Catholicism. This questioning is intensified by the influence of those personalities who are symbols of paganism and also the pagan myths. He gets confused and has difficulty choosing a side.

At the very early stages of the novel, Tortuga curses both Catholicism and Native spirituality. He is delineated as a desperate, hopeless and pessimistic character who cannot even find any hope anywhere, neither in the Catholic religion nor in the God of his mother. The protagonist's spiritual ambivalence somewhat calls to mind one of the characteristics of the historical period of the Mexican Independence and Nationalism³⁹, which "was also a time of great confusion, where the shifting sands of cultural variation had not yet settled" (Vigil, 2012, p.128). Here one of the implied unsettled cultural variations is the mixed parentage, which has been processed since the Spanish Colonial Period. Such hybrid parentage "created a mental confusion, with one parent representing the rulers and the other, the ruled" (Vigil, 2012, p.92). Moreover, it can be stated that this particular ambivalent situation of the characters denotes the confusion of the Mexican immigrants when it comes to the issue of religion and tradition. Anglo-Americans took control of the northern parts of Mexico (now the Southwest United States) and it affected the way of life of the Mexicans in some socio-cultural aspects such as culture, tradition, family and religion (as cited in Vigil, 2012, p.170) which "further added to the confusion and growing sense of powerlessness in the new era" (Vigil, 2012, p.170).

Unlike the child Antonio, to whom Catholicism is introduced and who in effect tries to understand it as well in the beginning of *Bless Me, Ultima*, the adolescent Tortuga shows that he has lost his faith in both of his parents' beliefs. In her study, Maria Wiehe (2020)

³⁹ It is important to note that the period of Mexican Independence and Nationalism focuses on political upheavals such as struggle for independence and Anglo expansionist policies. Nevertheless, one can argue that the effects of the cultural merging of the Spanish Colonial period still goes on.

compares Tortuga to other protagonists in the trilogy: “Tortuga is the most disconnected character from the Christian religion” (p.149). Tortuga’s confused views on religion are accompanied by the physical suffering of his body from paralysis. As soon as he is admitted to the hospital, Tortuga’s body is encased within a cast which is intended to heal his legs. Regarding the process of casting his body, he makes an analogy between himself and the Tortuga Mountain, which, once upon a time, was moving as a turtle according to the myth⁴⁰. However, now, since he can no longer move his body, Tortuga is likened to the mountain which is “imprisoned” in the earth (Anaya, 2000, p.13). At the same time, Tortuga is tied to the shell which covers his body and limits his bodily movements. That is, he is imprisoned by the shell-like cast, which deprives him of the freedom of bodily movements. Metaphorically speaking, such a physical pressure and limitation imposed on him is reflected in his soul, and therefore he seems to have lost his hope for everything, including his future.

As well as expressing his desperation that the future does not hold any hope for him, Tortuga also suffers from the pain and captivity in the dark night with his body cast for the first time. He utters: “I cursed, tried to turn my head and discovered that I no longer had even that freedom. I cursed again and tried to sleep, but I couldn’t with the cast tightening in on me” (Anaya, 2000, p.14). As is clear from the examples above, Tortuga’s lost religion is accompanied by his physical injury and crippled body. Also, his body cast is a symbol of confinement which limits him to the extent that he has no freedom to form his own unique perspective or identity. Besides, the constraint of his body by the cast results in a form of cultural disability, which reflects the historical contact zone of Mexican Independence and Nationalism. It is important to remember in that context that historically Chicana people struggled to gain their independence from Spain at first and then they were in conflict with Anglo-Americans who occupied their lands through the Mexican-American war.

There is a significant parallelism between the violent accident Tortuga experienced in the past, which involved his falling from a water tank, and the historical violence of the period of Mexican Independence and Nationalism on a deeper level. The brutality of this historical period can be represented through this tragic accident which disables Tortuga both physically and psychologically. This isolated incidence of injury that Tortuga severely suffered from refers to the Mexicans’ efforts to be an independent nation. In that particular context Tortuga can be the embodiment of Miguel Hidalgo who initiated fighting for the desired Mexican nation in 1810. Hidalgo, the parish priest and activist, sent the first army

⁴⁰ The turtle myth will be the main concern of Chapter 2.

with the aim of liberating Mexico from gachupines (Vigil, 2012, p.112), the Spaniards who were at the top in rank and in the governing mechanism of the colony (Vigil, 2012, p.82). Besides, as Vigil includes Anglo occupation in the time period of Mexican Independence and Nationalism, Tortuga's accident can be read as harsh conflicts, skirmishes, battles and upheavals which led to the United States - Mexico War of 1845. As Vigil (2012) points out, "New Mexicans were now in conflict with Anglos over the very same issues they had been in conflict with when the Spanish arrived—religion, labor, land, and water" (p. 140). Therefore, it can be suggested that Anaya brings back agony, torture and suffering to the conscious level of Chicanxs and revisits these historical events to inform readers about Chicanx duality throughout Mexican history.

After the accident, the representation of Tortuga, who curses both the Catholicism of his mother and the Native spirituality to which Filomon alludes, shows that he has no tendency towards his Spanish or Native background metaphorically. Instead, he tries to free himself from both views. In addition, Tortuga wants to get rid of the body cast which limits his movements. He can be an archetype of the Mexican people who try to free themselves from Spanish hegemony and become independent, whereas his body cast can be the symbol of the oppression and hegemony of the Spanish oligarchic government and colonial rule in those times (García, 2002, p.7).

After Chicanxs achieved their freedom, they still had some problems, but this time with Anglo-Americans. Likewise, it can be seen throughout the novel that Tortuga makes some progress in his healing process, which is marked by his body cast being removed. Yet, the problems relating to his bodily injury remain in place. The problems of the Chicanxs are still in the foreground with reference to the time period of Mexican-Independence and Nationalism. It is evident that Anglo-Americans had an eye on the northern parts of Mexico. They annexed some of those areas as a result of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848 which was signed after the Mexican-American War. Chicanxs were deprived of their lands and some of them were even forced to immigrate to the United States from their land which is Mexico⁴¹. Whereas the focus of *Bless Me, Ultima* is on the Spanish-Aztec contact zone, *Tortuga* centers on Spanish-Mexican and Anglo-American-Chicanxs contact zone. As Pratt (2008) puts it, "the space and time where subjects previously separated by geography and

⁴¹ Chicanxs were displaced from Mexico. They identified their displacement with that of the Aztecs who are thought to be the ancestors of Chicanxs. They believe the myth that the Aztecs were inhabitants of what is now the Southwestern United States, and were led to Mexico by their god Mexica. Their god Mexica promised them to come back one day and live in the Southwest region called Aztlán, their original homeland (Perkins, 2012).

history are co-present, the point at which their trajectories now intersect” (p.8). Like Spanish-Aztec people, Spanish-Mexican and Anglo-American-Chicanxs are also examples of such subjects crossing historical paths, although they lived on different parts of the United States-Mexican border and had various experiences in the past. In Pratt’s words (2008), the contact zone, namely, Spanish-Mexican and Anglo-American-Chicanxs in *Tortuga* is bearing striking resemblances “in terms of co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, and often within radically asymmetrical relations of power” (p.8). Pratt’s description of the contact zone, which seems to have a lot to do with colonialism, allows comparison between the United States and Spain in terms of colonial influence. It is also understood that these two colonial masters exerted different balance of power and influence upon their subjects. For instance, *Bless Me, Ultima* demonstrates the asymmetrical power of the Spanish over the Aztecs through mother and father figures who represent different sides of being Mestiza/o. On the other hand, *Tortuga* requires a metaphorical reading of Tortuga’s injured body which is associated with the Chicantx struggle for independence against Spain, and the recapture of the land occupied by the United States. In other words, his body is examined as a subtext of both Spain’s and Anglo-America’s hegemony over Chicantxs living in Mexico with reference to the historical period which Vigil categorizes. His crippled body is the representation of the lost homeland which Chicantxs had to give in to the United States. Moreover, his disabled body stands for Chicantx’s cultural disability and their lost Mestiza/o culture that were disrupted in the process of Anglicization.

Even though Tortuga makes progress in his process of physical healing which is marked by his transition to the wheelchair, or gurney in the story, he still gets confused as to what to believe in. The wheelchair makes him partly autonomous and free to the extent that he can transport himself to the other wards full of comatose patients. This device is a metaphor for the ongoing political turmoil even after independence from Spain and the Mexican-American war. Also, the coma, which can be a metaphor for the lack of awareness, lack of cultural memory, gives the signal that many members of the Chicantx community have not yet “awakened” to their cultural heritage. Even when Tortuga shows signs of healing, his healing process is interrupted by the hospital scene in which he is led to the ward full of coma patients by Salomon, who is in a vegetative state, too. Salomon, who communicates with Tortuga telepathically, could also be taken as a symbol of Native culture like Ultima in *Bless Me, Ultima*, since he shares common features with Ultima in terms of storytelling and wisdom.

What is remarkable about Salomon's utterances⁴² is that these words encourage Tortuga to enter the ward; "*You have a good instinct for finding your way in these dark and empty spaces*" (Anaya, 2000, p.116) "*If you are to walk in the path of light you must first walk in darkness*" (Anaya, 2000, p.117), Tortuga goes and sees comatose people and hears "the whooshing sound of the groaning iron lungs of them" (Anaya, 2000, p.115). Such horrible sounds and the atmosphere make him curse everything again. He says: "There is no meaning! There is no special destiny! Nothing! Nothing! Only the stories! Only the empty words which try to give meaning to this hell" and continues: "The weight of the mountain was falling on me, darkness was settling over me as I burrowed into my shell" (Anaya, 2000, p.118). It is clear that the dark atmosphere is created through the wheelchair, comas, and the hell-like room which can be read as the challenging socio-political milieu of the period of Mexican Independence and Nationalism. Tortuga cannot find any meaning in what he sees or experiences. In this helpless situation, he embraces neither religion nor mythic stories, which he thinks are devoid of meaning. Therefore, it can be said that, as a Chicano adolescent, he cannot grasp the mountain myth or any other stories which may be used as an instrument to construct Chicana culture. As Anaya (2017) points out in his "Homeland without Boundaries," these instruments are part of oral tradition of Native Americans that help to identify the Chicana self since the Natives are part of a shared Chicana history. Tortuga cannot understand the Native myths which will help him reconcile with the identity that he endeavors to form. This state of mind metaphorically suggests that he is literally disconnected from his Native myths, which also shows that he has broken with his Native past, the most important component of his Indian culture.

Tortuga, in that sense, cannot soothe himself through Catholicism either. Instead, he rejects God and religion and speaks out his opinions on spiritual and religious entities:

I don't believe in anything anymore. I am free. I am nothing. I won't be responsible for anything. I denounce my destiny. There is no destiny... there is no fate... there is no God, no universe... only my thoughts, and I can learn to silence those. I have given up sadness, because I can't understand the reason for the existence of those poor slobs, those poor withered vegetables that look like plucked carrots and turnips drying and shriveling in the sun. (Anaya, 2000, p.120)

⁴² Salomon's speech is conveyed to Tortuga telepathically. The whole of this speech is italicized in the novel.

It is clear that Catholicism is not an ultimate remedy for his pains or sufferings. His existence is not tied to any religious creed, which will give him hope of salvation. This demonstrates that he detaches himself from Catholicism which is, in essence, part of his Mestizo identity.

It seems that the protagonists Antonio and Tortuga are having hard times, and they cannot form their own identity. In *Bless Me, Ultima*, the child Antonio is trapped between different religious ideas and cultural backgrounds of his parents. These are Catholicism, represented by his Luna mother, and paganism represented by his father. This forms a contact zone within the family and at home, and this concept is conveyed through Antonio's memories. Such a contact zone is traced back to the Spanish Colonial period in which Natives, particularly the Aztecs, were colonized by Spanish conquistadors. However, *Tortuga* in this respect is different; it revolves around a paralyzed adolescent, Tortuga, who is confused about what to believe. Like Antonio, Tortuga has Mestiza/o parents who can be read in reference to the Spanish Colonial Period. In addition, Tortuga's body is more in the foreground. Metaphorically, this permits linking his disability with the period of the Mexican Independence and Nationalism which follows the Spanish Colonial Period. As the Mexican Independence period is also linked to the Anglo-American and Mexicanization period, Tortuga's body can be read as the reflection of this era, too. That is, his body turns into a Spanish-Aztec, Spanish-Chicanx and Anglo-American-Chicanx contact zone. Metaphorically speaking, his disabled body represents Chicanx struggle for independence from Spain and stands for the harassment of their land and culture by the United States. Therefore, Tortuga's physical disability presents the reader with a cultural dilemma where he can appreciate neither Catholicism nor Native spirituality. In other terms, the culture of these people is represented as being crippled by war and successive political interference.

CHAPTER 2

THE ROLE OF MESOAMERICAN AND PUEBLO NATIVE AMERICAN MYTHS IN CHICANX IDENTITY FORMATION

“Myth is our umbilical connection to the past, to the shared collective memory”

--Rudolfo A. Anaya “Aztlán: A Homeland without Boundaries” (1989)

After the discussion of duality in the identity formation of the Chicana community in the earlier chapter, current section of the study exclusively concentrates on the origin myths of a people, myths that identify a homeland and provide a specific history and character to a people, and ultimately which help the protagonists of the novels under discussion, Antonio and Tortuga, heal both physically and culturally. With respect to the pagan period of human history, myths can be regarded as the first answers to the questions relating to the very origins of human cultures. In other words, people living in communities in ancient times sought some clarifications to natural events such as storms, rain, earthquakes and the like because they did not have any information about the causes of certain natural events. As they wondered about what was behind such miraculous events, they tried to make teleological explanations which were based on nature. That is, they thought some supernatural forces governed the natural events which they experienced. Therefore, they attributed those events to gods who were thought to be responsible for all the happenings. As they imagined that there were supernatural powers above them, they made up some stories in which gods had important roles as supreme powers. Mircea Eliade (1958) defines myth as: “a story of what happened - what the gods and supernatural beings did - at the beginning of time” (p.1). With such mythic stories which “account for the origin of the world, of mankind, of death, or for characteristics of birds, animals, geographical features, and the phenomena of nature” (William Bascom, 1965, p.4), people hoped for miracles which they expected from gods. For example, people with unknown illnesses expected a cure from gods, or people who had disagreements with each other wanted a sign from gods to resolve the situation. Therefore, one can conclude that myths have traditionally served functions such as healing and reconciliation.

The potency of healing and reconciliation should not be taken into consideration in its literal meaning; rather it must be treated on a deeper level for which a critical analysis is required. Of course, when one thinks of healing, it is not just about the physical or psychological healing. Rather, it can refer to a kind of cultural healing which ends up forming one's own identity. Also, the issue of reconciliation is not necessarily limited to the agreement two people make. It can be about one person's reconciliation with herself/himself or the reestablishment of a friendly attitude toward one's own identity. Therefore, a consideration of the myth's healing and reconciliatory functions in terms of forming a new identity will be the main strategy of this chapter, and this approach will make use of transculturation as a theoretical concept. This chapter is also intended to show how the process of transculturation is completed with the help of Mesoamerican and Pueblo Native American myths which will also contribute to the healing process of the protagonists.

As the offspring of Chicano parents, Antonio and Tortuga can be analyzed with regard to "transculturation" to which Mesoamerican and Pueblo Native American myths contribute in *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Tortuga*. In *Bless Me, Ultima*, Antonio is a child who is raised as a Catholic, but is filled with inner conflicts with respect to religious creeds. The Mesoamerican Aztec myth of the golden carp, which was regarded as a pagan river God, changes Antonio's perspective because it enables him to see the third possibility of religious faiths. He is aware that he is not limited to choosing only his mother's or his father's faiths, but he learns that he can combine them. Similarly, in *Tortuga*, the Pueblo Tewa myth of Tortuga⁴³ which designates both a mountain and the turtle, helps Tortuga to go beyond his disability because it gives him hope, which was not obtained by holding Catholic faith alone. Although the healing process is a common subject in both novels, Antonio's healing is more on a psychological level. When Antonio's psychological problems in the form of nightmares and inner conflicts disappear, he will create his own Chicano identity. Tortuga also has similar problems. Moreover, he has physical deformity and a disabled body. When Tortuga gets over his physical disability and has a healthy body, it will mean that he will reach an agreement in forming his Chicano identity.

At this stage it is essential to point out why Anaya relentlessly tries to rediscover his Native roots and why Chicano people need this moral support. Chicanos' "long history of oppression and domination" is followed by the negative labels put by the dominant culture, such as lazy, poor, breedlike-rats, unemployed and dumb (Martinez, 1973; Vigil, 2012). This

⁴³ This thesis will name this myth Tortuga or the turtle myth as the novel *Tortuga* does.

is why a proud imperial past like that of the Aztecs and Native culture is necessary to raise one's self-concept. Of course, on the surface, these myths heal the protagonists such as Antonio and Tortuga but on a deeper level, Anaya endeavors to reveal Chicaxs' authentic culture and their cultural richness and therefore, as a cultural nationalist, he exposes his mission of bringing to light Chicaxs' long-ignored cultural tradition to which these myths belong. Therefore, it is important to demonstrate that Anaya's genius is in pursuit of the sources of Chicax consciousness, the history of the remote past and mythic tropes beyond conscious memory.

The healing process refers to a practice in which Antonio and Tortuga are gradually cured physically. Also, symbolically, Anaya gives a hopeful message that, at the end, the Chicano protagonists will form their hybrid identity if they grasp the true meaning of their Native American side, which is specifically represented by Mesoamerican and Pueblo Native American myths in both novels. In fact, Anaya reveals such an ideal in his interview "Of Cuentistas, Myth, and the Magic of Words: An Interview with Rudolfo Anaya - Paul Vassallo" (1998):

[T]ouching the myth was important, because to bring the myth and make it part of the fiction, part of the story, means that you're tying into your past and to your collective memory and to your history, and reminding people of the sources of their inspiration, and their values. So, it's not just one myth that we have to explore, it's the myths of our world view. Which ones are more important to me? The Native American myths. Why? Because it seems to me we already know, if we receive a liberal education in the Western tradition, the mythology of the Greeks, of the Romans, of the Catholic Church and later of the Protestant Reformation. We know the Judeo-Christian tradition. So we know all about mythology. What was lacking for our community, it seems to me, was to be in touch with Native American mythology, and that would complete the picture. (pp. 100-101)

As such, it is not surprising that Anaya integrates Native American myths, which are perceived as complementary and fulfilling the need of forming a hybrid identity by means of transculturation.

