"BEAUTY, BORDERS AND THE AMERICAN DREAM IN RICHARD DOKEY'S 'SANCHEZ'"

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Critics have pointed out discrepancies between what is commonly understood as the American Dream in the mainstream culture at large and the fictive representation of Chicanos or Mexican-Americans who attempt to appropriate the dream as their own. For example, Luther S. Luedtke explores the Chicano novel *Pocho* only to conclude that this novel confirms its protagonist as a "universal man" who "suffers an existential insecurity against which no community can protect him" (14). The existential plight demonstrated in the novel is heightened because of the distance between the historical and mythical origins of the Chicanos and the white mainstream culture which posits the American Dream in confusing and alien terms.

Luedtke relies on sociological studies by Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck to illustrate the discrepancy:

Problem	Mexican-American Response	American Response
Man's relation to nature	Subjugation-to-nature	Mastery-over-nature
Essence of human nature	Mutable Good-and-Evil	Evil-but-Perfectible
Man's relation to man	Lineality (group, family)	Individualism
Preferable activities	Being	Doing
Time orientation	Present-Time	Future-Time

The contrasting categories suggest an important epistemological

orientation that continues to inform fiction and socio-political values. Luedtke infers: "the progressive orientation and success ethos of American core culture contradict the traditional world view of the Mexican-Americans, with its emphasis on continuity, community and the obligation of one's assigned role" (8). Though this study is some forty years old and the cultural dynamics have changed to some degree, it is still helpful to illustrate the original world view that informs much of the Mexican-American presence in North America, especially as fictive representatives encounter representatives of the core culture.

More recent cultural critics have developed the idea of borders, nationality and imagery both metaphorically and geographically, with similar conclusions[1]: "Latina/os are inherent outsiders to the realm of national belonging" (Moya,193). Aspirations to achieve the American Dream often remain frustrated due to the history of conflict involved. Moya, for example, examines three critical works on the subject by Monika Kaup, Mary Pat Brady and Monica Brown. Both Kaup and Brady tend to view the struggle of Latina/os in terms of binary oppositions: "resistance or accommodation" for Kaup and "(subordinated) Chicanos and (hegemonic) Anglos for Brady (Moya, 186 & 188). Kaup, for instance, claims that whereas Texas Chicano writers tend to be resistant to the mainstream culture imposed upon them, Chicano writers from California employing "the immigrant plot" are "oriented toward the future, not the past, and their attitude toward the process of Americanization is one of desire rather than resistance" (185). In such writing, the border is a line of "demarcation – a point in space to be passed over and left behind – along the journey toward a new, American future" (185). Despite certain vantages from this type of oppositional thinking, Moya finally argues, however, that such distinctions eventually fail to recognize the necessary "nuanced and accurate understanding" of society (194).

Richard Dokey's California story "Sanchez" offers a nuanced, complex protagonist that Moya could appreciate, a character who arguably fits the older Luedtke model while risking those values of his origin, bravely attempting to gain a foothold in a new land. Dokey's Juan Sanchez attempts to raise himself in accord with the notions implied in the American Dream as valued by the core

culture, but in the end, realizes the futility of his upward mobility. His desire for preservation and self-determination are immersed with his understanding of beauty and his subjugation to nature. In other words, not unlike Villarreal's protagonist in *Pocho*, Dokey's story of Juan Sanchez is existential and individual. Its tragic protagonist demonstrates an ambivalence toward his understanding of his origins and future possibilities. The conflict between his "inner and outer realities intensifies" and he considers "his identity a personal matter" (Luedtke 5).

Another critic, Antonio Marquez, considers the "utopian quest" in *Pocho* in terms of the American Dream, but concludes the "noble and beautiful idea ... is revealed as sham" (8). Typically, the protagonist is caught between two systems and his story reveals his "confusion, alienation, and ambivalence" (10). Both Luedtke and Marquez recognize the foundational quality of *Pocho* in relation to the rise of *chicanismo*, and Marquez suggests there are "now alternatives to the American dream – and the nightmare – alternatives not available to [Villarreal's] Richard Rubio and a generation of 'pochos'" (10-11).

Nevertheless, the American Dream as perceived by the mainstream culture, with its emphases of upward mobility, materialism and class distinctions remains a "threatening" and "perplexing" construct that will "continue to beguile the Chicano and that confrontation surely will be reflected in Chicano literature" (19). Eliu Carranza expresses similar concerns, arguing that the American Dream is illusionary for Mexican-Americans; in fact, it works to oppose equality because of the establishment of "difference" and "separation" (*Pensamientos*, 45). Moya concurs, arguing that the "realm of the imaginary remains a crucial arena for epistemological and political struggle for Latina/os who are interested in claiming their rightful place as full and entitled citizens of the US" (193).

