

Ana Laura Alvarado
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Final Examination

I. The portrayal of women is very uniquely shown in the following novels written by Graciela Limon, Sandra Cisneros, Reyna Grande, and Alicia Gaspar de Alba. These female authors portrayed women in a very precise way that shows how a woman is capable to do anything for the ones they love, meanwhile they are on their own search for self, and happiness in life.

Woman in these novels are empowered by these authors because they are portrayed as strong and independent, and in search for their identity, rather than weak and dependent, which is how they usually are portrayed. These authors left clear to readers that women, just like men are capable of doing anything, even what might seem impossible just for the ones they love.

In the novel, *Woman Hollering Creek*, written by Sandra Cisneros, there are a series of short stories and women here are portrayed in a very typical way. Here women, and submissive to men, and are sensible, because the men are the ones that are in charge of everything. Men are portrayed as the typical “hombre macho” of the story, and everything they say is done. In these stories just like in *Bless Me, Ultima*, instead of male, now women are in search of their own identity and trying to figure out what they want to do with their lives. Unfortunately, the protagonist only reaches to her dreams being shattered, and in the end she is left with figuring out what is the best thing for her to do now. In this novel the author pretty much portrays women as rather than giving up completely, she still wants what is best for her in the end, and she is in search of herself. Women are seen as starting to have a voice in this novel.

In *Memories of Ana Calderon* by Graciela Limon, women are portrayed as being able to accomplish things despite the fact that they might be going through a hard time. In other words, they can be seen as perseverant. In this story the protagonist, Ana faced a lot of struggles in her life, literally ever since she was born. Her parents thought she has cursed her mother's womb because she had lost all other three pregnancies before her, so she is born with that blame already, to come and face even more problems. She is born with a sense of rejection to a certain point. She then deals with the death of her mother, and an adopted child, Octavio. She falls in love with him and has a child of his, Ismael. Ana's father was not happy with this at all that he even dared to threaten her with killing her son. Ana and Octavio are supposed to get married but he leaves her the day of their wedding, he never showed up. Ana faces rejection for a third time in her life and decided to move forward with her son, then Octavio finds out where she is at and attempts to kidnap his own son. As soon as Ana finds this out, she gets filled with rage and ends up shooting Octavio. She goes to jail for her murder and loses her child. When she is finally out of prison she continues on with her life, and ends up in school getting educated, and becomes wealthy. She falls for a guy again, and has a relationship with him, she finds out it was her own son with whom she had slept with only until he has already passed away. This is a very strong story because it is portraying that even though woman may be having the most difficult time in their lives with either losing a child, have rejection from her own parents, she is never to give up. Women keep going no matter what the circumstances in her life are, this is portraying them as strong independent women. Women are capable of going through hell but yet do not manage to give up, is what the author was trying to tell the reader with this story. The fact that she can kill her husband for the safety of her son says a lot about how strong women can be. The way that

even after having lost everything she still managed to keep her feet firmly on the ground and decided to pursue an education says even better about women, that they try to get an education and are willing to go over any obstacle possible in life.

Across a Hundred Mountains by Reyna Grande portrays women as capable individuals that are willing to do anything for their loved ones. In this novel, the protagonist Juana, suffers the loss of her little sister because of a horrific storm, she accidentally drops her and she downs. Her parents do not have enough money to pay for the funeral so they get loans, her father decides to go to "El Otro Lado" to get a better paying job, and be able to pay the loan back. Her mother becomes an alcoholic and is in a severe depression. After her father leaves, and after years of not knowing of him Juana decides to go look for him. She goes off and crosses the border where she meets Adelina, and becomes close to her. Adelina is in search of her loved one, while Juana is in search of her father. Adelina's lover ends up killing Adelina and Juana takes her identity in Tijuana. Juana finds out her father never made it because he died in the desert and she finds her lost brother as well. This novel sends out a strong message to the readers as well because it is showing that a young girl like Juana at age 12 is mature enough to take on a journey that might cost her life. She is not afraid because she has a set goal of wanting to find her father no matter what, she does but not how she wanted to. The author portrays women as capable of doing anything like taking someone else's identity in order to get and find what they want. Women can be very dangerous just like men, because when they have their mind set on something, they are not tranquil until they reach their goal, and many times in order to get where they want to get, they might not have boundaries. This is how women are portrayed in this novel.

Desert Blood: The Juarez Murders by Alicia Gaspar de Alba has a very similar message to the novel above. This novel is about a professor named Ivon wanting to adopt a baby. She is excited to adopt it from a woman named Cecilia, as she was to meet up with her, Cecilia is murdered in Juarez, and the baby is disemboweled. Unfortunately, this is not the end of the sad story for Ivon, because shortly after that her sister is kidnapped. She in desperate need of finding her teams up with both countries border patrols to be able to find her. For her luck, she ends up to find that the border patrol that is helping her resulted in actually a businessman of child pornography in Juarez. Ivon is terrified at this time because of that news and she is scared of her life, but luckily she is saved by another agent named Pete. This novel is also saying that women are strong but can also be independent. The reason is because Ivon does everything possible to find her sister to bring her back home, and is at the same time afraid and not afraid because it is her sister, and she is capable of doing anything necessary to find her. Women are portrayed as strong individuals here, and as willing to do anything to find a loved one especially when that person is family.