The novels under discussion delineate characters with their own mythical stories that help complete the picture of transculturation, and all of these stories contribute to the healing process of the protagonists in *Bless Me*, *Ultima* and *Tortuga*. For example, *Curanderas* (folk healers) use plants, herbs, and massage techniques. Apart from these practices, they tell the stories, specifically mythic stories, which are associated particularly with the Aztec creation myth, or *cosmogonic myth* which is described as "the model for all myths of origin" by

Eliade (1967, p. 173). Curanderas are not the only ones good at telling those stories; children and adults have important roles in storytelling, as well. The major Aztec creation myth in *Bless Me, Ultima* features the Golden Carp⁴⁴ which is believed to be a river god. It is represented as an Aztec god (Kanoza, 2002)⁴⁵. In *Bless Me, Ultima*, Antonio also describes it as a pagan god (Anaya, 1994, p. 114). In the first instance, this myth is related by Samuel⁴⁶ who is Antonio's friend. Before learning this myth, Antonio describes the storyteller as follows: "Samuel was only in the third grade, but he always seemed wise and old when he talked, kind of like my grandfather" (Anaya, 1994, p. 77). It is clear that Samuel is likened to Antonio's grandfather in terms of wisdom. In other words, to boost Samuel's credibility, Antonio sets the image of an old, experienced, and wise man in the reader's mind. Also, it might indicate that this myth is traditional knowledge, the product of an older time. This could be suggested as one of the reasons why Antonio considers and believes in the myth of the Golden Carp. In *Bless Me, Ultima*, apart from Samuel, the reader is informed that a curandera named Ultima and other secondary characters like Jason's Indian, Samuel's father and Cico, are familiar with the Golden Carp myth. Clearly, there is a close connection between these characters and the myth. This situation can reveal that the characters' sympathies and tendencies are aligned with Paganism, the Mesoamerican religion of the Aztecs, and they are instruments of the healing process of Antonio.

Besides, the Golden Carp myth is a tool for them to let Antonio know about the presence and the existence of the pagan past in a microcosm. When looked at from a wider perspective, this myth also informs Chicanxs about their indigenous past as Herminio Rios C. and Octavio I. Romano-V (1972) discuss:

It is from our collective memory that he draws myths such as that of Cihuacoatl.... And it is from our collective subconscious that the myth of the Golden Carp arises... Anaya takes us from the subconscious to the conscious, from the past to the present...in so doing he has helped us to know ourselves. (p.ix)

⁴⁴ The Golden Carp is thought to be in the Pecos River in reality (Hunt, 2008). In his autobiography, Anaya (1990) admits that he visited golden carp in the river in his childhood. This shows that Anaya's cultural and personal memory is reflected in his writings.

⁴⁵ For more information about the representation of the Aztec Golden Carp myth, see Kanoza's "The Golden Carp and *Moby Dick*: Rudolfo Anaya's Multi-Culturalism" (2002).

⁴⁶ Although some characters can be analyzed or mentioned within this theoretical approach, the focus of this thesis is the protagonists of both novels. Nevertheless, those subsidiary characters such as folk healers and storytellers help protagonists find their ways and identities. They will also be used as "aides" to evaluate the protagonists and show the protagonists' identity formation process in this thesis.

Furthermore, the myth is functioning in this context as a means of juxtaposing Catholicism and paganism. While some characters refrain from contrasting Catholicism and paganism, some others are inclined to do so. That is to say, Ultima does not prefer to criticize Catholicism, but she simply leads the way for Antonio to think about religion. When Antonio asks Ultima whether he is to believe the Golden Carp story or not, she says: “As you grow into manhood you must find your own truths—” (Anaya, 1994, p.119). On the contrary, the Golden Carp myth is also used as an instrument of criticizing Catholicism in a harsh way by Cico, who is a friend of Antonio. He says: “The golden carp accepts all magic that is good, but your God, Tony, is a jealous God. He does not accept competition—” (Anaya, 1994, p.238). One can come up with the idea that there are two sides of paganism represented in the story by two groups of characters who tell the Golden Carp myth. One side is more obviously trying to mentor Antonio in an objective way while others, like children, are represented as harsh critics of Catholicism. These kinds of storytellers can be compared to those in *Tortuga*, which also features different relators of myth. An ambulance driver, Filomon, who takes Tortuga, to the Crippled Children’s Hospital, appears as the first storyteller in the story. He introduces the Turtle myth to Tortuga. Filomon is “an old man with a deep wrinkled face” (Anaya, 2000, p.3). He is similar to Ultima because they are both represented as old and wise. Therefore, Ultima and Filomon are portrayed in accordance with the old sage stereotype. They can be the representatives of grandparent figures who are knowledgeable, experienced and mature in Chicana culture, and therefore they could be taken as representing cultural memory. They are closer to the past that must be reclaimed.

The story of *Tortuga* begins with an ambulance scene. Tortuga’s journey begins in this ambulance, as well. As an ambulance driver, Filomon carries children in need or in an emergency. The ambulance in which Filomon carries Tortuga can be a journey in which the possible physical healing alternatives are first made available. Therefore, Filomon turns into “the one who gives children hope at the same time as he delivers them to their diseases,” as Liana Vrajitoru (2003) states (p.258). Also, the ambulance can be the vehicle to heal Tortuga’s crippled identity metaphorically. The first time that Tortuga hears about the turtle myth is when he is driven by Filomon during this ambulance scene. The implication is that as soon as Tortuga is exposed to the Turtle myth, which is infused with paganism, he can enter the challenging process of healing himself, thereby reshaping his own identity metaphorically. It can, therefore, be suggested that Filomon is also a representative of paganism like Ultima, Samuel, Cico and such characters in *Bless Me, Ultima*.

As is clear from the portrayal of the pagan characters, who inform the protagonists about myths, they share a common characteristic which is wisdom. Therefore, paganism, wisdom and myth are all strongly connected to each other. In other words, the notion of “wisdom” is attributed to paganism to make myths believable and credible for the protagonists. This is because Antonio and Tortuga are desperate to believe such myths to go one step further in their healing processes. If the Golden Carp and the Turtle myth had been told by ordinary people or average human beings, it could have been hard for the protagonists to return to and embrace their pagan roots. What makes myth appear magical in these stories is the existence of magical people, who transmit the myths orally in the novels.

It is important to introduce the major mythic figures of the Golden Carp in the story in order to better focus on the representation of this particular myth, and find out how it functions in *Bless Me, Ultima*. Samuel, for instance, starts to tell a seemingly minor fish story which is associated with the Golden Carp. This minor story is about people who are turned into fish. As the story goes, once upon a time, the gods sent strange wandering people into the fertile lands, which are the lands in which Antonio and Samuel live. Those people had some animals, sweet fruit and drink and fields of maize. Only the fish called carp in the river was forbidden because it was sacred to the gods. For a long time, there was no rain in those lands and the drought came along. People had to eat the carp in the river to survive. Gods were very angry for the sin of the people and wanted to kill all of them. One god who loved them persuaded the other gods to forgive the people for their sin. Gods turned them into carp that are tinted bronze⁴⁷ by the sunlight. After telling the story of the carp, Samuel warns Antonio not to catch and eat those species of fish because it would be a sinful act (Anaya, 1994). This introductory story sets the stage for the Golden Carp myth. After this, Samuel introduces the Golden Carp myth, which is the continuation of his fish story. One god becomes very sad because people were turned into carp. He demands of the other gods that he be turned into a carp so that he can protect his people in the river. Gods turn him into a big Golden Carp and announce that he is the god of the river (Anaya, 1994). Later on, Antonio’s friend, Cico reveals to Antonio the prophecy that the Golden Carp, the Pagan god, will return to punish new people who came to the valley many years later if “they sinned a lot, they sinned against each other, and they sinned against the legends they knew” (Anaya, 1994, p.118). The Golden Carp says: “the sins of the people would weigh so heavy upon the

⁴⁷ The bronze race is interchangeably used with Mestizo identity for Chicanxs in *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* (1969).

land that in the end the whole town would collapse and be swallowed by water— ” (Anaya, 1994, p.118).

With regard to these stories, Herminio Rios C. and Octavio I. Romano-V (1972) draw an analogy between the Golden Carp story and “Atonatiuh, the first cosmic catastrophe in Náhuatl cosmology” (p.ix). Michel Graulich⁴⁸ thinks that “indigenous sources [are]... representative of mythology rather than a historical record” (as cited in González & Pérez Flores, 2016, p.172). He also illustrates some indigenous sources such as Codices, “early Aztec religious or historical texts consisting of pictographs (word pictures) painted on paper made from bark or deerskin, which were folded accordion style; the singular form is codex” (McKinley, 2015, p.84). Moreover, he mentions Mesoamerican history, referring to four or five ages which are described as suns and named after the catastrophe that brings them to the end. Called Atonatiuh or Chalchiuhtonatiuh, the fourth age means Sun of Jade or Sun of Water. Although stories vary from one another, the concept of the flood remains unchanged and the people’s metamorphosis into fish is told in four sources including the Leyend de los Soles, Histoyre de Mechique, the Anales de Cuauhititlan and the Codex Vaticanus as Michel Graulich states (as cited in Hunt, 2008). An example from The Codex Chimalpopoca shows the similarity between the Golden Carp myth and Aztec Creation story of the fourth era: “it was 676 years they lived. And they died by drowning. They turned into fish. The skies came falling down. They were drowned in only one day” (Bierhorst, 1992, p.143). Graulich cites another version of the creation myth that links the Golden Carp to the Aztec god Cipactli, in the form of an aquatic Sarian beast (as cited in Hunt, 2008). Described as Sarian, Caiman, sawfish, or dragon depending on the source (Hunt, 2008), it is usually thought that the Earth (Tlaltecuhli, the Lord of the Earth or Tlalteotl, the Lady of the Earth) emerges from it (as cited in Hunt, 2008).

Hence, there are strong similarities between the Aztec creation myth and the Golden Carp myth. Therefore, it is important to associate the Golden Carp myth with the specific Aztec creation myth even though the Aztec myth in the Codices does not explicitly refer to the metamorphosed god, the Golden Carp (Hunt, 2008). Anaya is involved in this reconstruction process of the Aztec myth, “that was an important aspect of the Chicano Movement, which derived unity from a myth of cultural nationalism in Aztlán” (Hunt, 2008,

⁴⁸ For more information about Mesoamerican myths, see Graulich, M. (1997). *Myths of Ancient Mexico*. University of Oklahoma Press. , Graulich, M. (2000). Creation Myths. In D. Carrasco (Ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Mesoamerican Cultures* (pp. 280-284). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

p.189). In this regard, *Bless Me, Ultima* can be taken as a symbolic representation of the Chicano Movement, *El Movimiento*, together with the Aztlán myth which aims to re-fashion the indigenous past of Chicanxs. The Golden Carp image in the novels stands for a god who loves his people and forgives their sins. This image is juxtaposed with the Catholic God who is “not a God of forgiveness” (Anaya, 1994, p.173). Frederick S. Holton (1995) also compares these figures: “The unmerciful Church also stands in contrast to the Golden Carp, who is willing to sacrifice himself to save erring mankind” (p.36). As Antonio was raised by his mother Maria in the Catholic religion, it is the first time that Antonio encounters such an “unbelievable” story. So the Golden Carp is hard for him to grasp and to believe in. This strange concept is also challenging for him because he is familiar only with the rules, principles, and doctrines of Catholicism, a monotheistic religion. Nevertheless, when one looks into the Golden Carp myth, it is apparent that it is a polytheistic and nature-based belief.

When Antonio confronts a myth that proposes a polytheistic way of seeing life, he regards this new belief as strange. His internal thoughts reveal his confused and tangled mind. He ponders on the golden carp: “a new god?” (Anaya, 1994, p.81) and he continues: “I could not believe this strange story, and yet I could not disbelieve Samuel” (Anaya, 1994, p.81). Therefore, he is torn between Catholicism and paganism. Moreover, he expresses his uneasiness and vulnerability by referring to the Golden Carp: “It made me shiver, not because it was cold but because the roots of everything I had ever believed in seemed shaken” (Anaya, 1994, p.81). His confusion accelerates and even leads him to make a comparison between the God of Catholicism and the gods of paganism. He thinks: “If the golden carp was a god, who was the man on the cross? The Virgin? Was my mother praying to the wrong God?” (Anaya, 1994, p.81). As is clear from what he thinks and feels, he must ask questions and acknowledge his confusion (Van Hecke, 2014).

In addition to Samuel, Antonio’s friend Cico tells the Golden Carp myth and shows Antonio the Golden Carp in the river. The first moment Antonio sees the golden carp, he is impressed by its big, bright appearance. His first impression is: “I could not have been more entranced if I had seen the Virgin, or God Himself” (Anaya, 1994, p.114). He compares his first impressions of the Golden Carp to that of Ultima, the folk healer. He reveals his feelings for both of them:

I felt my body trembling as I saw the bright golden form disappear. I knew I had witnessed a miraculous thing, the appearance of a pagan god, a thing as miraculous as the curing of my uncle Lucas. And I thought, the power of God failed where Ultima’s worked; and then a sudden illumination

of beauty and understanding flashed through my mind. This is what I had expected God to do at my first holy communion! (Anaya, 1994, p.114)

Antonio comes to the realization that the Catholic God cannot satisfy his demands and expectations. Rather, he starts to notice that Ultima and the Golden Carp, pagan figures, seem more useful and powerful for his Chicano family than the Catholic God. As Vernon E. Lattin (1979) affirms: “Through the influence of Ultima and the golden carp, Antonio has progressed beyond traditional Christianity which failed to satisfy his religious quest and has moved into the ancient mythic understanding of existence” (p. 31). This pagan myth helps him think critically about what happens around him. In other words, although he feels that he is confined to one mainstream religion only, the practice of which is enforced by his mother, he begins to give meaning to the pagan god which offers an alternative to Catholicism. It is obvious that the Golden Carp myth in *Bless Me, Ultima* reveals the protagonist Antonio’s inner conflicts and opens a new path for him to discover his pagan roots as he begins to construct a Chicano identity. The examples mentioned above are related to the function of the Golden Carp myth, which is invoked to initiate the process of questioning by protagonists, who do not have such an opportunity in a Catholic environment.

Similarly, Tortuga has some contradictory thoughts and perceptions about the Turtle myth which is not meaningful for him at the very early stages of the narrative. The Turtle myth is about the sea turtle which transforms itself into the mountain called Tortuga when there is a drought that dries the oceans. The story is told gradually by different characters. As Tortuga is informed by the myth in different layers, his perceptions towards the myth change thoroughly. In the beginning of the story, his position is similar to Antonio’s in *Bless Me, Ultima*. He has difficulty giving credence to the story which is told by Filomon. Tortuga, who suffers from paralysis in the ambulance, seems indifferent to that story because of his physical pain. Yet metaphorically, his disability, which is an emblem of cultural disability, can signal his conflicts about issues including his identity and religious belief. Therefore, as long as he cannot solve his identity problem, he will not be healed. One of the ways he solves his problems is forming or making a new Chicano identity which, he thinks, will be attained with the help of the Turtle myth.

Filomon shows Tortuga the mountain called Tortuga, as well as the myth, and he describes how it functions: “it’s been our faith in this wasteland...and it’s helped a lot of kids. There’s a strong power there” (Anaya, 2000, p.5). Apparently, he uses the word “wasteland” for this land to show that it is a desert. Also, at a deeper level, he implies the

problem of forming a Chicano identity by using the wasteland metaphor. Although he seems to be hopeless on such an issue, he still has a belief in healing for Chicano people with the help of Tortuga Mountain on which the myth is based. Besides, he implies that each child needs to know how her/his past is associated with the Tortuga Mountain which is connected to the myth. The beginning of the story implies that there is some healing and magical power in the Tortuga myth, and this magical power is used for bringing the problematized Chicano people together in the Chicano community. This is what Filomon thinks and feels about the myth, but it does not initially influence Tortuga. The myth begins with a drought which is also a point of reference to the Aztec myth of the Golden Carp in *Bless Me, Ultima*. Therefore, one can anticipate that such a disaster can be the starting point for both myths which will end in hope and optimism.

In contrast, Tortuga does not believe what Filomon tells about the myth as Tortuga's inner monologue reveals: "The Sea would never return. The earth was drying up and dying. Even the rain which pelted us during the trip fell hot and boiling on the empty desert. I had no faith left to believe his crazy story. Already the paralysis seemed to have gripped me forever" (Anaya, 2000, p.7). In a way, he tries to indicate that in his life, he has already enough trouble which makes him paralyzed and exhausted. Tortuga has no hope left, unlike Antonio who at least tries to give meaning to what he experiences with Catholicism and paganism. As his only concern is his pain, the myth that was told by Filomon is nonsense to him. Such a drought, which can be representative of Tortuga's spiritual and emotional aridity, leads oceans to dry and turns them into the desert which is the setting of *Tortuga*. As the ocean is getting drier, the living beings in the ocean search for a place to migrate. One of them is the sea turtle which makes its way to the north where it transforms itself into the Tortuga Mountain to be alive in a magical way. Since the mountain cannot move unless there is a seismic movement, the sea turtle cannot move. That is, being a mountain means being a prisoner kept in bondage for the sea turtle because it cannot move (Anaya, 2000). This mythic episode may suggest that the sea turtle binds itself to that land as the Tortuga Mountain. In other words, in the myth, the sea turtle changes to a landbound turtle which forms a meaningful frame together with the concept of the Tortuga Mountain.

Metaphorically, this episode can be put into a broader context by connecting it to the sea turtle, the Tortuga Mountain and the protagonist. The protagonist Tortuga can suggest a metaphorical reading of these concepts which underlines disabled Tortuga's inactive and disabled position. Similar to the landbound turtle, the protagonist Tortuga is represented as captive to his paralyzed body and his body cast, as he makes such an analogy (Anaya, 2000).

Both the landbound turtle and the protagonist need to be set free to move on literally, but in the deeper sense, their ability to move freely will signify the hope for the protagonist's renewed perspective and negotiation with his hybrid identity. Additionally, it is a sign for the potential of healing the wounds of their Chicana community. To be set free, Filomon states that the Earth must be covered with oceans as it was in the beginning (Anaya, 2000). The ocean and its movement, which led to the disaster, can stand for the life cycle repeating respectively and opening a new age which is implied through the seismic movement of the mountain in the end.

Despite the pessimistic representation of the immobile sea turtle, the underlying miraculous power that appears in this myth has become a source of healing and inspiration for the people since ancient civilizations. Interestingly, though the landbound sea turtle represents immobility, despair and hopelessness, the healing principle lies within this turtle, or mountain, together with the land itself. In parallel, the healing must come from within Tortuga's paralyzed body, too. His potential to heal himself both literally and culturally, is exposed through this mytho-historical intervention represented by Native American myth. Therefore, when Tortuga is immersed in the myth, witnessing the magical power of the magical past of the Chicanos, he will break from his paralyzed position. Thus, Tortuga's body can point to the cultural deprivation of the Chicanos. On the other hand, it will be a metaphor for the healing of his identity in cultural terms which needs to be repaired.

Before mentioning the relation between the protagonist Tortuga and the Tortuga myth, it is useful to compare the Tortuga myth to the myths of Mesoamericans and Native Americans, given the fact that the Golden Carp myth is associated with Mesoamerican myth. It can be stated that a myth can show up in a slightly different form in different Native groups. Some critics such as Peter J. McCormik (1999) connect the Tortuga myth, which is believed to be the Turtle island myth associated with the creation of the Earth, to the myths of Mesoamerica, "a cultural region encompassing an area just north of the central plateau of Mexico City and all the way down to the northern nations of Central America" (Vigil, 2012, p.28). Other critics like Hebebrand (2004) think that it is connected to the Native American creation myth.

The latter is particularly linked with Tewa Pueblo⁴⁹, whose homeland is located along the Rio Grande in New Mexico, which is associated with the locality about which Anaya writes (Hebebrand 2004, p.46). In the creation story of the Tewas, Mole is the leading figure

⁴⁹ "The Tewa language and Tewa traditions are peculiar to certain of the Rio Grande pueblo people in the Southwestern United States" (Leeming, 2010, p.255).

for the people who are in the underworld and leads them to the new world which has a blinding light. In the new world, people meet Spider Woman who shows them the sacred mountains and wants them to live near Turtle Mountain, which is Sandia Mountain near Albuquerque in New Mexico (Leeming, 2010). People are guaranteed that they will find Mole and Spider Woman if they settle there. Yet people do not care about the instructions and they settle the nearby mountain called Red where the Comanches kill them. Only one woman and man survive and they make a journey south through the desert until they meet the Rio Grande where they come across the little turtle of Turtle Mountain, which makes them understand that they have found the right place to make the Tewas' home (Leeming, 2010).

The Tortuga myth in *Tortuga* can be either accepted as part of the Mesoamerican past or claimed to be a Native American creation myth with particular reference to Tewa Pueblo. The idea here is not the particular reference to any specific community, or to a particular Spanish or Anglo-American culture; rather the point is that Anaya is trying to highlight the myths of Native peoples including Mesoamericans and Native Americans. This creates diversity, a rich element which comes from Native culture, but is also embraced and emphasized by Anaya (2017):

It was in Mesoamerica that we rediscovered the legend of Aztlán, a story of mythic proportions, rooted as it was in the tribal memory of the Aztecs. Why was the legend not readily available to us—say, in the legends of the pueblos of the Río Grande? Perhaps it was, but by the middle of the twentieth century we as “Hispanos” were separated from the Pueblo Indian world of our ancestors. A color consciousness which has been such a negative element in the history of the Americas affected our own people, and, falling prey to the pressure, the large mestizo population moved to identify with that which was Hispanic. Indian thought, once accessible to our ancestors, was withdrawn to the inner circle of the pueblo, and the myths of the Americas were revealed only to those of us who delved into the symbolic meanings in the collective memory. (p.35)

It can be seen that Anaya, as a cultural nationalist, uses his novels *Bless Me*, *Ultima* and *Tortuga* as a means of reclaiming the connection with Native myths in accordance with the Chicano Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Rather than taking the label ‘Hispanic’ for granted, Anaya tries to put forward Native culture to counter-balance the Chicano identity.

As to Tortuga's reaction to this myth, which is narrated by Filomon, it is very clear that he cannot grasp what Filomon means and feels about the mountain. Tortuga feels hopeless:

I struggled to turn to see more, instinctively, as I had so many times before, but it was useless, I couldn't move. I could only turn my head and watch the mountain across the valley. An air of hopelessness brooded over the dull mountain as the remaining winter clouds huddled at its peak. It seemed lost and out of place in the immense desert which surrounded it, and I wondered what secret rested in its core. Whatever it was, it was something that made Filomon's voice ring with hope and made his eyes sparkle even after the fatigue of the long journey. (Anaya, 2000, p.6)

It is apparent that crippled Tortuga projects his physical pain and disability upon the mountain. In other words, since he has no hope of healing, his descriptions of the mountain are very pessimistic. In addition, he alludes to the winter atmosphere which contributes to the gloominess. Also, his point of view toward the mountain is juxtaposed with that of Filomon who is represented as a knowledgeable old person in the story. Tortuga's thoughts about the mountain are best revealed in his statement: "But where was its magic? Nothing seemed to grow on its sides; it was bare and dark and gloomy" (Anaya, 2000, p.6). Hence, he is not able to figure out what to do with this "hollow" mountain and its myth. These can be his first reactions towards the myth, and he is in difficulty and confusion since it makes very little sense to him. In a figurative manner, this reveals his culturally discouraged and distrustful state of identity formation which is a tough process for an adolescent.

Moreover, the belief system of Tortuga's mother seems to be in conflict with the myth. While the myth can be regarded as one of the sources of pagan belief, his mother, in fact, can be the representative of Catholicism which is a systematic body of belief. Tortuga whose conflict appears in the form of a physical disability, starts to think about the Catholic religion when this myth is introduced to him. He says: "I had long ago lost the faith in my mother's gods" (Anaya, 2000, p.8). This can lead to the belief that he needs something to believe in.

After the ambulance scene, Tortuga is finally admitted to the hospital. In a dark and silent room, he is able to see the mountain through the window and thinks of what Filomon has told him. Tortuga is portrayed as being so desperate that he tries to find something to hold on to. Actually, there are some traces of the Catholic God subconsciously in his childhood memories. He does not seem to be the solution for Tortuga. However, the myth can be attributed to the power of hope and healing by the storytellers. He seems to realize that the Catholic God could not heal the patients called "vegetables" who are on the brink of death; he is getting closer to the myth. He seems to be impressed by the scenery of the mountain and says: "For a moment the mountain was alive. It called to me, and I lay quietly

in my dark room, hypnotized by the sight. Now I knew what Filomon had meant. There was a secret in the mountain, and it was calling me, unfolding with movement and power as the dying rays of the sun infused the earth with light” (Anaya, 2000, p.21). However; his hopes are diminished through the atmosphere of the hospital. He says and dreams:

Then a gray wash fell over the desert and the golden light was gone. The cold wind rattled the roof of the hospital. Brittle tumbleweeds rolled across the frozen waste. The fatigue of the journey settled over me and I fell into a troubled, restless sleep. In my dream I saw myself crawling across the desert like a crippled turtle. I made my way slowly towards the mountain, and when I was there I found the secret ponds and springs at the foot of the mountain. A ring of young girls danced around the water...they sang and danced like the group of first communion girls who had shared my holy communion so many years ago...when I was only a child. (Anaya, 2000, p.21)

Such a transition from an optimistic mood to a pessimistic one can give the impression that he still needs something strong to heal him or that it will take some more efforts on his part as well. As his dream shows he still finds himself somewhat connected to Catholicism subconsciously. In his dream, what he remembers is his holy communion, which was imposed upon him in his childhood. Besides, it is important to note that the celebration now happens at the foot of Tortuga Mountain. Catholic memory helps him understand that this is a holy communion, and this place is sacred. The parallelism suggests equality between the two belief systems. The mountain will now become the pagan site of faith. This is a clear example of transculturation which is a process that selects forms and meanings from both metropolitan and marginal cultures. The result is hybridity which Anaya (2009) describes as “The New World Man” in his critical essay entitled “The New World Man,” through which he espouses a new perspective. Also he sees it as “a declaration of independence from a narrow view that has defined us only as Hispanos with only a Spanish heritage. The definition of our identity must be a New World definition” which highlights the indigenous, mother side of Chicax people’s roots, as well (Anaya, 2009, p.96). In reference to *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Tortuga*, the protagonists are examples of such glorious mestizaje (Anaya, 2009).

Antonio has such a religious education in *Bless Me, Ultima*. The issue of communion makes the issue of the Catholic God more contradictory because Antonio and Tortuga cannot find what they expect from their communions after they complete this process. What they expect is communication with God, the ultimate figure who hears people in need of him according to the Catholic belief. Yet, Antonio and Tortuga realize that everything seems to

be getting worse and worse and nothing is solved. From Antonio's point of view, his inner conflict and also the conflict between the people in his Chicana community goes on even though he prays to the Catholic God. Similarly, it is implied that Tortuga comes to the realization that the Catholic God could not prevent him and other children from suffering and pain although he had his holy communion. It can be understood that the Catholic faith will drag protagonists into the myths that are thought to be the only ultimate solution to their problems.

One of the characters who present the myth as a remedy to Tortuga is Josefa. Like Ismelda, Josefa is a folk healer who works as a nurse at the hospital. She tells Tortuga the Tortuga myth in a similar fashion, drawing his attention to the holy mountain: "But we do know it's a holy place, because the water that flows from the mountain is holy. It's the only place in the desert that there is a chance for salvation" Tortuga answers: "But there's also suffering," She continues: "Ah, Tortuga, maybe that's your salvation...that you will learn to suffer" (Anaya, 2000, p.57). Josefa suggests the mountain's enchanting power will be the cure for Tortuga, and therefore that he must participate in the spiritual lesson in order to be healed. Nevertheless, Tortuga resists believing in such an optimistic thought, and reacts with a sentimental expression of pessimism: "There was no salvation for me in suffering; nothing could be saved through the suffering of the vegetables which lay in Salomon's ward" (Anaya, 2000, p.58). It is clear that there are certain characters who already know the turtle myth. Each of these characters is assigned to tell the story to Tortuga. Appearing to be the most important storyteller in the plot, Salomon is represented as a wise bookworm, staying in the ward of children who are comatose, or "vegetables." His important role comes from his appearance along with his stories in Tortuga's dreams or via telepathy with Tortuga. One of the stories related to the Tortuga myth gives hope and endurance. The story revolves around men and turtles who dominate the living realm in the sea. One day, the grandfather wants them to have a journey from the sea to the land because the world is dark. When they arrive on the land, they see the sun and the sky. Men, who are on the back of the turtle, try to reach the light of the sun. As they come closer to the light of the sun, they burn, become darker and lose their golden scales. They desire to discover this land of the sun and call it "walking the path of the sun." The men want the turtles to come and see this way of life, but not all turtles can come along because they are afraid. Some of them manage to come to the land and they are so scared that they develop thick protective shells. Also, sometimes they move back to the sea because it is a safe place for them to live. After telling this story, Salomon gives some advice and addresses Tortuga: "We cannot retreat into the darkness,

Tortuga, we cannot build shells like the turtle...our commandment is to live in the light of the sun...to walk in the light of the sun” (Anaya, 2000, pp.68-69). The shells of the turtles can be compared to Tortuga’s body cast which prevents him from moving freely. Apparently, Salomon suggests that Tortuga needs to get rid of his body cast to be free. Also, this suggestion is made with the help of the myth which puts an emphasis on light, brightness and illumination which is also a clear reference to the Pueblo Tewa myth. Feeling the sense of magic in the words of the storytellers, Tortuga utters:

Somehow Ismelda and Salomon and Filomon and all the others I had met were bound together, and the force created was sucking me into it. When Ismelda sat by me I felt another presence hovering over us. When I looked into her eyes I often saw the outline of the mountain. When I asked her questions she would smile and tell me that my concern should be with getting well. But I had the vague, uneasy feeling that other things were in store for me. (Anaya, 2000, p.101)

Actually Tortuga subconsciously feels that these storytellers have something in common; a pagan belief. What is remarkable about these storytellers is that none of them gives an example from the Christian God. They attribute hope and optimism to nature or natural events as it is apparent in the content of the Tortuga myth. They do not direct Tortuga to the Catholic God but to the mountain, the light of the sun, the turtle, and the like. It can be stated that the healing power is hidden in the mysteries of nature, as is implied through the myth.

With the help of these characters, Tortuga becomes familiar with the concept of destiny which is also an issue in *Bless Me, Ultima*. This issue is brought forward by the folk healer, Ultima, and Antonio’s father Gabriel, representatives of paganism. Some of the storytellers like Salomon in *Tortuga* induce Tortuga to pursue his destiny in myths rather than the Catholic God. Tortuga seems to agree with these ideas about destiny, and obviously these ideas contradict with the idea of believing in the Catholic God:

I thought and remembered that I had often felt a force directing my life. At first I thought it was God. The force would move, like the soft fanning of swirling wings, it would call to me, and it would lead me to see things I would otherwise have missed. There seemed to be a purpose behind the smallest accident. So maybe there was a reason for my stay at the hospital. But what was it? And who knew? Salomon knew. (Anaya, 2000, p.103)

From this point onwards, Tortuga continues to question the Catholic God and makes every attempt to find answers to these questions. He comes closer to the myth which will otherwise provide him with power in his life. The myth starts to give him hope which he will never

find in the Catholic God. Having heard about the Turtle myth, Tortuga meditates upon what he believed in the past. He begins to find a purpose which he cannot find at the beginning in the ambulance scene. He shares this idea with the children in the ward: “There must be a purpose to all this” (Anaya, 2000, p.104). Therefore, he finds a purpose in life after he is exposed to the myth by different storytellers.

Added to this, when one of the children asks his ideas on such mythic stories, Tortuga does not answer, but reveals why he is not ready to answer yet through internal monologue:

I knew I had prayed and there had been no answer, that faith in the old powers was as dry as dust. I knew I had to find something to hold on to, we all did, but I wasn't quite sure what it was. The hospital and the desert which surrounded it seemed to be hopeless, and beyond that the world I had known before the hospital seemed to have only pockets of love fighting against a huge machinery which crushed everything. Here, at least, there was Ismelda, and Salomon, Mike and other kids, and the doctors who helped. (Anaya, 2000, p.107)

Tortuga realizes that he must find something to make him feel safe and sound. Moreover, it is interesting to note that his connection to others is now of paramount importance to him. This desire to reconnect himself to others may represent the beginnings of the Chicano community in the hospital, which stands for a microcosmic environment for Chicano people. The final phase of the healing process of the protagonist also underlines his ability to form his Chicano identity.

One outstanding argument of this analysis is that religious conflict poses a significant obstacle in the process of the formation of a new identity. Native myths are used for the resolution of those problems. Anaya discusses the importance of archetypes, or “primal symbols” (González-T, 1998, p.84) in reference to myths, and explains the function of myths in defining one's identity in an interview: “If part of the search is for the authentic self in us, then those archetypes and symbols are clear messages that begin to define the authentic self” (as cited in González-T, 1998, pp.85-86). In this way the Golden Carp myth is used in the creation of Antonio's identity in *Bless Me, Ultima*. While the storytellers in the novel relate the Golden Carp myth, the protagonist awakens to the fact that the Catholic God is not the solution to the problems he confronts in his life. Indeed, he fails to meet the expectations of the protagonist. Therefore, one can claim that the image of God is reconstructed and can be associated with sadness and pessimism. In contrast, paganism, rooted in Aztec myths, is much more interesting and hopeful for the characters. Since Antonio sees there are other powerful alternatives to God that are achieved by myth, he realizes that he does not have to

choose one side or another. That is to say, Antonio discovers his pagan roots which are developed with the help of Aztec myths. For example, the end of the story reveals Antonio's reconciliation with the familial rift. He tells his father: "Then maybe I do not have to be just Márez, or Luna, perhaps I can be both" (Anaya, 1994, p.247). He understands that he does not have to choose between Catholicism and paganism. He thinks of combining them. He continues: "It seems I am so much a part of the past" (Anaya, 1994, p.247). His father replies: "Ay, every generation, every man is a part of his past. He cannot escape it, but he may reform the old materials, make something new" (Anaya, 1994, p.247). Antonio says to himself: "Take the Llano and the river valley, the moon and the sea, God and the golden carp—and make something new . . . That is what Ultima meant by building strength from life" (Anaya, 1994, p.247). He asks his father: "Can a new religion be made?" (Anaya, 1994, p.247). His father responds affirmatively. Antonio thinks: "If the old religion could no longer answer the questions of the children then perhaps it was time to change it" (Anaya, 1994, p.248). Antonio thinks of combining what he has learned from his parents, relatives, Ultima and his friends. This is an obvious example of transculturation and a kind of cultural synthesis. Antonio's father does not impose any kind of belief system over another. He ultimately reconciles with his Catholic wife. Another passage from Antonio's internal monologue shows that he is suspicious of Catholicism, observed by his mother and uncle, and embraces the pagan god which is associated with his father: "Would they smile when they learned I doubted the God of my forefathers, the God of the Lunas, and knew I praised the beauty of the golden carp?" (Anaya, 1994, p.257). Apparently, Anaya bolsters Chicano ethnic pride by reviving a pagan god and promoting the Aztec civilization cultural nationalists' claim as their ancestry. Anaya obviously brings the Aztec myth to the center of the novel for the purpose of restoring Antonio's psychological health on the plot level, and ultimately helping to form his identity metaphorically.

By the same token, the Tortuga myth can be seen as the pagan tool which acknowledges the indigenous past of the Chicanos. At the same time, it is used as a means of negotiation between binary oppositions; Catholicism and Native spirituality. Such achieved negotiation between cultural contact zones is demonstrated towards the end when the Tortuga Mountain moves and gives the impression of seismic movement like an earthquake. Besides, Tortuga reveals his combination of Holy Communion girls, Ismelda and Tortuga Mountain in a dreamy spring atmosphere. At the same time, the end indicates that the Tortuga myth is realized: "then the night came and around us the roaring suns of

prior ages welcomed us into our new destiny” (Anaya, 2000, p.187). It suggests that it creates new life, new beginnings and thus Anaya is giving birth to a new identity.

Anaya uses the Mesoamerican myth of the Aztecs to heal the protagonist Antonio on the plot level, thereby contributing to the transculturation process of his identity formation. Similarly, Anaya brings back the Pueblo Native American myth in reference to Turtle Island to help the protagonist Tortuga create his own identity. As the child and teenage protagonists are considered parts of a chain, Native myths of Mexico and New Mexico can complement each other. The writer bolsters his Native heritage which was previously ignored, thereby contributing to the Aztlán myth and to the Chicano Movement.