All in all, these authors put together a portrayal of women, that they can be all in one. They can be submissive but at the same time they have the capability to find their own identity and fight for what they want, no matter what. Women are portrayed as strong and willing, it is seen in these novels. They are seen as being able to go after what they love, in these cases family, without caring about consequences, or what can happen to them. It shows that the love of mother and son is much more strong than anything possible in the world, that if their son is ever put at risk or in danger she can become a beast and defend it with no boundaries what so ever.

II. In *Bless me, Ultima* by Rudolfo Anaya, the role of dreams in this novel is the search for identity. Antonio, the main character has multiple dreams throughout the novel, and this is a form of communication with his innerself. The dreams are used to find his own identity, and he uses them to find out what he really want to be, and do. For example, in the beginning of the novel Antonio has a dream where he basically relives his birth and he witnesses being there. He sees his family in debate whether he will be a priest like his mom wants him to be or, be in the llano like his dad (Anaya). Antonios search for identity begins here because he is confused about his future and anxious to know what he will become when he grows older. He uses this dream to figure out which path in life does he want to take. He decided to talk to his mom about it the next morning and she confirms it. In his dream Antonio also sees Ultima the lady that is going to live with them now, and he sees how only she was certain about his future. This is the leading factor of them two, Antonio and Ultima, to having a close relationship. Another dream that Antonio has is when his brothers are asking him for help when they want to build his father's castle, and then they hear something near the river thinking it might be La Llorona, and Antonio calms the river down so his brothers can cross it (Anaya). This is another example of how he uses the dreams as a search for identity, because here he starts to learn about both cultures of mom and dad, and starts thinking that instead of just picking one, he can be both cultures when he learns to appreciate them how each parents wants him to. He uses la Llorona as his symbol of fear, and remembers all the times he was disobedient to his parents, and when he was close to the river. He starts developing his own self-conscious by combining the two different cultures of his parents together. In chapter fourteen Antonio has a dream in which he dies and he is damned to hell because he has not taken the Eucharist (Anaya). Antonio after having this dream he decided to

start attending communion classes to be able to do his communion and receive the Eucharist. He went to hell despite his mother's prayers and Ultima's magic, not receiving the Eucharist was much more powerful than faith and magic to determine his place after death. This is another example of how he is using his dreams as form of identity, because he is acting upon them and responding to them to not go to hell like he did in his dream. He finds out in this dream that he wants to receive the Eucharist to receive God and all the knowledge of him as well. Since he is still a bit confused of his future he decides to attend classes and learn, in order to not go to hell. Antonio's dreams, serve to him as a form of communication with his innerself, and they help him for his search of identity. He has a lot of dreams throughout the novel, which sends him messages of his life, and he acts upon them to learn and make a decision of what he wants to do with his life. He uses Ultima as his mentor, but his dreams are the ones that help his self-discovery. He uses his dreams to help others and to understand where he stand in life.

III. My favorite novel in this course was *Across a Hundred Mountains* by Reyna Grande. The reason was because I felt like I could relate a lot to this novel, and it also made me think a lot. It made me doubt for a second about the American Dream. The reason is because the father tried so hard to get here, and dreamed of it so much, and in the end he did not even make it. It made me doubt it because for all the immigrants coming in there are so many challenges, and life risks they face that makes me think, is it worth leaving your family behind to find something you might not even get? Is the American Dream even real to all those immigrants coming in? The story of people wanting to cross the border because they want a better life is something I am very familiar with. I did not personally live it but I have experienced first hand of family members

that dream of it, just like my parents did as well. I also felt guilty in this novel because how the characters describe “El Otro Lado” is exactly how it is, and I did not see it that way. I felt as if I took for granted all the commodities that I live in, and that I do not appreciate not having to struggle for simple things like water, electricity, food, warmth, and so on. People that do not have the same luck as I do struggle on a daily basis to get something that I have everyday, and I did not see it that way. I am happy that I read this novel because it made me get a reality check of my life. It helped me appreciate my surroundings and be thankful for what I have today, rather than complain for the things I want and do not have.

IV. In this course I did not have a least favorite novel. I enjoyed all of them. I personally think that all these novels have something to teach a reader, and that there is never a book taken for granted. The authors all wrote with intention to getting the message across the readers and I felt like I was able to capture all of the messages. Each novel was very unique and very fun to read for me. I enjoyed reading about migrant workers and about people wanting to come to the United States of America. I had never read a book about Chicano Literature, and since this was my very first time ever, I enjoyed all the books because I felt like in every book there was something I could relate to. Coming from migrant parents, and workers, there was always something that reminded me of things when I was a child, or stories that my parents would tell me about their lives, and their struggle for wanting to get here just like in *Across a Hundred Mountains*. Also, the search for identity in some novels like *Bless Me, Ultima*, made me realize that at some point I was in the same point of confusion as the protagonist. The desperate need to know what to do and who you really are are thoughts that I felt close to the protagonist are what made me enjoy

all the novels. Going in search for someone you love was another feeling that I related to in *Across a Hundred Mountains*, and in *Desert Blood*. Therefore, I do not have a least favorite novel, because in all the novels there was a bit of my identity in them. Thanks to all these novels I am now looking forward to continue reading about Chicano Literature in the future.