CHAPTER 3

THE ROLE OF THE LAND IN CHICANX IDENTITY FORMATION

“Woven into centuries of tradition was the unspoken rule: the land cannot be sold. It is part of the heritage of the land grants, part of the heritage gained from the Indian view of the earth. To sell the land was to cut your roots, and a man without roots lacked identity.”

Rudolfo A. Anaya *The Essays* (2009, p.159)

Throughout history, various meanings have been attached to the concept of land which is defined in simple terms as “an area of ground, especially of a particular type or used for a particular purpose” (Oxford University Press, 2011). Retrospectively, land has been perceived as the source of material gain by Europeans and Euro-Americans (Bruchac, 2004; Niezen, 2000). From the very beginning of the colonial period, since the 16th century in the case of the Spanish in the Southwest, Europeans have searched for the means of wealth in the land. In his *Democracy in America* (1831), Alexis de Tocqueville, a French sociologist, observer, political philosopher and historian, advises Europeans to come and work in America. He describes America as a land of opportunity, freedom, equality and prosperity in the context of the American Dream. In addition, throughout the 19th century, these ideals led to the coinage of a motto “Go west, young man, go west” in association with Manifest Destiny, the supposedly God-assigned duty of westward expansion. These concepts were accompanied by the idea of individualism, as coined by Tocqueville, which continued to exert increasing influence throughout the 19th century. In his book *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, Tocqueville (1998) observes and defines white American individuals as: “no longer attached to each other by any tie of caste, class, association, or family” (p.87).

However, focusing on the Chicanax way of understanding land, one can see that it is different from the view of Anglo-Americans. Anaya uses the Spanish word “La sagrada tierra”⁵⁰ for the land. At a connotative level, the word tierra refers to “property, the soil, the nation or motherland, and the planet” (Fernández Olmos, 1999, p. 47). Anaya (1977) also uses “La tierra” for the landscape and he justifies the usage this way:

⁵⁰ In *Heart of Aztlán* (2015), the second book of the trilogy, this Spanish word is used for the land that the Chavez family must leave.

[I]t conveys a deeper relationship between man and his place, and it is this kinship to the environment which creates the metaphor and the epiphany in the landscape. On one pole of the metaphor stands man, on the other is the raw, majestic, an awe inspiring landscape of the southwest; the epiphany is the natural response to the landscape. (pp. 98-99)

As is clearly expressed in Anaya's words, Chicana culture privileges the land and perceives it as sacred for their community like indigenous American cultures that have a "metaphysical attachment - a sacred thread -" to land (Watkins, 2001, p.41). Furthermore, considering their cultural and historical ties to the land, American Indians' "past and future is intertwined with it, as the fabric of their culture is woven of threads tied to places" (Watkins, 2001, p.42). For these reasons, they regard land as part of mother earth; it is nurturing, healing and transforming. Likewise, Chicanos, who share ancestry with indigenous people, have a similar sense of spiritual relationship with nature and land and, as such, they are committed to developing a deeply-felt sense of belonging to land, which is an expression of who they are. Also, their culture, myths, values, traditions, and, most importantly, their identities are strongly rooted in, and connected to land. In other words, it can be said that land becomes the expression of their identities as Chicanos.

In this regard, it is crucial to concentrate on the idea of Aztlán myth of the Chicano Movement because it reinforces both the physical and the spiritual connections of Chicana people to their lands. The Aztlán myth of the Chicano Movement is an example of a people declaring an identity for themselves by reviving an older sense of what land meant to them. The southwestern United States, in particular, is the point of reference for the Aztlán myth in the context of the Chicano Movement because this particular geography was originally the homeland of many Chicana bloodlines before the government of the United States annexed it in 1848. Now, the point is not to question this historical past of annexation and land loss; rather, the issue is Chicanos' low status as a minority group in the Southwest, even though the Southwest is their original homeland. Anglo-Americans have classified Chicanos as illegal, aliens and foreigners (Chávez, 1987), which, in fact, seems contradictory by nature. It can be argued that Anglo-Americans both ignore the seizure of a people's homeland and despise Chicanos' long diverse cultural tradition that has flourished in the Southwest. Therefore, the Aztlán myth is inextricably connected to the revival of the concept of a homeland that predates the present geopolitical boundaries.

In this regard, the pioneering figure of the Chicano cause, Anaya, strongly raises the particular issue of land, and attaches it to spirituality by means of diverse natural

descriptions, and shows Chicaxs' commitment to their homeland in his novels *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Tortuga*. In these novels, the homeland is portrayed as an entity, capable of transforming and nurturing power over protagonists, who will heal their previously denied cultural identity in the end. In *Bless Me, Ultima* Antonio and his family live in Guadalupe County, on the plain of Llano Estacado, in New Mexico. This imaginary setting stands for a real geographical site in New Mexico as Anaya himself confirms in his interview with Jim Harris (1998): "Primarily the background for *Bless Me, Ultima* was the Llano of eastern New Mexico, in and around Santa Rosa" (pp.50-51). The exact locality of the novel is the city and county seat of Guadalupe County situated in Northeastern New Mexico. Significantly, these are the places where Anaya spent his childhood. Thus, critics affirm that Antonio is analogous to the author himself (McCormick, 1999). Talking about the setting, the narrative sometimes alludes to certain villages where Antonio visits his relatives. They are Las Pasturas and El Puerto de los Lunas, small unincorporated Chicax communities. At first, Antonio is not able to integrate himself into the nature and land of the Llano. As Antonio makes trips in the Llano plains accompanied by Ultima, he discovers the natural beauties which are diverse and various. Thanks to Ultima, he starts to describe specifically the river⁵¹, herbs, plants, trees and other geographical formations in positive terms. This indicates the transformation of Antonio who will use the life-changing power of the land in the process of forming his identity.

Tortuga centers on a teenage protagonist, Tortuga, who suffers from paralysis, which can be a signifier of his cultural disability. The Chicax and Anglo-American contact zone is represented by Tortuga's painful experience with his body which prevents him from seeing his surroundings including the Tortuga Mountain and other formations. Tortuga realizes the "magic" in the scenery through the mediation of characters who are folk healers and storytellers. His moment of realization is simultaneous with his healing, which suggests his ability to form a new identity metaphorically. In other words, the moment that he feels a part of the land is also the indicator of his regained health and new identity. Throughout his treatment, Tortuga stays in the Crippled Children's Hospital which is located in a small town, a fictional representation of Agua Bendita. Agua Bendita, which was named by Spanish colonialists at one time, comes to mean 'Holy Water' in English because the land is described as being full of healing springs, baths originating from mountains such as Tortuga near the

⁵¹ The river in the story is thought to refer to Pecos River in New Mexico since they seem to share the location (Hunt, 2008).

hospital (Anaya, 2000). Before the arrival of the Spanish colonists, the Indians had already discovered “the waters of the turtle” and used them during their stay in their “winter ceremonial ground” when they bathed and purified themselves (Anaya, 2000, p.5). Well after those remote eras, the narrative suggests that people are still coming: “people come from all over to bathe in the mineral waters from the springs which drain from the mountain—” (Anaya, 2000, p.3). Like *Bless Me, Ultima*, the fictional setting of *Tortuga* points to a real physical setting, which is Truth or Consequences (T or C) (McCormick, 1999, p. 80). Located as a city and the county seat of Sierra County in New Mexico, Truth or Consequences has been credited with Hot Springs. These are referred to in *Tortuga* as the fictional setting Agua Bendita (Anaya, 2000; McCormick, 1999). This indicates that *Tortuga* depicts a real-life place as *Bless Me, Ultima* does (McCormick, 1999).

Before Anaya dives into the mythic realm with reference to Aztlán (the homeland of the Aztecs), he tries to reconstruct real places in New Mexico with verisimilitude in the very opening lines of the novels. While Anaya refers to real places in New Mexico, these locations are also symbolic of the original Chicano homelands, lost since the mid-nineteenth century. He fictionally re-appropriates these locations in the interest of bolstering indigenous consciousness in Chicanoism. By returning to the issues of war, land loss and the racial categorization of Chicanos, the author intends to emphasize once again how asymmetrical power relations exist between Anglo-America and the Chicano people in his *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Tortuga*. In fact, it is clear and meaningful why Anaya tries to take a closer look at the real places since he intends to claim New Mexico back with the aim of demonstrating that Chicanos were already inhabitants of New Mexico before the United States annexed it. Seemingly, Anaya wants readers to re-imagine that Chicanos were the first class citizens of that land.

Closer examination of the novels reveals not only the Chicano and Anglo-American contact zone but also some other aspects of the Chicano Movement together with the Aztlán Myth. Added to these, Anaya’s investigation of the Chicano psyche is so deep that it is even traced back to Aztec times. By revisiting the idea of Aztec ancestors, real places in New Mexico become re-mythicized in the interest of constructing the new Chicano identity. Within the context of the Chicano Movement, these Aztec traces can be identified with the Southwest, specifically New Mexico which Chicano cultural nationalists consider the original motherland of the Aztecs (Calderón, 2004). Since the action takes place in New Mexico in *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Tortuga*, the setting is associated with Aztlán, the homeland

of the Aztecs. In addition, this association between Aztlán and Agua Bendita in the desert can be made literally:

The hot springs of the mountain cover a distance of seven miles up and down the river, and there are seven major springs... the water that comes boiling out of those springs is more than water, its hot turtle pee. Yes, that's why it's miraculous and can cure sickness, because it's the hot pee of our brother the mountain. (Anaya, 2000, p.58)

Maria Wiehe (2020) endorses this association: "In *Tortuga*, the setting is not explicitly called "Aztlán," but the description of the primordial desert with the prominent mountain and its seven healing caves makes Aztlán recognizable once more" (p.149). Considering allusions to mythic elements in the above statement, there is a connection between myth and water. The passage above also describes the waters in terms of the emergence myth, making it both magical and personal to the people whose origin it celebrates. Ultimately, the homeland, which has been lost in history, seems to be reclaimed through imagination by Anaya.

Seemingly, Anaya fictionalizes the land in which he has lived. Since some critics regard them as autobiographical novels (Fernández Olmos, 1999), one can point to real life settings in the villages of New Mexico. Therefore, Anaya is very familiar with the landscape and natural features which he describes very vividly and vigorously in his novels. Re-creating such magical lands in New Mexico contributes to the project of Aztlán myth which is essential for delivering Chicana identity. Within the framework of Aztlán myth, the Llano and Agua Bendita can be considered as the land of Aztlán, to which spiritual power is attributed by the author himself as a source of healing the Chicana people and uniting them around common values. Although there is no direct reference in the novels, Anaya depicts the Llano plains and Tortuga Mountain as the land of Aztlán in the same spirit because of their sharing association with Aztlán, an imaginative connection, and the same regenerative and embracing power. This aspect of the novels shows how the setting of the Llano and of Agua Bendita contribute to the project of constructing a new Chicana identity for the protagonists.

The land⁵² about which Anaya writes is defined by its aridness as well as its fruitfulness. This particular geography therefore can be thought of as unproductive and

⁵² In this sense, *Bless Me*, *Ultima* and *Tortuga* not only share the setting which is clearly New Mexico, but they also have in common the representation of New Mexico as the "Land of Enchantment," which is the official nickname of the state (Weigl, 2008, p.4). New Mexico, a state in the United States, is rich in diverse landscapes which earn it the title "the Land of Enchantment." This diversity comes both from its fertile soil and its barrenness at the same time (Doak, 2002, p.vii).

infertile, considering some parts such as Great Plains, Rocky Mountains and Sonoran Desert. Yet, these formations are mingled with valleys, springs, canyons, rivers, trees, plants which flourished in the most well-known landforms such as the Gulf of Mexico, the Red River and the Rio Grande (Doak, 2002; Weigl, 2008). This diverse nature of the land can be applied to some of the inhabitants who are defined as Chicax people. In other words, being defined as Mestiza/o, Chicax people who are hybrids can be regarded as another version and the embodiment of such a diverse landscape. Similar to the diverse nature of New Mexico, Chicax people are products of a cultural blending that derives from both the Indian and the Spanish people.

Although the story of *Bless Me, Ultima* is set in three different places, namely Las Pasturas, Guadalupe and El Puerto de Lunas, the focus of discussion geographically revolves around the plains of Llano with which Las Pasturas is associated in the novel. There are several reasons to analyze the Llano plains; one of these reasons is the attribution of the healing power to the Llano in the novel, since it helps consider the Llano for its association with the mythical Aztlán. Luis Leal (2017) emphasizes the function of the mythical land as follows: “Aztlán symbolizes the spiritual union of the Chicanos, something that is carried within the heart, no matter where they may live or where they may find themselves” (p.153). Such a mythical land is created through Antonio’s descriptions, constructing and reinforcing the concept of the Chicax “homeland,” which is theorized in the book *Aztlán: Essays on the Chicano Homeland*.

On the other hand, *Tortuga* does not seemingly focus on the exact name of the setting. Yet the reader is informed that the hospital to which Tortuga is admitted is located in the South (Anaya, 2000). It discloses the view of Tortuga Mountain, which is described as somewhere very near the village of Agua Bendita. In fact, there is necessarily no need to pinpoint the physical location. It is clearly known that *Tortuga* is set in New Mexico, whose symbolic power can be attributed to its villages. Luis Leal, one of the pioneering figures in Chicax literary criticism, does not try to find an exact location for Aztlán, but instead argues: “What interests us is not determining where Aztlán is found, but documenting the rebirth of the myth in Chicano thought” (Leal, 2017, p.156). As Leal demonstrates, it is crucial to show that Aztlán is not a place, but an idea and ideas are what novelist Anaya uses in order to achieve his fictional goals, thereby portraying a mythical Aztlán. *Tortuga* makes use of the Tortuga Mountain which is given credit for its healing mineral water.

The mutual relationship between the protagonists and the land suggests the transformative power of the land over the protagonists and vice versa; however, the

descriptions of the land in rather pessimistic tone demonstrates hopelessness of the protagonists. The process of transculturation, which underlines the healing process, does not seem to be smooth and crystal-clear for the protagonists who must overcome internal and external conflicts. This process can be tracked by the descriptions of the land which signify both problematized identities and their resolution. The pessimistic representation of the Llano in *Bless Me, Ultima* suggests the conflicts Antonio experiences. These conflicts contribute to a dark atmosphere which is already created by the identity conflict. In other words, when seven-year-old Antonio experiences something bad, he feels awful and describes the Llano in negative terms. For example, when Antonio witnesses the death of Lupito, a war veteran, he becomes very frightened and describes the land by means of its river: “The muddy waters of the river lapped and gurgled savagely around him ... The river’s brown waters would be stained with blood, forever and ever and ever ...” (Anaya, 1994, p.19, 24).

In addition, both Antonio’s inner conflict and the conflict based on his parents’ different views on life are reflected in his descriptions. As Anaya (1977) explains, “characters who have become separated from their land and sense of place become frustrated, alienated human beings. They lose their center, and most devastating, they lose their source of redemption” (p.101). Until Antonio comes up with the possibility of forming a new identity, he describes the land as dark and gloomy. The key figure in the novel who helps Antonio acclimate to the land is the old folk healer, Ultima. She changes Antonio’s views on the Llano. Antonio expresses how she changes his view in the beginning. He says:

When she came the beauty of the Llano unfolded before my eyes, and the gurgling waters of the river sang to the hum of the turning earth... She took my hand, and the silent, magic powers she possessed made beauty from the raw, sun-baked Llano, the green river valley, and the blue bowl which was the white sun’s home. (Anaya, 1994, p.1)

Antonio talks about the very first time when Ultima makes her appearance. She is represented as a personality with magical power, who also has a charmed touch which turns the desert-like Llano to a productive place. Therefore, it can be implied that the magical image of the mythic land is constructed by its folk healer to whom supernatural power is attributed.

Tortuga has a folk healer figure like Ultima but this time, she is young Ismelda who impresses Tortuga for the first time. She has a physical influence on him and she changes his thoughts about the land with regard to the Tortuga Mountain. In other words, Ismelda,

who attracts him physically, constructs an irresistible image of the Tortuga Mountain and its healing water. Since she presents these features of the land to him, he becomes aware of the landscape which he portrays in his descriptions. His beautiful descriptions of the land are accompanied by the arrival of spring, which is clearly the symbol of reawakening, for both the mountain and Tortuga. It is also the signifier of his healing and of the completion of his transculturation process. In a dream Tortuga and the other young crippled people in the hospital are taken to the mountain by Ismelda for the May dance. Tortuga describes his dream as follows:

[W]e turned and saw the mountain was rising safely into the starry sky, while behind us the earth thundered and exploded as the forces of the fire and water dashed over the land to make it new again. Mike cheered, and we all cheered, because we were rising like a glowing sun into the indigo of night, rising to take our place in the spermy string of lights which crowned the sky. (Anaya, 2000, p.187)

This dream episode apparently underlines the celebration of the spring season with its arrival in the story. Here Ismelda wants patients to give up their wheelchairs and crutches and asks them to climb the mountain together because she wants them to perform a May dance (Anaya, 2000, p.186). It gives the impression that they practice a ritual on the top of the mountain. Also, the earthquake occurs and the Tortuga Mountain joins them by breaking free from the earth. As Jill Drayson Sweet (1983) discusses in relation to the Tewa's understanding of ritual, "rituals most often occur because they are believed to be necessary events that contribute to the successful transformation of phases in the seasonal cycles and / or individual life cycle" (p.255). Celebrating the arrival of spring on the top of Tortuga Mountain with the help of Ismelda shows Tortuga's changed point of view towards the mountain. Therefore, the descriptions in this dream episode seem more optimistic than the way he describes the desert in the beginning of the story. Although the descriptions show that it is seemingly night, there are some words "starry sky," "glowing sun" and "spermy string of lights," which connote brightness, brilliance and luminosity. Also, these words can be associated with the spring festivals which center around fertility, sexuality, birth and rebirth. For the adolescent Tortuga, these are interesting subjects which signify his healing physically and the potential of his sexuality at the plot level. At a deeper layer of the text, along with these depictions, the spring festival suggests the rebirth of cultural myth, in particular the mountain myth, which implies the healing of Tortuga in terms of cultural identity as well.

In addition to these mythic references, a carnivalesque atmosphere is created, and everybody seems to discard items associated with their disabled condition, and gathers around the Tortuga Mountain, which turns into a holy site for a ritual which is thought to be crucial for the survival of the community (Sweet, 1983). When viewed from a broader perspective, this scene is symbolically suggestive for the Chicax community for which the patients, the curandera, the season, the mythic holy mountain stand. Portraying such resplendent and gleaming scenery conveys the message of physical relief for the patients, and it is an indicator of liberation and hope for the Chicax community. Anaya reconstructs New Mexico by garnishing the ancestral land of Chicaxs with myth. The message conveyed is that othered and alienated Chicaxs need to go back to the idea which brings them together in one common homeland, Aztlán, and strengthens them culturally. The image of the movement of the Tortuga Mountain manifests that the turtle myth is in the process of coming true. The mountain, which was tied to the land, is becoming free as a turtle again. Since the idea of myth is related to the protagonist himself, it can allude that the protagonist is starting to free himself from his paralysis and his plastered body. He finds his cure on this mountain. This dream imagery also proposes that he is in the process of transculturation which prepares him to form his new identity. Tortuga's dream of the May dance night reveals transculturation together with healing:

We sang and danced on the back of the turtle that once free of the earth could swim so gracefully in the ocean of the night. So the earth was the beach that we had crossed...and what we should have known is that we had to join hands and cross it together, because it was only for an instant that the sun bathed and fed us with its love...then the night came and around us the roaring suns of prior ages welcomed us into our new destiny (Anaya, 2000, p.187).

Tortuga makes an analogy between a crippled adolescent's body, the turtle, and the Tortuga Mountain which cannot move; nevertheless, now with the spring, the mountain frees itself and begins to signal that there is a possibility that it will turn into a turtle and move again. Similarly, the patients, including Tortuga, recover from their disabilities, try to overcome their hardships and climb the mountain as the turtle crossed the ocean in the past. On the surface level, the message seems to be that if people come together and celebrate their ancestral past around such a magical place, they will get over their hardships. On a deeper level, if Chicax people understand the Aztlán concept, an ideal homeland, and what it meant to them, they will recover from illness both physically and spiritually. In other words, they will improve in health, which refers to the transition from the disabled to the

abled position. Besides, they will be united as one, attaining a distinct identity which is the hybrid Chicanx, and they reach the consciousness of forming their community.

It can also be argued that the Tortuga Mountain itself turns out to be a sacred pagan site of faith for those crippled patients including Tortuga. Ismelda already knows about the healing and unifying power of the mountain, and so does Filomon, the ambulance driver. Therefore, the mountain can be regarded as the substitute for the Catholic God. In other words, Anaya attributes both pagan and Christian meanings to the mountain in a syncretic structure that contributes to the transculturation process, forming a neo-Chicanx identity and helping Tortuga reconcile the two different religions, neither of which he accepted at the beginning.

At the end of the story, Tortuga and Ismelda make love: “Time stood still as we felt the turning of the earth and the sun... and we dissolved into each other. I dreamed my first communion girls in her eyes, and they smiled and waved at me from across the river, and they called my name and forgave my sins” (Anaya, 2000, p.195). Hence, both Ismelda and communion girls are in his mind and imagination, which reveals the completion of the transculturation process. Whereas Ismelda can be considered as the pagan side of him, the communion girls are representative of his Catholic side. It can be suggested that the combination of these elements form a new sense of holiness, which contributes to Tortuga’s healing and identity formation. Through the portrayal of the subconscious of Tortuga, Anaya gives a positive image of communion girls in the context of the Catholic tradition. It is important to note that Tortuga’s subconscious is revealed through the interesting word choice. In other words, while Anaya is exploring Tortuga’s subconscious towards the end of the story, he re-creates a favorable image of the Catholic tradition. It is clear in his use of positive words such as “forgiving sins” in a dreamy atmosphere, in which Tortuga seems pleased, happy and full of hope. When comparing such joyful moments to the one in earlier parts of the story, it is possible to see the clear-cut difference in terms of Tortuga’s stance. In the beginning, he is distrustful, hopeless and he is in a dismissive position towards his mother’s religion and the spirituality of the mountain. This mentality is accompanied by his crippled, painful body representative of cultural deficiency together with an arid desert setting. This also affirms that the grand mountain, which is associated with a pagan sacred site, helps Tortuga disclose his subconscious which Anaya uses in *Tortuga* for the purpose of showing not only the healing power of the mountain as representative of his Indian roots but also the reconciliation with his bi-cultural heritage as this analysis claims.

Another issue emphasized earlier is the clash between different lands as well as identities in *Bless Me, Ultima*. Antonio is torn between his Catholic mother and his pagan father. This clash can be rooted in the different lands from which they come. Those lands, Las Pasturas and El Puerto de Lunas, form a cultural and religious contrast. The conflict seems apparent at the beginning of the story. Las Pasturas, on the plains of Llano, represents the culture of Antonio's father, whereas his mother's side comes from El Puerto de Lunas. Therefore, Las Pasturas and El Puerto de Lunas are represented in accordance with the culture they sustain. For example, the folk healer Ultima describes Las Pasturas and El Puerto de Lunas to Antonio who wants to know more about his parents' different characteristics. Antonio asks her: "why are they so strange and quiet? And why are my father's people so loud and wild?" (Anaya, 1994, p.41). Ultima answers: "It is the blood of the Lunas to be quiet, for only a quiet man can learn the secrets of the earth that are necessary for planting—They are quiet like the moon—And it is the blood of the Márez to be wild, like the ocean from which they take their name, and the spaces of the Llano that have become their home (Anaya, 1994, p.41). Thus, there are two possibilities in front of Antonio: Las Pasturas and El Puerto de Lunas —as there are two possibilities such as Catholicism and paganism in terms of religion. Also, the opposite characteristics are attributed to those lands which can be associated with human traits. While taciturnity is attributed to his mother's side, his father's side is characterized by their loquacity and wildness. It means that the Llano symbolizes wildness, wind and the ocean. Similarly, Antonio's father, who is a Llano man, shares these characteristics since he is represented as bad tempered, unstable, fond of his freedom and the like. In contrast to his father, his mother behaves in accordance with the characteristics of El Puerto de Lunas. She is depicted as stable, tied to her earth and soil. Thus, it is understood that Antonio's mother and father, who live on a plot of land in New Mexico, show the characteristics of that land to which they seem to belong. They embody the diverse characteristics of New Mexico as they are depicted as opposites. The mother and the father are like two sides of the same coin. They complete each other. Actually, together they represent what Chicano identity is meant to be.

One particular discussion this section attends to is the new and rich Chicano identity which Anaya endeavors to reconstruct in the imagination of readers. He puts forth Antonio as an embodiment of the integration of opposed lifestyles with the aim of synthesizing a hybrid identity. Yet, it is essential to note that such hybrid culture is formed with the help of the Llano plains, which this study claims as the representation of pagan Aztlán. On a larger

scale, the author seems to convey the message that the Chicax community accepts such oppositions as parts of its collective character.

Although his parents have disagreements with each other over many issues, they give up arguing and try to compromise. The dialogue between Antonio and his father, Gabriel, approaches a resolution which shows that Antonio will be able to complete the transculturation process. Gabriel says: “ Oh, I would have liked to have sent you to the Llano, that is the way of life I knew, but I think that way of life is just about gone; it is a dream. Perhaps it is time we gave up a few of our dreams” (Anaya, 1994, p.247). He refers to the vaquero or cowboy tradition associated with the Llano plains. He had expected that his children would be wanderers, as a natural outcome of being a Llano man, but he realizes that this dream, which cannot be fulfilled by his children, must come to an end. In that sense the author gives the message that time is changing. Therefore, he and his wife need to check and revise their dreams. This is a hopeful attitude that enables them to gather in one Chicax identity.

It is possible after all, to see the renewed perspective of Gabriel, a representative of paganism. Apparently, Anaya can put the pagan characters on stage and they have the leading role to direct the protagonist in his project of demonstrating the development of a neo-Chicax identity and consciousness. He deconstructs and harmonizes the binary between the two lands from which Antonio’s parents descend. The result of such synthesis is hybridity. Antonio asks his father whether he should give up his mother’s dreams or not. His father expresses his assent and continues:

we lived two different lives, your mother and I. I came from a people who held the wind as brother, because he is free, and the horse as companion, because he is the living, fleeting wind—and your mother, well, she came from men who hold the earth as brother. They are a steady, settled people. We have been at odds all of our lives, the wind and the earth. Perhaps it is time we gave up the old differences—. (Anaya, 1994, p.247)

This utterance puts forth that Antonio’s father reconciles with his wife’s lifestyle and the tradition of El Puerto de Lunas which has always been a matter of discussion for both of them. That means, he seems to have given up his expectation of keeping the tradition of the cowboy and wandering. Moreover, he focuses on the big picture, New Mexico, which possesses a unifying power beyond that of individual villages. It may well be that they can live comfortably with differences once they have developed the hybrid identity. The idea of Aztlán, the ideal homeland, which brings back their authentic identity, is symbolized by the

homeland of New Mexico forming a harmonious atmosphere in which hybridized culture will live peacefully and with its rich cultural elements. Also, this can be suggestive of a more powerful image of Chicanxs in the face of Anglo-Americans due to the fact that Anaya imaginatively reclaims Mexico as Chicanxs' cultural heritage flourished in the homeland.

In a similar way, Antonio finds his new path, which is a matter of creating a magical land, and which helps to construct a new Chicane identity. He says: "Then maybe I do not have to be just Marez, or Luna, perhaps I can be both—" (Anaya, 1994, p.247). Here, Marez and Luna, as small communities, stand for the diverse cultural backgrounds of Chicanxs. When considering the physical setting of these communities, it is clearly seen that they are opposites. One is a farming community, whereas the other is situated on the wide plains. Throughout the novel, Anaya focuses on both physical and imagined differences that he creates within Antonio's mind, and the result is the formation of one unified Chicane culture which encompasses differences, stemming from Spanish and Indian heritage. Moreover, the above quotation alludes that the conflict between different villages is resolved, thereby resulting in the creation of a new magical land along with a new Chicane identity. Such a diverse and hybridized culture of Spanish and Indian is achieved by New Mexico on a larger macrocosm. In the novel, it is demonstrated that when Chicanxs are tied to New Mexico spiritually, they form a diverse culture, which reflects the diverse geographical formations of New Mexico. Also, it can be said that establishing the setting of the novel in such diverse lands contributes to the process of transculturation which is to create a unity in diversities.

Seemingly, *Tortuga* has two kinds of settings which can be categorized as the land in which Tortuga lived before the accident and the land where he is admitted to the hospital when he is paralyzed. On the other hand, *Tortuga* does not show the conflicts between different lands as explicitly as does *Bless Me, Ultima*. There is no reference to the village in which Tortuga had lived with his family in the past before he got paralyzed. Although another village, in which Tortuga stays in the hospital after being paralyzed, is mentioned, this village, namely Agua Bendita, is not compared or contrasted to the former one. That is, whereas *Bless Me, Ultima* shows the panoramic view of the different lands to create and deconstruct the opposites and the conflicts in terms of culture, religion and physical land, *Tortuga* uses the contrast between a hospital building and a healing Mountain nearby to resolve the protagonist's physical disability, which also metaphorically expresses a form of cultural disability.

The diverse natural setting of New Mexico is revealed by the protagonists through their descriptions of the particular landscape. In *Bless Me, Ultima*, Antonio draws a picture

of the Llano which is transformed into a rich, empowering, mythical, magical and enchanting place. It is important to note that this metamorphosis happens at a crucial time when he first encounters Ultima. As an embodiment of an ancient land, Ultima plays a role which is to introduce the beauties of the land to Antonio. For example, the first impressions of Antonio depict the connection between the land itself and Ultima when she touches his hands. He says:

I felt the power of a whirlwind sweep around me. Her eyes swept the surrounding hills and through them I saw for the first time the wild beauty of our hills and the magic of the green river. My nostrils quivered as I felt the song of the mockingbirds and the drone of the grasshoppers mingle with the pulse of the earth. The four directions of the Llano met in me, and the white sun shone on my soul. The granules of sand at my feet and the sun and sky above me seemed to dissolve into one strange, complete being. (Anaya, 1994, p.12)

This quotation shows the powerful imagery of the Llano in which Antonio perceives various natural beauties. His mood is not pessimistic; rather, he discovers even the inspirational essence of the desert on the Llano plains. Wherever he looks, he sees diverse elements of nature that complete one another in a harmonious way. Metaphorically speaking, this diversity points to the potential of an equally diverse nature in Antonio's developing hybrid cultural identity which is a mix of Indian and Spanish backgrounds. Antonio reconciles with the diversity of nature as is clear in the quotation above. This metaphorically implies that he will restore a harmony with his bicultural heritage from his parents through the Llano.

Anaya explains the impact of the Llano on its people with reference to *Bless Me, Ultima*: "And always there is the interplay of people on the stage of life with the elements of nature—and the Llano itself working through the people, changing the people, finally making the people who they are" (as cited in Bruce-Novoa, 1980, p.185). It is important to note that throughout the story, Ultima, the curandera and Antonio's father, Gabriel Márez, representatives of a pagan heritage, are associated with the Llano for various reasons. These figures share a similar background because they are both defined by where they are from; the Llano. This points out that the Llano is fictionally realized as pagan land. Anaya seems to integrate pagan elements not just with the intention of praising and celebrating pagan heritage but also for the purpose of deconstructing Anglo-Americans' imposed point of view toward Chicaxs. This piece of literature presents a kind of self-bolstering image of the homeland that fosters the cultivation of a hybrid identity and shields against the demeaning attitudes of Anglo-Americans. In this way, Chicaxs have the chance to speak against the

metropolitan culture which actually tries to assimilate them, or to exclude them as if Chicanxs did not belong in the Southwest. Thus, it can be argued that Antonio gains the power to re-imagine Llano, New Mexico as his homeland, which also helps him to reconcile his bicultural background. Besides, the writer tries to give the message that if the character Antonio can do this, so can the Chicanx readers of the novel.

Further, the beauties of the land, such as hill and river, merge into the magic of Ultima. It is clear that Antonio's stance is transformed by Ultima who simultaneously wields spiritual, magical and physical power throughout the narrative. This image of the folk healer identifies New Mexico as a symbolic place for Chicanx people. This is the promise of the Aztlán myth in the hands of Anaya, a creation that allows people to lay spiritual claim to lands in which they have been labeled as aliens and outsiders. Similarly, in *Tortuga*, a volcanic mountain streaming holy water becomes an enchanting place for which Chicanxs hunger. Therefore, *Bless Me, Ultima* looks at the land from a panoramic perspective while *Tortuga* zooms in on the narrow view of the Tortuga Mountain seen through the hospital window. *Tortuga* does at times offer the panoramic view as it describes the desert and the holy water. However, again, it zooms in and focuses closely on the mountain.

While Tortuga journeys into the desert, he describes it in a pessimistic way. Although the ambulance driver talks about their destination and the mountain optimistically, Tortuga cannot understand him. Later, as Tortuga examines the mountain in careful detail, he conveys his inner thoughts about the mountain. He is sometimes deeply affected by it. Of course, he is only able to create the image of the mountain with the help of other characters such as folk healers. Ismelda is a folk healer figure like Ultima, but with one difference. She is portrayed as a young and attractive woman who appeals to Tortuga sexually whereas Ultima is portrayed more like a nanny and grandmother. Yet, knowledge and wisdom are attributed to Ismelda as they are to Ultima. While Tortuga is expressing his ideas and feelings about Ismelda, he uses natural imagery to describe the mountain and her. For example, while Ismelda is telling the story of the mountain, his internal monologue reveals: "I looked at her and saw the image of the mountain swimming in her dark eyes" (Anaya, 2000, p.58). In a similar way, in *Bless Me, Ultima*, Antonio thinks: "Her eyes swept the surrounding hills and through them I saw for the first time the wild beauty of our hills and the magic of the green river" (Anaya, 1994, p.12). Hence, Antonio and Tortuga see the natural imagery with the eyes of curanderas, which creates a powerful connection with the land and engages a mythic perception of place.

Eyes, which are associated with vision, are an important motif in the novel. They symbolize perception, awareness, observation, and also knowledge about one's self. Ultima's and Ismelda's eyes reflect the beautiful, magical land which reinforce the myth of Aztlán. The healers' eyes reflect this dreamland because they are the visionaries and the spiritual guides of the Chicana folk culture. This leads to considering the Aztlán as an ideal land more than a mere place. Through the use of the motif of eyes, Anaya also creates a mental image that inspires a collective spirit of their Aztec heritage. A magical land in which all the Chicana people live in peace and harmony together also appeals to the imagination of Chicana readers. In that sense the motif of the eyes conveyed through the description of the protagonists and the healers is very significant. One's imagination is also added to this literary dimension because Anaya describes the ideal image of New Mexico in which Chicana people inhabit so that the reader can see it in their mind's eye. For example, when Ismelda talks about the mountain, one captures a clear image of this land:

Her words created a sleepy silence in the sun-flooded room. No one spoke. Strands of golden sunlight wove us together, wove us into the time of the hill and the river and the shell of the mountain. Over us the blue sky flowed like water, a palpable magnetic stream which spilled over its edges and flooded the earth with its intensity. We dreamed, each one of us woven into the same dream, dreaming of a time when the mountain would rise and walk and we would follow it north, saved by its holy water. (Anaya, 2000, p.59)

When Ismelda describes the mountain, she creates a dreamy atmosphere in which Tortuga creates the image of a moving and healing mountain. It insinuates that the protagonist will get rid of his paralysis and will be free if the mountain myth is realized. This also implies the resolution of his fractured identity.

Ismelda's massage is accompanied by her song of love and peace. He thinks: "Her touch was magic. Her supple fingers rubbed life into my tired nerves. She sang a song and made my eyelids heavy with sleep" (Anaya, 2000, p.128). These actions make Tortuga so relaxed that he finds himself in a dreamy atmosphere in which he relates Ismelda to the mountain. His internal monologue proves that he is lost in a daydream:

It was a song of peace... of love, a song which erased the dread of time and the past which had haunted me... Her long, dark hair wove a web, a web of dream in which I rested... from which I could see the waters of the mountain flowing into the river and winding their way south towards the sea... and the people of the water and the golden fish played in the gentle water. (Anaya, 2000, p.128)

Instead of eyes, here one can see the image of hair which is connected to the land. Through the efforts of Ismelda, Tortuga can imagine the landscape with its formations. She will help him heal. Thus, in both novels folk healers really seem to be attached to nature to the degree that they become a spiritual link to that mythic state associated with the land and are used to create the idea of Aztlán. Anaya re-imagines not just a piece of physical land but also treats it as a living being which has a soul. In that soul, he finds his own cultural products, which are not only the ones that belong to Spanish and Anglo-Americans but also the one that belongs to Indians.

The focus is on how the writer reshapes Chicana identity by pointing out various lands in New Mexico and establishing the homeland in *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Tortuga*. Such a Native homeland, represented by the land of Aztecs, symbolizes healing, regeneration and identity. Only through the guidance of the folk healers will it be possible to familiarize the indigenous community with the land and its diverse nature. New Mexico also unites the protagonists spiritually and helps them gain an awareness of being a part of the Chicana community. In this way, protagonists grow up, lead a harmonious life, and ultimately feel a sense of belonging to that land. Therefore, those magical lands in a diverse natural environment contribute to the eventual formation of the protagonists' identities. This diversity can reveal multiplicity and plurality, which help protagonists reconcile with these various elements and form their new identities.

CHAPTER 4

THE ROLE OF CURANDERAS IN CHICANX IDENTITY FORMATION

In earlier chapters, the problematized identities were dealt with and then the discussion focused on the ways Native wisdom and healing were evoked with a particular reference to issues of myth and land in the light of transculturation, the contact zone and the Aztlán myth. This chapter will deal in depth with the central concept of curanderismo which is crucial to Anaya's strategy of portraying powerful female curanderas, who represent the embodiment of Native culture. These curanderas are effective in the formation of a Chicano identity in *Bless Me*, *Ultima* and *Tortuga*, as well.

While carrying out Anaya's central attention to female healers, this chapter will show the strong connection between the protagonist and the folk healer. Further, it will indicate a robust relationship with the perceptions of feminism and post-colonialism and such relationship can be of a higher importance for Anaya's goal of empowering female Chicana identity.

In addition to the Chicano Movement of the 1960s, the second wave feminist movement was also taking place in the same years and Anaya was influenced by the outcomes of the feminist movement as well. These two movements are closely connected because they both revolt against oppressive ideologies. In this respect, it can be claimed that these two movements also engage in a contact zone.

Colonial ideology categorizes Indians as feminine and the colonized, while the Spanish are portrayed as male and the colonizers. This confirms the interrelatedness of the concepts of postcolonial and feminist ideas which are also tied to each other in Anaya's fiction. Thus, as this chapter establishes, Anaya subverts this binary opposition in his novels and deconstructs the hierarchically constructed relations between Indian women and Spanish men, which dates back to Spanish colonial times. In other words, he plays with the notion of machista which originally refers to the disproportionate Spanish male power. The connection between Spanish and Judeo-Christian culture is clear as Vigil (2012) acknowledges: "Spanish customs under the Catholic Church definitely granted power and authority to the patriarch" (p.170). Therefore, Anaya tries to deconstruct the excessive male power of the Spanish and the Judeo-Christian culture which suppressed the figure of the powerful woman.

In addition, *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Tortuga* can be read as manifestations of Anaya's literary stance towards the white male dominant Anglo-American culture. In this sense, it seems possible to classify Anglo-Americans as the male colonizers whereas the Chicanxs are the colonized female. Anaya in his novels gives voice to Chicanxs rather than to Anglo-Americans by bestowing Chicanxs both physical and imaginary space. Anglo-Americans can be seen as token characters. That is, it can be said that Anglo-Americans are so invisible in the novels that they scarcely play a role as important characters.

Moreover, Anaya disempowers Anglo-Americans on purpose since he intends to dismantle the Anglo-American structures of male dominance and privileges the female power attributed to Natives. That is to say, it is demonstrated that Spanish priests as representatives of the Spanish colonial mentality and Anglo-American doctors as embodiments of Anglo-American colonialism are not enough by themselves to heal the protagonists in both novels. Rather, curanderas, who are representative of Native roots, are seen as a great opportunity to help them heal. Anaya's powerful representation of curanderas consolidates the image of ethnic identity which Chicane cultural nationalists regard as a necessary element of identity. Therefore, Anaya as a representative of the literary side of the Chicano Movement, tries to consolidate Chicane identity which seemed to be an urgent need in the 1960s and 1970s to counter the pressures of assimilation to Anglo-American norms. Anaya (2017) himself presents the necessity of such consolidation in his article "A Homeland without Boundaries": "the absorption of the Chicano into the mainstream American culture was occurring so quickly that unless we reestablished the covenants of our ancestors, our culture was threatened with extinction" (p.37). In a way, he guides Chicane people to go back to their indigenous roots which is a way of protecting them from being assimilated into mainstream America.

The term *curanderismo* has been commonly used by Chicane scholars. Lexically, the words *curanderismo* and *curandera/o* go back to the same etymological origin (Torres, 2006). They come from the Spanish verb *curar* which means to heal (Torres, 2006). *Curanderismo* refers to folk healing (Torres, 2006) or a holistic medical system, which concerns the "whole person, body and soul" (Avila & Parker, 1999, p.44) and *curandera* is a female folk healer in Chicane culture (Torres, 2006).

The *curandera* is thought to be the "high-tech doctor" of pagan times. That is, she had an important duty to heal people even though she had no technological equipment as developed as today's. She can even be considered more broadly effective than modern

doctors⁵³ because she has a wide and deep knowledge in various topics such as nature, spirits, health, and the like. Elisio Torres (2006) observes this and relates that, for centuries, a folk healer has been curing many psychological illnesses which could not be acknowledged by modern or “formal” healing institutions that only later on realize the value of holistic treatment (p.15). Also, Anaya (2009) who supports Torres’ argument and compares the folk healer to a shaman, contrasts folk medicine with modern treatment in his *The Essays*: “A component in our belief system has to do with the role of the soul, or spirit, and its illnesses. This component does not exist in the view of modern medicine, and it is quite different in its basis and in its practice from the view psychiatry holds” (p.182). In a way, he tries to put emphasis on the importance of the soul and spirit and its difference from modern medicine in his representation of curanderismo. From Anaya and Torres’ words, it can be concluded that the power of spirituality is one of the strongest characteristics of Native healing methods, and Chicana culture seems to be proud of having inherited it.

In addition to being like a psychologist, a curandera can be regarded as a polymath who is an herbalist (*yerbera*), mentor, mediator, masseur (*sobadora*), midwife (*partera*) and storyteller (*la cuentacuentos*) at the same time (Torres, 2006, p.13). She touches people’s lives from the beginning at their birth ceremony, in which she often participates as a midwife. Therefore, she demonstrates a familiarity with human anatomy. Moreover, her knowledge about herbs and plants comes from her familiarity with nature. She applies these products of nature to physically and psychologically ill people. These make her both a physical and spiritual healer at the same time.

Furthermore, she treats illnesses by applying massage techniques to ease a patient’s tense body. Furthermore, she is interested in people’s choices which can be hard for them to make. She tries to lead the way for the desperate ones who seek help. She is, in a way, considered to be a guide and mentor who can be consulted. Moreover, she tells stories to open a new path for those who search for something in which they can believe. In addition to this, a curandera displays a mediator’s role and tries to solve the conflicts between people in her society and to reconcile opposing ideas. Therefore, the mission of a curandera is to establish peace and harmony in the body and spirit of the person as well as in her society. Anaya portrays all of these characteristics in his novels, which inform the reader about the Chicana folk tradition of the curandera. Respectively, *Ultima* and *Ismelda*, who, as

⁵³ The reason for such a statement is the representation of modern doctors in *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Tortuga*. They fail; they cannot cure ill people in either novel. Folk healers are more successful.

representatives of the Native heritage of Chicanxs, can be considered the embodiments of those characteristics mentioned above.⁵⁴

In *Bless Me, Ultima*, in the medical situations where the Catholic priest and Anglo-American formal medicine fail, “the *curandera* (medicine woman) of the New Mexican *Llano*” Ultima, who is Antonio’s midwife, appears as an alternative healer (Kanoza, 2002, p.52). Later on, Antonio gets over his cultural and religious conflicts with the help of Ultima, who both introduces to him the various herbs and plants of New Mexico which have diverse natures, and also treats him with them. Antonio is usually involved in the healing ceremonies practiced by Ultima who instructs Antonio to witness them. Furthermore, she usually listens to Antonio when he is in need of her and tries to open the way for his development in his rites of passage. In order to broaden Antonio’s imagination and enforce his creativity, she sometimes tells stories the way that the bards and gleemen of the pagan times do. Therefore, in terms of these aspects, Ultima contributes to his healing process which coincides with the formation of his new Chicano identity.

Unlike *Bless Me, Ultima*, *Tortuga* only acknowledges the Catholic background of both the disabled protagonist Tortuga and his parents through Tortuga’s dreams, which reveals that Catholicism alone is not a solution for his healing. Also, medical personnel such as Dr. Steel, the physical therapist K.C., the aides Ismelda and Josefa, are more clearly depicted than medical personnel in *Bless Me, Ultima* since the story of *Tortuga* takes place in a Crippled Children’s Hospital. Despite all of this medical support, the person who influences the protagonist Tortuga to the greatest degree, is portrayed as an attractive young nurse and folk healer, Ismelda. Tortuga is cured by Ismelda, who brings the healing water of the magical mountain to him. She gives Tortuga a massage with her magical touch. Besides, she is good at telling stories which change Tortuga’s perspective about life. During this process, Tortuga falls in love with her, which will contribute to his healing as well. The end of the story implies that Tortuga is free from his body cast and paralysis, resulting in his finding a new identity. His new Chicano identity is illustrated through his memories in which Catholic and pagan elements are mixed.

To begin with, the old folk healer and nanny-like figure Ultima is introduced when she comes to stay in Antonio’s house in Guadalupe County, New Mexico. She is often referred to as ‘*la Grande*’ which indicates the person of higher importance in terms of both age and

⁵⁴ Although there are various kinds of folk healers and similar characters in both novels, this thesis mostly focuses on Ultima in *Bless Me, Ultima* and Ismelda in *Tortuga*. The reason is that the protagonists are influenced and shaped by them to a great extent.

wisdom (Anaya, 1994, p.4). Antonio, who is both the protagonist and the first-person narrator of *Bless Me, Ultima*, remembers Ultima and describes her in detail when he meets her for the first time: “She wrapped the black shawl around her hair and shoulders. Her face was brown and much wrinkled. When she smiled her teeth were brown” (Anaya, 1994, p.11). Since Antonio’s family is anxious about her as an old woman in difficulty, her old age is an apparent reason to invite Ultima to their house. Another reason is that the mother, Maria, wants to compensate Ultima for her past favors. Therefore, it can be inferred that, although the mother conforms to the rules of Catholicism, she is not prejudiced against Ultima, the representative of paganism. In contrast, Maria always shows respect to Ultima. This points at the idea that the relationship between characters who are the representatives of different belief systems also present the possibility of hybridity, which can be a sign of a negotiation between opposite ideas.

As for *Tortuga*, the involvement of the young folk healer Ismelda in the story seems to occur in a different way. When Tortuga arrives at the hospital, he is admitted to the Receiving Room in which he encounters Ismelda for the first time. She is introduced as a young girl acting as a nurse’s aide who is responsible for taking care of kids, making beds, sweeping floors, and the like (Anaya, 2000, p.8). Tortuga, who is both the protagonist and the first-person narrator of *Tortuga*, describes Ismelda: “She had a warm smile. Her dark eyes and long hair set off the most beautiful oval face I had ever seen. She was about my age, maybe a little older, but dressed in the white uniform of a nurse’s aide” (Anaya, 2000, p.8).

Hence, the descriptions of Ultima and Ismelda are contrasted with each other. The dark image of the aged Ultima is replaced by the young and beautiful image of Ismelda. Therefore, it can be concluded that Ultima can be compared to the grandmother figure of Antonio and he loves Ultima the way he loves his old grandparents. Clearly, Antonio respects Ultima and is charmed by her wisdom and old age. He is attracted to Ultima spiritually, but Tortuga falls in love with Ismelda and dreams about her because he is attracted to her both physically and spiritually. Therefore, it is clear that he is sexually drawn to Ismelda who also heals him with her love.

Despite the fact that Ultima and Ismelda seem to be two opposite figures in physical appearances, they can be said to be parts of a cycle. While the former can represent dark, winter and ancient wisdom as an old midwife, the latter can be the symbol of light, spring and rebirth of ancient wisdom in the third book of the trilogy. The death of old Ultima at the end of *Bless Me, Ultima* insinuates that her spirit still lives as young Ismelda in *Tortuga*, in

the last book of the trilogy. Anaya seems to synthesize these qualities to paint a full picture of the curandera figure for the purpose of hybridizing them, making whole and celebrating the strength of both.

In this sense, this proposes the two poles of the eternal feminine archetypes, Demeter and Persephone, the mother goddess and the maiden goddess, two types and degrees of power that mirror the natural cycle of the seasons. Ultima can be the metaphorical representation of Demeter, who is regarded as the goddess of harvest, agriculture, fertility in Greek mythology. However, Ismelda can be read as Demeter's daughter, Persephone, whose ascendance from the underworld to the world heralds the season of rebirth (Keller, 1988). Thus, the association of seasons with Ultima and Ismelda helps link them with Persephone who represents the division of the seasonal cycle in Western mythology.

Additionally, such a cyclical seasonal representation can be traced back to a Native American perspective of time, seeing life as a sequence of ever-returning stages rather than a linear path to completion. This circular structure contrasts with the European concept of relentless forward progress towards a goal. The reason Anaya highlights the varieties of female spiritual power can stem from his aim of reconsidering the outlook of Native cultures which is frequently inclusive and expansive as opposed to exclusive and limiting by classification and binary logic.

Apart from physical appearance, it is also possible to note physical and imagined space. The physical space that gives meaning to the being of the curandera is represented differently. The young folk healer Ismelda shows her magical skills under the title of nurse's aide and therefore she is represented as a more institutionalized folk healer since she practices her profession at the hospital. In the novel, inside the hospital, she visits children's wards and accompanies them, but her physical space is not limited to the hospital. It is expanded to the outer world of nature, the physical setting of Agua Bendita and the hills in which she lives. She integrates her knowledge of healing derived from pagan sources into the hospital environment. For instance, she uses the curative power of the water from the Tortuga Mountain which is acknowledged as a pagan source. While reading the text, one can expect Ismelda to use modern medicine but there seems no implication of that; she accepts its definition of healing. Rather, by the word medicine, she means the water of the mountain. In contrast, Ultima is not part of such a well-established system which defines her responsibilities. She is represented as the mentor of Antonio and nanny who helps Antonio's mother in household chores. However, Ultima's role as a healer is not solely spatialized in Antonio's house, but is also open to the exterior world. She visits other villages in the Llano

plain and conducts rituals in nature throughout the neighborhood. These are the physical spaces that represent the world of verisimilitude in the novels.

On the other hand, the novelistic space or imagined space, which was created by Anaya by means of the protagonists, represents a zone beyond the world of verisimilitude in the novel. Although the protagonists' physical location differs from one novel to the other, the space of the protagonists' imaginations shares common ground for both *Ultima* and *Ismelda*. This space can give a diagram or schematic of more abstract ideas of power, the spread and scope of ideas and the physical map of a route to healing. That is to say, *Ultima* and *Ismelda* are constructed by the physical location in which they live. Likewise, the concept of the folk healer is constituted by the imaginary space of the protagonists via *Ultima* and *Ismelda*. The representations of the folk healers described within the protagonists' imaginary spaces do not signify a definite spatiality.

Here, in his imagined space, Anaya delineates a wide range of female healers who are located in various physical spaces. He combines home, hospital, outer world, nature, and hybridized versions of these physical spaces breathe new life into the female healers. In each novel, these hybridized spaces also form a circular pattern which marks the healer's movement and contribution as a healer to one other. Broadly, these two novels propose circularity which ties folk healing to the modern medical institution represented by the hospital, as well.

While discussing the hospital setting in *Tortuga*, Anglo-American medicine is represented by the minor figure of a male doctor, Dr. Steel. Zooming in on *Ismelda* rather than Dr. Steel, whom this thesis regards as the embodiment of the Anglo-American colonizer and dominant male power, and giving more space and power to *Ismelda* to heal, shows Anaya's intention of subverting colonialism and male supremacy.

Apart from the different locations with which each of the folk healers is associated, the relationship between these folk healers and nature also contributes to the construction of the *curandera* concept. In particular, the relationship between *Ultima* and nature sharply defines the image of the *curandera*. In ancient cultures, particularly with reference to the pagan era, there have always been some connections between folk healers and nature. Dyan Donnelly (1974) acknowledges this connection and portrays *Ultima* as "a pantheistic priestess, good witch of the South, earth mother, life force and universal spirit" (p.115). That is to say, folk healers used to be seen as agents of nature. They are even considered to be the embodiment of nature from which they benefit and provide benefits to others. To use nature for the benefit of human beings, *curanderas* must be familiar with nature and have a deep

knowledge about it. Also, they have to know how to make use of natural products such as herbs, plants, trees, mineral water and the like, in order to cope with evil supernatural beings and to heal people. In this regard, *Bless Me*, *Ultima* and *Tortuga* share such curanderas who are tied to the specific local ecosystems in which they live. They are similar to the local spirits, *genii*, or *genius loci* in the Roman pagan system since each local feature of nature may be governed by a deity in this system. Likewise, Native Americans, who regarded land as organic, believed that land formations have their own governing spirits, too (Cousins, 1996, p.500). Thus, *Ultima* and *Ismelda*, embodiments of paganism, can be likened to the “spirits of place.” As a result, they are closely acquainted with nature and its fruits which are instrumental in the healing process of the characters in the novels⁵⁵. Antonio reveals his renewed idea of nature, and how *Ultima* guides and helps him discover it:

I learned from her that there was a beauty in the time of day and in the time of night, and that there was peace in the river and in the hills. She taught me to listen to the mystery of the groaning earth and to feel complete in the fulfillment of its time. My soul grew under her careful guidance. I had been afraid of the awful presence of the river, which was the soul of the river, but through her I learned that my spirit shared in the spirit of all things. (Anaya, 1994, p. 15)

Similarly, In *Tortuga*, being represented as a knowledgeable healer connected to the physical nature in which she lives, *Ismelda* describes the lively and diverse nature of the desert to *Tortuga*:

Like the mountain, the desert seems barren at first, but it isn't. When you look close you can see the life which lives in it: small, hardy plants which hang on for dear life, cactus which blooms in bright, lush colors, lizards and birds which look like the color of the landscape ... in the desert you have to look closely to find life, but it's there. Just like it is on the mountain. All these places around here were once so holy. (Anaya, 2000, p.165)

Yet, *Tortuga* still differs from *Bless Me*, *Ultima* in terms of the means by which *Ismelda* heals the protagonist, *Tortuga*. *Ismelda* is familiar with the magical water or “turtle pee” of the *Tortuga* Mountain which is seen from the window of *Tortuga*'s room in the hospital. As *Ismelda* transmits the mystical and mythical power of the mountain through its elixir-like water, “The water itself, which emerges from the rivers of healing mineral water beneath *Tortuga* Mountain, softens the protagonist's cast, thus aiding in the transformation

⁵⁵ Although the folk healers help some characters in both novels, this chapter will primarily consider the protagonists.

of Tortuga from a 'turtle' into a man, and baptizes the boy with the sacred power of nature" (Wesley, 1997, p.63). Therefore, Tortuga has an epiphany in which he comes to realize the beauty in nature: "I followed her gaze and through her eyes I saw the beauty she described, the beauty I had not seen until that moment" (Anaya, 2000, p.166).

On the other hand, in this regard, the old curandera, Ultima is represented as an herbalist who has vast knowledge about herbs and plants, especially those endemic to the Llano, New Mexico. Her knowledge about herbs and plants is revealed through her wandering in the Llano with Antonio and through her healing ceremonies. Chapter four, entitled '*Cuatro*' in *Bless Me, Ultima*, alerts the reader to the extent of Ultima's expertise on the rich variety of herbs and plants in the Llano. The herbs and plants Ultima introduces to Antonio are *yerba del manso*, *orégano*, *oshá* and *manzanilla*. When Ultima introduces such herbs and plants, she first demonstrates the ritual of communicating with them. Then, she teaches Antonio how he should touch and collect them.

It can be concluded that Ultima presents herbs and plants as vibrant and lively spirits. Antonio describes how Ultima instructs him: "She would lead me to the plant her owl-eyes had found and ask me to observe where the plant grew and how its leaves looked. 'Now touch it,' she would say" (Anaya, 1994, p.39). Ultima's eyes are compared to those of an owl which is known to have sharp eyes and a penetrating vision. That is, Ultima is good at detecting plants with her eyes and also possesses wisdom, which is associated with owls:

For Ultima, even the plants had a spirit, and before I dug she made me speak to the plant and tell it why we pulled it from its home in the earth. "You that grow well here in the arroyo by the dampness of the river, we lift you to make good medicine," Ultima intoned softly and I found myself repeating after her. Then I would carefully dig out the plant, taking care not to let the steel of the shovel touch the tender roots. (Anaya, 1994, p.39)

As is clear from Ultima's words, even to pull out a plant is a ceremonial event in which she needs to inform the plant itself. Thus, one can infer that herbs and plants are vital to the folk healer who contributes to the creation of the magical Aztlán land, the nursery of mysterious and healing plants.

Also, Ultima instructs Antonio about the plants' medicinal value. The first plant mentioned is *yerba del manso* which "could cure burns, sores, piles, colic in babies, bleeding dysentery and even rheumatism" (Anaya, 1994, pp.39-40). The second one, which Antonio has already encountered, is *orégano* which "was not only a cure for coughs and fever but a spice my mother used for beans and meat" (Anaya, 1994, p.40). The third one is *oshá* which

grows better in the mountains. It is like la yerba del manso, a cure for everything. It cures coughs or colds, cuts and bruises, rheumatism and stomach troubles, and my father once said the old sheepherders used it to keep poisonous snakes away from their bedrolls by sprinkling them with oshá powder. It was with a mixture of oshá that Ultima washed my face and arms and feet the night Lupito was killed. (Anaya, 1994, p.40)

The last one is manzanilla. As Antonio says, “Ultima told me that when my brother Leon was born that his mollera was sunken in, and that she had cured him with manzanilla” (Anaya, 1994, p.42). These diverse herbs and plants have various functions which Antonio learns from Ultima. The Llano Plains gather together herbs, plants and roots which are represented as a “magic harvest” (Anaya, 1994, p.39). As Thomas A. Bauder states, plants are permeated with power in Native American cultures, and Ultima, the representative of Native culture, uses this power to heal (as cited in Holton, 1995, p.49).

As a part of Antonio’s healing ceremony, Ultima sometimes prepares a drink that makes him relaxed and sleepy. Even though she does not always apply medicinal herbs to Antonio, his involvement in other people’s healing process is a part of his treatment. For instance, he witnesses the healing ritual of his uncle, Lucas. Lucas is believed to be cursed by brujas (witches) named the Trementina sisters because he challenged them with a cross during their satanic rituals. Since modern medicine and the priest fail to heal Lucas, family members want Ultima to cure him. The child Antonio, who is raised Catholic by his mother, compares: “Would the magic of Ultima be stronger than all the powers of the saints and the Holy Mother Church?” (Anaya, 1994, 97). While Antonio witnesses Ultima’s preparations for the healing ceremony, he embarks on his process of questioning which is primarily about Catholicism versus Native spirituality. He thinks: “The power of the doctors and the power of the church had failed to cure my uncle. Now everyone depended on Ultima’s magic. Was it possible that there was more power in Ultima’s magic than in the priest?” (Anaya, 1994, p. 99). In contrast to his mother, Ultima opens the way for him to think about them critically. This implicitly leads to the failure of modern medicine which can be linked to Anglo-Americans’ way of treatment. Also, people consult the priest and doctors first whereas they see Ultima as the last alternative. Antonio’s way of thinking subverts this hierarchal order in which the church as a decision maker is represented at the top. Instead, Anaya gives Ultima the chance to speak for her society by getting her to be involved in the healing which was not accomplished by the power of Spanish Catholic church or Anglo-American modern medicine.

During the healing ceremony of Lucas, Ultima wants Antonio to watch the process and help her. She prepares a drink which is a mix of various herbs and forces Lucas to drink it. After drinking this mixture, Lucas vomits a green bile and then a huge ball of hair (Anaya, 1994, p.103). Simultaneously, Antonio is affected by this ritual and feels as if he were in a dream. Also, he feels the pain his uncle feels (Anaya, 1994, p.100). Ultima offers Antonio blue atole or blue corn meal which is sacred to Indians (Anaya, 1994, p.98). He vomits poisonous green bile and feels renewed (Anaya, 1994, p.102). The healing ceremony is completed; that is, the curse on Lucas is removed. Since she can break the spell on Lucas, Antonio's belief in Catholicism begins to get weaker and weaker. This is probably one of the reasons that Antonio does not accept his mother's expectations of religion. Since he witnesses that Ultima, has the ability to heal someone who cannot be cured by a priest, he needs to search for other possibilities. Also, Ultima uses herbs to make a scapular and wants Antonio to wear it around his neck. She thinks it will protect him. Representing Ultima as such a pagan figure also metaphorically serves Anaya's purpose of reappropriating Aztlán in his novel (Lattin 629). He emphasizes what is disregarded, namely Native spirituality, as Ultima enables Antonio to enter "the ancient mythic understanding of existence" (Lattin 631).

Instead of focusing on herbs and plants, *Tortuga* acknowledges the curandera, Ismelda, who has both mythicized and historicized knowledge about the magical water of the Tortuga Mountain. Besides, there are other characters such as another aide, Josefa, an ambulance driver, Filomon, a storyteller patient, Salomon, who present the water's story based on a mythical and historical perspective.

Although Filomon talks about the magical mountain and the water on the way to the hospital, the first time Tortuga drinks the magical water of the mountain coincides with the first time that he meets Ismelda at the hospital. After Tortuga tastes it, he feels good and says: "tastes strong." Ismelda responds: "The water of the mountain is strong" and goes on: "that's because it's full of good medicine" (Anaya, 2000, p.9). It is clear that Ismelda has knowledge about the benefits of the water. Besides, she behaves like a modern doctor and presents the water as a medicine to Tortuga. It is different from *Bless Me, Ultima* in this aspect, and it is worth noting that Tortuga responds to an apparently more medical introduction to folk healing and myth. As is mentioned previously, extending the scope of the physical terrain of the folk healer, the writer seems to challenge modern medicine via depicting a female healer through her folk remedy at the hospital. He also re-constructs the psychic terrain of the protagonists and the reader by showing the powerful female image of

the healer who will contribute to Tortuga's healing in the greatest degree. At a figurative level, embellishing these Native healers with power and vigor, women's knowledge and abilities seem more respected in Anaya's depiction of Native traditions. Additionally, he decentralizes the notion of Spanish and Anglo-American patriarchy whereas he permits "powerless" Indian females to display their energized role on stage.

This shows the strong connection between Ismelda and the water which is implicitly shown to be used for the healing of Tortuga. Josefa affirms the power of the mineral water and she implicitly criticizes modern doctors who are represented as not very knowledgeable about the power of the mineral water as curanderas:

it's that strong! But the doctors don't know it. They say it's the minerals in the water—Bah! If it's just the minerals in the water why don't they pour those minerals into their bathtubs and take their baths at home, eh? Because it's more than just the minerals!" She paused and looked out the window. "It's the power of the mountain ... the power in our sleeping brother ... just waiting. (Anaya, 2000, pp.58-59)

Therefore, the curandera opposes the image of the Anglo-American doctor who despises the water's magic, which is seemingly of utmost importance for curanderas in both novels. Contrasting these two figures, therefore, Anaya actually leads to consideration along the lines of what kind of healing and healer will be triumphant. Moreover, the organization of the plot of both novels even contributes to the idea of prioritizing the female curanderas who are emphasized through their healing powers. However, it can be said that doctors have a function of being inadequate and passive which makes them foil-like characters who highlight the powerful and active image of the curanderas. Margarite Fernández Olmos (1999) supports this contention: "when the folk and Native-American traditions of healing and spirituality are compared in *Tortuga* to conventional Anglo medical technology and institutionalized religions, the latter come up short" (p.78).

Throughout the narratives, the healing of the protagonists will be successful to the greatest degree owing to the curanderas, "Josefa's and Ismelda's natural folk remedies, their 'strong medicine'" (Anaya, 2000, p.9). Those remedies are more than the hospital's "sterile approach," which can be considered twice whether this serves Anaya's aim of re-positioning curandera figures as deeply rooted in Chicana culture (Fernández Olmos, 1999, p.78). Thus, Anaya illustrates that the Tortuga Mountain is the great source for constructing the image of such magical water. This powerful representation of the mountain can be associated with the

aim of Anaya, who emphasizes the pagan rituals of Indian culture, and thereby, highlighting a distinctive heritage beyond the conception and control of Anglo-Americans.

In addition, generally, mountains are seen as holy sites and revered by the people who consider them as grand and majestic, particularly in reference to pagan frame of thought. Mountains are high up, closer to the spiritual world. In Native American thought, “the beings who inhabit the land are not thought of as gods and goddesses who rule over the mountains or rivers. Rather, they are the mountains and rivers” (Cousins, 1996, p.500). As can be seen, Ismelda knows the significance of the Tortuga Mountain, regarded as a holy site. It shows that she connects to a spiritual power. Chicanxs coming from Indian origin can have a spiritual relationship with mountains from which they believe blessings may come. It can be concluded that the Tortuga Mountain is the counterpart of the God of Catholicism in *Tortuga*. The folk healers, Ismelda and Josefa, and the patients gather around the mountain and perform a pagan-like ceremony which contributes to the healing of the protagonist. Similarly, Antonio and Tortuga’s Catholic mothers pray to God and practice certain rituals. Here, the mountain turns into a holy being which can be likened to the symbolic Mexico Catholic altar decorated with the figure of the Virgin. Paganism and Catholicism seem different in terms of different associations in both novel; yet, the Mountain and the God stand for the holiness of either beliefs.

The Tortuga Mountain in *Tortuga* can be compared to the Llano which is associated with both the curandera figure and the plants. In the same way, the Tortuga Mountain can be related to its water and the curandera, Ismelda. Also, in terms of descriptions of the Llano, Antonio draws the picture as a “wonderland,” a depiction that underlines the fact that his healing process is nearly completed. Similarly, when Tortuga grasps the power of the Tortuga Mountain and describes it in positive terms, he, in a way, portrays it as a wonderland which has a healing and uniting power. In his dream, Tortuga reveals what he constructs: “I made my way slowly towards the mountain, and when I was there I found the secret ponds and springs at the foot of the mountain. A ring of young girls danced around the water...they sang and danced like the group of first communion girls who had shared my holy communion so many years ago... when I was only a child” (Anaya, 2000, p.21). As is clear from this quotation, Tortuga remembers his childhood which shows that he received a Catholic education. Also, in his dream, he makes a connection between the mountain, the water and the Holy Communion. Whereas Holy Communion is a representative of Catholicism, the Tortuga Mountain and its water can be considered as the expression of pagan idea. This dream, which can be symbolically an utterance of the idea of an unusual trinity such as the

mountain, water and communion girls, shows that Catholic and pagan elements are integrated. In other words, it tries to show how Tortuga combines the opposite elements unintentionally. His subconscious is revealed through this dream in which he is involved in the transculturation process. Therefore, this dream can be taken into account as a proof for the transculturation process which destroys cultural oppositions.

Tortuga continues to narrate his dream:

Then one of them, a dark-haired girl with flashing eyes, broke loose from the dance and ran towards me, calling my name as she ran. Tortuga! Oh, we're so glad you've come. Come and swim in the holy waters of the mountain! Come and hear Salomon tell his stories! I recognized Ismelda, dressed in flowing white and singing a song of joy...She took my hand and together we tumbled into the warm, bubbling waters. (Anaya, 2000, p.21)

The curandera, Ismelda, appears suddenly and she has distinctive features which can be compared to Ultima again in terms of appearance. Ismelda has impressive eyes which reveal her youth and energy which Ultima, the old folk healer, does not have. Nevertheless, Ultima's eyes, as is mentioned before, are singled out for their unique qualities when they are likened to an owl's eyes. It can be inferred that the curandera's power is expressed through images of distinctive eyes which implies a special type of vision and perhaps an inner spiritual insight.

Also, their dress is in accordance with their appearances. For example, Ultima is represented in her black shawl which can symbolize her old age, sexual barrenness, the death cycle and winter in nature. On the other hand, here Ismelda is dressed in white which can imply youth, energy, sexual power, purity, and virginity. With her sexual power, she is represented like a young attractive masseuse whose "energy passes" when she touches Tortuga (Anaya, 2000, p.9). For instance, while she is bathing Tortuga, Tortuga expresses his feelings:

Her touch sent hot fire rushing through my veins. I tried to speak but my throat was tight with the strange excitement of her touch. I closed my eyes and breathed deep, and I thought of the woman who had kissed me in my dreams. Ismelda teased me with her gentle hands. Under her care I wasn't the terrible turtle-man of the kids' rumors, I was a vulnerable, crippled turtle turned on his back. As she wiped me I could hear the soft jangling of her seven silver bracelets, and I could smell the clean, wild perfume of her body, an aroma that hinted of home odors and goat fragrance. (Anaya, 2000, p.57)

Ismelda is portrayed as a hot and attractive woman who is full of energy. Also, here Tortuga seems to be emotionally aroused by Ismelda, and he reveals that the woman in his dreams is Ismelda. He implies his sexual desire with ‘goat fragrance,’ which insinuates her rural life. In fact, it seems unusual to feel and enjoy such an animal fragrance because perfumes which smell of herbs are generally preferable. Yet it is important to note that Ismelda lives “in the valley, just on the outskirts of the town” (Anaya, 2000, p. 8). Therefore, the goat fragrance can refer to nature in which she lives. The association with an animal, especially an animal associated with a strong sex drive, rather than a plant, is significant because, on a connotative level, it can signify the natural expression of sexuality according to the *Tortuga* narrative. A person, in particular a man, who is “goatish” is idiomatically being described as oversexed. The faun in classical mythology is a goat-man associated with sex and fertility. If such a fragrance helps him fantasize about her, her goat fragrance can arouse his sexual desire and connotes his awakening sexuality. Therefore, Tortuga in his rite of passage, discovers Ismelda, the representative of Native female power, who helps the teenaged protagonist Tortuga discover his sexuality which is often considered sinful by the Catholic religion. Tortuga is the person having newly reached adolescence, but deformed according to the Catholic Christian culture of guilt and mortification of the body, a culture that privileges the spirit and punishes the flesh. This may be contrasted with the pagan system that is more natural and free in its consideration of sexual intercourse. It may be inferred that this healing restores a balance between the soul and the body that is more natural for human beings. Also, such sexual intercourse in the form of natural expression can be read as generative; it creates new life, new beginnings, and new lineages. It produces; it does not prohibit. It can be concluded that Anaya is generating the positive Native image of the female curandera through Ismelda, thereby giving birth to a new identity.

Moreover, this can show her connection with nature in which she uses animals whose images are constructed in a positive way. Here, like the turtle figure, the image of the goat is used. Another exemplification is Ismelda’s power of touch on another day in which Tortuga talks about how she massages: “Ismelda’s touch was magic on my paralyzed nerves. She rubbed my numb muscles every day with the ointment she said was made of goat fat and sweet herbs, and the massages soothed away the pain I felt after therapy” (Anaya, 2000, p.110). It is clear that Ismelda’s massages work on Tortuga, who seems hopeful when he is with her. Also, it can be understood that Ismelda has background knowledge about herbs like Ultima. Of course, in *Tortuga*, the use of magical water from the mountain is more in

the foreground. Given the sexual references above, this is one of the ways Ismelda cures Tortuga, who has newly reached adolescence.

That kind of representation is not valid for Ultima who is an old woman although Ultima comforts Antonio as Ismelda comforts Tortuga. The scenes in which Ultima touches Antonio are so skillfully integrated that it is in the background. That is, it is clearly shown that Ultima sometimes touches his forehead with her magical hands to make him relaxed and cured. The striking scene at the end shows Antonio on his knees saying: “Bless me, Ultima” (Anaya, 1994, p.260) and she touches Antonio’s forehead and speaks her last words before dying. These words are also the title of the novel and it points to the transculturation process. The syncretic merge of Catholicism and paganism is expressed explicitly at the end.

I bless you in the name of all that is good and strong and beautiful, Antonio. Always have the strength to live. Love life, and if despair enters your heart, look for me in the evenings when the wind is gentle and the owls sing in the hills. I shall be with you --. (Anaya, 1994, p.261)

As Kanoza (2002) highlights, such syncretism is accomplished by Ultima: “As she offers her blessing, she adopts the cadence of the Catholic benediction and invokes her own secular, benevolent triune” (p.52). Ultima, the embodiment of Native culture, brings the binaries together and re-forms cultural materials to harmonize bi-cultural heritage. This reveals the hidden aim of re-creating a powerful Chicana culture which partly derives from Native culture. Instead of highlighting their chosen Mexican-American identity, Anaya—as this thesis consistently argues—would rather place the emphasis on their Mexicanness in an Anglo-American world, which evokes a Neo-Mestizo identity which means, as Anzaldúa (1987) explains: “to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view” (p.79). Apart from this process, this scene implies that Ultima has fulfilled her duty and metaphorically gone to the underworld to return to the seasonal cycle of Native culture. Ismelda will appear in the form of spring in *Tortuga*.

Correspondingly, an example of Antonio’s dream can reveal the transculturation process which is contributed by Ultima, who, as Ann Daghistany (2005) argues, provides “natural wisdom as the source of synthesis for his conflicting backgrounds” (p.343). Antonio reports what Ultima says in his dream:

Stand, Antonio, she commanded, and I stood. You both know, she spoke to my father and my mother, that the sweet water of the moon which falls as rain is the same water that gathers into rivers and flows to fill the seas. Without the waters of the moon to replenish the oceans there would be no oceans. And

the same salt waters of the oceans are drawn by the sun to the heavens, and in turn become again the waters of the moon. Without the sun there would be no water formed to slake the dark earth's thirst. (Anaya, 1994, p.121)

Antonio continues by pointing out Ultima's emphasis on the synthesis of his different backgrounds: "The waters are one, Antonio. I looked into her bright clear eyes and understood her truth. You have been seeing only parts, she finished, and not looking beyond into the great cycle that binds us all" (Anaya, 1994, p.121). After this dream, which again stresses the eyes, Antonio feels peaceful. This passage demonstrates the conflict that Antonio experiences and shows the way Ultima helps him resolve it by tapping into a collective unconscious. George Lipsitz (2001) also presents Ultima as a mediator figure: "Unlike Antonio's mother and father who want him to obliterate contradictions by choosing one side or the other, Ultima teaches Antonio to embrace contradictions, to use the divisions created by history without succumbing to their oppressions" (p.226). Ultima, who stands for Native wisdom, dismantles disproportional power relations and re-establishes harmony in opposing contact zones represented by Antonio's parents. This is one of the examples of the transculturation process which hybridizes the lifestyles of his mother and father.

In addition, the subconscious also unveils to what extent the curanderas promote pagan roots and enable characters to live the rituals of Native cultures through attributing healing and unifying power to the Tortuga Mountain, to its water and to the Llano, all of which are represented as enchanting. Examining Anaya's folk healers, such as Ultima and Ismelda, to see the development of Chicana self-consciousness for Anaya's protagonists, Jean Cazemajou (1990) writes: "They preserve an indispensable contact with the world of nature and the supernatural forces inhabiting this universe which, as the Indians say, have always been with us" (p.255). In fact, the curanderas do not force Antonio or Tortuga to choose their pagan heritage. Yet, the shamanistic attitudes of the curanderas, "explicitly linked with the mediating figure of the artist or poet, act as spiritual and cultural guides who instruct the wayward protagonists, helping the narratives' heroes to communicate with an inheritable tradition and past presently lost to them" (Lopez, 2011, p.134). They simply make them remember their past in order to find their pathways, which are complicated and problematized in both novels, just as their identities are.

Comparably, it is insinuated that pagan beliefs are seen to relieve certain cultural pains inflicted by Christianity—intense dualism, guilt, judgment; on the other hand, Catholicism, represented as an inflexible belief system, is contrasted with the Native

spirituality of the curanderas. Also, there is the message that if the lives of the protagonists had not been touched by the curanderas, Catholicism probably would not have been the solution alone for their healing and transformation. It leads to the conclusion that Catholicism and paganism are reconsidered, reconciled, thereby helping the formation of a Chicana identity.

As Antonio experiences the natural world accompanied by Ultima, he develops respect and credit for both Ultima and the natural space in which he lives. Antonio develops a close connection with Ultima as she does with nature itself. Antonio begins to identify himself with the land and its natural features owing to Ultima who creates balance and brings harmony (Broncano, 2008, p.96). As Antonio learns to be respectful to nature and become one with it, he reveals his ideas about his surroundings: “There is a time in the last few days of summer when the ripeness of autumn fills the air, and time is quiet and mellow. I lived that time fully, strangely aware of a new world opening up and taking shape for me” (Anaya, 1994, p.39). This quotation also reveals that Antonio’s point of view about nature is in accordance with the cycle of the seasons which can be a symbol in several ways. That is, when he talks about the summer, he is represented as optimistic and hopeful toward nature. However, if conflicts appear, the season is represented as winter which is depicted as gloomy, dark and pessimistic and can be linked to Antonio’s mood. This is also valid for Tortuga who feels wonderful in the spring, symbolizing the rebirth of nature. This quotation also explains that Antonio feels reborn with Ultima who opens his eyes. Owing to her, he tries to become one with the land and celebrates the beauty of the Llano.

Another example of Antonio’s internal monologue clarifies the sense of belonging he develops: “I found that I was no longer lost in the enormous landscape of hills and sky. I was a very important part of the teeming life of the Llano and the river” (Anaya, 1994, p.40). It can be concluded that Ultima helps Antonio discover the magical plants and herbs which contribute to his awareness of the beauty of the Llano. At a deeper level, Antonio learns to be respectful to the diverse nature of the Llano in terms of both people and plants. Therefore, herbs and plants are one of the elements which play an important role in the transculturation process as they are analyzed in detail, since they enable Antonio to come to the realization that he is part of the Chicano hybrid formation. Besides, these natural elements play a role in the resolution of his identity conflict which is a combination of Native American and Spanish heritage. This resolution can be a hopeful conclusion which underlines a unified new Chicano identity.

In addition to the skills of healing, the curanderas play a role similar to today's psychologists. Naturally, they heal the protagonists with magical herbs and water. The conflicts of the protagonists come to an end. They feel both physically and psychologically whole. This is conveyed through their inner thoughts and the vivid descriptions of nature, whereby the protagonists gain an ability to form their own identities. Ultima and Ismelda use natural gifts to resolve the protagonists' inner conflicts. In the same way, they appeal to their worlds of spirit by being good listeners and advisors who lead them to the way in which they can find an authentic sense of self. For example, in *Bless Me, Ultima*, from the beginning of the book, it is interesting that Antonio either thinks about the different ideas of his parents himself or he asks questions about them to Ultima. That is, in each phase of his life in which he faces hardships, he shares his fears and hesitations with Ultima. One early example which shows such hesitation about his parents' different world views proves that he is caught between such opposite ideas and must take advice from Ultima.

Antonio says: "Now we have come to live near the river, and yet near the Llano. I love them both, and yet I am of neither. I wonder which life I will choose?" She replies: "do not trouble yourself with those thoughts. You have plenty of time to find yourself—" (Anaya, 1994, p. 41). This conversation means a lot. The first thing that one needs to consider is that he asks a question which can be answered implicitly thanks to Ultima who introduces pagan rituals and enables him to compare them with the Catholicism he has already practiced. In other words, here the matter is not to question the different landscape to which Antonio's father and mother belong. But it is important to find out the two opposite poles which they are in: Catholicism and paganism.

Another issue here is Antonio chooses not to ask the question to his parents, who cannot be objective at the very beginning since they are represented as symbols of opposite sides. On the other hand, Ultima, surprisingly, seems to display an objective approach, although she is most often associated with paganism in this thesis. In other words, she is portrayed as respectful to the ideas of both Antonio's parents. She does not try to impose any of them upon him. But, as a curandera, she presents the pagan mentality—as this chapter tries to show that such a mentality proposes peace, harmony and unity instead of marginalizing one side—which also contributes to the extent to which the transculturation process is accomplished.

On the other hand, Ismelda can be different from Ultima in treating Tortuga's psychology. Ultima gives lots of advice to Antonio and makes him relaxed whereas Ismelda seems not to have such advice to comfort Tortuga. Rather, she has a magical touch, looks,

eyes and appeal which make Tortuga feel relieved. Instead, other characters, who can be associated with paganism, offer words of wisdom as Ultima does. One of them is Salomon, a storyteller patient, who communicates with Tortuga telepathically. When Tortuga sees the dreadful condition of “vegetables” in their ward in the hospital, he feels awful and shouts. At that time, Salomon interferes and says to him: “Know only that every man, in one way or another must cross the desert. Life is such a thin ribbon, so fragile, so easily transformed...But as we teach you to sing and to walk on the path of the sun the despair of the paralysis will lift, and you will make from what you’ve seen a new life, a new purpose” (Anaya, 2000, p.41). This quotation is a prelude that continues with Salomon’s story integrated into advice which can be taken into consideration metaphorically. Firstly, Salomon makes an analogy between the protagonist Tortuga and the myth of the turtle which states that the turtle had to cross the desert and transform itself into Tortuga Mountain. Similarly, Tortuga’s pain and suffering, which stem from what he sees in the hospital and experiences first-hand, resemble those of the turtle who tries to survive while walking away from the sea. Since Tortuga is familiar with this myth, he can unconsciously apprehend what Salomon tells him.

In conclusion, this chapter has discussed the representation of curanderas, who are portrayed as the shaman-like characters Ultima and Ismelda in *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Tortuga*. Although these two figures are different from each other in terms of appearance, age and have different roles in the cycles of life and reproduction, they function in the same way which is to serve the good of the protagonists and their community. Ultima and Ismelda benefit from herbs, plants and water. Further, they use their wisdom which is imparted through their words, stories, and knowledge. Therefore, this chapter states that they can form a cyclical structure of Native culture despite their different representations. Whereas Ismelda, as a young nurse, represents the spring with its energy of rebirth and renewal, Ultima, as an old midwife, stands for the winter and dark. Also, when they heal the protagonists physically, they heal them spiritually and emotionally as the bases for their Chicano identities. In other words, their healing process coincides with forming a Neo-Chicano identity which is a part of the transculturation process. Moreover, it can be proposed that there is hope for Chicano society if Chicano people remember where they come from, what influenced them and their disregarded Native roots which help them form a new Chicano consciousness. That is, the writer uses the image of the curandera as a model of Native mentality to help these people gather around one common background, which is their

Chicanx identity, and thereby preserve their own authentic cultural identities against Anglo-American impositions.

CONCLUSION

Bless Me, Ultima and *Tortuga* are basically categorized as bildungsromans which portray the protagonists' psychological and moral growth. These novels also make use of magic realism, which blurs the boundaries between fantasy and reality to draw attention to cultural and societal issues. However, when these novels are evaluated within the context of the Chicano Movement, they offer new insight into the process of Chicana identity formation.

Bless Me, Ultima portrays a child's predicament due to the conflict between his parents' worldviews. Whereas Antonio's mother is a representative of Catholicism, his father has a pagan spirit. In the beginning, Antonio cannot commit himself to either of them. The inner conflict he experiences on the individual level stems from his parents' cultural background. However, his conflict is not limited to the familial environment. The roots of it can be traced back to the historical Spanish-Aztec contact zone in the Spanish colonial period. Comparably, in *Tortuga*, Tortuga goes through an identity crisis during the treatment of his disability. His crippled and casted body stands for the Mexican-Spanish and Mexican-Anglo-American contact zone with specific reference to Mexican Independence and Nationalism period.

Setting out from the categories of Mexican-American history which Vigil presents, what is seemingly common in these novels is the association of these historical periods with the maturation process of the protagonists. Vigil also regards the Spanish colonial period as the childhood period, and Mexican Independence and Nationalism as an adolescent period of Mexican-American culture. Therefore, the protagonists represent different life stages, which are also linked to different stages of Mexican-American culture.

The cultural struggle and the difficulties that Chicana had experienced in these periods are represented via Antonio's inner conflict and Tortuga's crippled body. Anaya tries to show that these were the protagonists' bearing the scars of the colonized Chicana's mentality in the past. Even though the difficulties experienced in the colonial period remained in the distant past, they still have a negative psychological effect on these hybrid people. Anaya claims that there is an unconscious struggle going on and this assumes various forms and roles in shaping an individual's Chicana identity. To demonstrate the various possibilities that can take place in Chicana identity formation, Anaya weaves the constituents

of the characteristics of Chicana identity into these novels. The components are Native myths, the homeland, and the curandera.

These concepts bring back the notion of paganism or Native spirituality in some respects. For instance, the Golden carp and Tortuga myth are associated with the specific Native myths of Aztecs and Pueblo Native Americans. Besides, the land concept is interpreted in reference to the homeland of Aztecs. Finally, curanderas are seen as the agents of Native wisdom. When such an overview is considered, it would not be a mistake to think that Anaya promotes the elements linked to pagan characteristics. Anaya has a political agenda and what he wants to do through writing novels was to awaken the Chicanos to their cultural identity so that they can gather around common historical, cultural and social values.

To better understand Anaya's purpose, it is necessary to go back to the socio-political milieu in which he lived. At that time, Chicanos were treated as second-class citizens and defined by pejorative terms by the mainstream culture. The Chicano cause reacted to historical discrimination in the contact zone in which Anglo-America exercised "asymmetrical unbalanced power" over Chicanos. Furthermore, it gave Chicanos a chance to re-evaluate their history and culture, which was in the monopoly of the status quo. Their colonized, oppressed and suppressed position throughout history enabled them to take sides with their Native American and Mesoamerican heritage. Besides, Chicanos remembered that they were descendants of Native people even though they had the image of 'Hispanics' in the eyes of Anglo-Americans. The term Hispanic emphasized their Spanish roots and seemed to reduce their identity to one single category, but Chicanos believed that they had a more complex identity. They had dual heritage; Spanish imperial power and "glorious" Aztec civilization.

When the concept of the contact zones are taken into consideration, Chicanos were in the colonized category, while Spanish and later Anglo-Americans were in the colonizer category. Dominant colonial powers defined Chicanos, constructed binary oppositions and they exerted their power on them. Anaya was one of the pioneering cultural nationalists, who was both an active participant of the Chicano cause and became a representative of this ideal through his literary works. He aimed to deconstruct the binaries mentioned above in his novels. In fact, *Bless Me*, *Ultima* and *Tortuga* are not explicit declarations of Anaya's political views. Yet, his views are presented through the mythic and archetypal representations in his novels. Therefore, Anaya's rich mythic symbolism is an essential tool in confronting social evils and changing consciousness.

If Anaya's fiction is the product of his imagination, he reconstructs the imaginary world of Chicanxs through *Bless Me, Ultima*, and *Tortuga*. These novels serve the cause of a cultural nationalist, who aimed to spread the understanding of the "spiritual Aztlán." Emerging out of the Chicano cause, the Aztlán myth was a way of re-thinking and re-imagining the lost past for the Chicanxs. It was not merely daydreaming but a people's ambition to reconstruct their history, culture, and identity by themselves. Anaya realized this in *Bless Me, Ultima*, and *Tortuga* with vivid descriptions of Native myth, land, and curandera concepts.

New Mexico is the setting of both novels. Anaya announces New Mexico as a Chicano homeland, and it is depicted as sacred and holy through its multicultural environment for a particular reason. Retrospectively, with the annexation of the Mexican territories, Chicanos lost their lands. Moreover, they abandoned the culture on this land. In order to create a Chicano consciousness, he identified this state as the homeland of Aztec civilization, although it is located now in the Southwest United States. Chicanos took pride in this motherland and their Aztec heritage. This idea enabled them to embrace a collective past and gave them strength as opposed to the Anglo-American image of themselves. It also helped Anaya build a wonderland Aztlán image that functioned as representations of the Native culture and the homeland of the Chicanos. As the protagonists developed a sense of belonging for this spiritual zone, they found the source of healing to form their hybrid identities.

Another concept which connects the Chicanos to this land is Native myths. Anaya points out the healing power of oral tradition, which originated in the pagan era. Also, one of the elements that help people be part of a particular culture is myths. Therefore, Anaya revives the cultural memory of Chicanos to stand against the religious discourses of the colonizers, but it is essential to note that he does not just promote pagan myths for the sake of rejecting Catholicism. He highlights Native myths to deconstruct the binary between Catholicism and Native spirituality, thereby bringing balance to them. With the help of the Golden carp myth, Antonio imagines a third possibility for belief, a combination of Catholicism and spirituality. On the other hand, Tortuga recovers from his disability, and his dreams also reveal a reconstructive belief that combines Catholic and pagan elements. For the protagonists, the myths serve to negotiate the protagonists' dual positions and to reconcile with their cultural memory.

Besides, Anaya illustrates powerful Chicana curanderas who are representatives of Native spirituality. Ultima and Ismelda possess different physical qualities and functions.

Whereas Ultima is an old midwife of Antonio, Ismelda is a young healer who is Tortuga's peer. Ultima has deep knowledge about plants and herbs, and she lives with Antonio in his house. She helps him feel the spirits embedded in plants, herbs, and nature. However, Ismelda, who brings sacred spring water to Tortuga, works at the hospital. She cures Tortuga by touching, massaging, and making him drink the magical water. Also, both women are the mentors who guide the protagonists and remind them of who they really are. Anaya portrays them in different ways to give a complete definition of Chicana folk healing. Moreover, bringing back older archetypes of feminine power in feminist activism can be essential to Anaya's political project. He may attempt to correct both the Spanish system of machista and the Anglo-American structure of male dominance.

In conclusion, this thesis examines Chicana identity formation in *Bless Me, Ultima*, and *Tortuga*. Pratt's idea of the contact zone exposes that these novels are reevaluations of the historical past of the Chicanas. Also, the historical conflicts, which still play out in the psyche of Chicanas, can be settled by the pagan roots. In other words, pagan roots, which have been ignored by the mainstream culture, have healing power and therefore destroy the asymmetrical power of domination of the colonizers. Prioritizing Native cultural heritage means reviving the essential but discarded part of their identity. Therefore, three loosely related concepts, myth, homeland, and the curandera, enable Chicana protagonists to reconcile the dichotomies they experience. The character who has integrated previously suppressed cultural elements, as Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) says: "develops a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity" (p.79). Also, these concepts navigate the protagonists to form a Neo-Mestizo hybrid identity, which for Anzaldúa (1987) explains the implications of particular cultural situations: "to be an Indian in Mexican culture, to be Mexican from an Anglo point of view" (p.79). In this regard, Anaya re-imagines such a hybrid figure who recalls and preserves her or his Native past not to be assimilated into the mainstream culture. This figure is a future role model, who challenges previous historical contact zones, for Chicanas to fulfill their identity.

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