Like the emphases expressed in foundational Chicano fiction, Richard Dokey's protagonist also dares to appropriate the American Dream, even temporarily finding personal satisfaction as he raises himself above his roots and class of his fellow field workers. But his individualism costs him dearly. He finds himself excommunicated from his fellow countrymen, loses his wife, and finally, his son

does not follow in his understanding of beauty and reflection. In an ironic turn, Sanchez's son returns to the Mexican-American community thereby wounding Sanchez's appropriation of the dream. Sanchez sadly refers to his son as the "American," yet he is "of the Flotill" (35). For Juan Sanchez, the mainstream conception of the American Dream turns out to be a double-edged sword, the inherent individualism cutting both ways. It entices him with a potential elevation in status while that same individualism distances himself from his beloved son, and ironically makes it possible for him to be lured away from him, back to the cannery and to the community of laborers (all in the name of Americanization) from which Juan Sanchez has removed himself and his family.

Dokey's contribution to the theme of Mexican-Americans involvement with the American Dream offers an interesting variation – the explicit pursuit of beauty. Given the relationship of man to nature that Luedtke has pointed out as common for people of Mexican origins, such a category is implicit in other Chicano fiction[2]. Yet for Dokey's protagonist, beauty is a determining motivation that drives him away from the drudgery of field work. In much precursory Chicano fiction, themes of survival and identity necessarily are prominent given the characters' confrontation with a foreign world view, economy, distinctive class and racial systems. But in Dokey's story, the themes of survival and identity are amalgamated within the epistemological category of beauty that shapes the existence of his protagonist, despite the costs involved.

Sanchez's attempt to realize the American Dream may be understood in terms of a quest. With Quixotic persistence, Dokey's *caballero* yields to nothing, to no one, not even God, in his desire for beauty. His confrontation with injustice and tragedy does not alleviate his passionate understanding of how life ought to be; it only brings the reader to a renewed consideration of something not unlike the Socratic eternal forms or Romantic ideals: justice, honor, courage, and predominantly for Sanchez, beauty.

His quest takes him from the desert to the mountains of the Sierra Nevada. He works and saves for two years in anticipation of his move, routinely thinking "only of La Belleza and the beautiful Sierra Nevada" (31). When the day comes for him to take his

loveliness, La Belleza, toward the lovely mountains, the lovers board a Greyhound bus for Fresno, then continue on to Stockton, upward toward the mountains. Their upward journey, paralleling their attempted rise in social status, their attempt to appropriate their personal dream, is erotic. Laughing as their romantic adventure progresses, they "gazed out the window at the land" (31). The passage is referred to as "a day like no other day in his life" (31), and it is closely described in terms of natural hues: "lovely mountains," "where hundreds of [green] deciduous oaks and evergreens grew." It is the materializing of his particularized, individualized American dream:

> He had never seen so many trees, great with dignity: pines that had gray bark twisted and stringy like hemp; others whose bark resembled dry, flat ginger cookies fastened with black glue about a drum, and others whose bark pulled easily away; and those called redwoods, standing stiff and tall, amber-hued with straight rolls of bark as thick as his fist, flinging out high above great arms of green. And the earth, rich red, as though the blood of scores of Indians had just flowed there and dried. Dark patches of shadow stunned with light, blue flowers, orange flowers, birds, even deer. They saw all that on that first day. (32)

The sharp contrast with the desert of his previous life is punctuated by Sanchez's statement declaring the destination of the two lovers: "*Bellisima* ... Into much loveliness" (32). Like the Platonic Erotic myth, Juan Sanchez's dream moves beyond the ecstacy of material, physical to the ideal, eternal categorization of beauty. This foundational understanding determines Juan's destiny in the making, and nothing will prevent his attempts to fulfill the ideal dominating his existence. No other place will do. He steps beyond the boundaries of his social class and economic constraints, and in gentle defiance of the mainstream culture wills for himself a new existence. His consumptive vision of an invigorating beautiful place beyond the borders of his homeland, beyond the borders of field labor demonstrates both a Chicano pride in the heritage of his indigenous ancestors as well as a bold mingling with comfortable members of the core culture.

The retreat into the lovely mountains may also be seen in terms of spirituality. When readers learn later in the plot that the mountains do not protect Juan from his fears of death, when tragedy follows him into the mountains, his demise is documented in explicitly religious terminology. In fact the spiritual conflict within Juan has been well established even before his move to the mountains. La Belleza has already suffered and lost a child in her first pregnancy by the time Juan decides his destiny will be in the beauty of the mountains. He weeps at the news of the stillborn child and at the fact that La Belleza "could not have children and live" (29), but he still entertains the hope of blessing when they finally reach the mountains. He wants to run away "to the high white cold of the California mountains, where he believed his heart would grow, his blood run and, perhaps, the passage of La Belleza might open" (30). He holds onto the possibility of the miraculous, and the miraculous is always integral with the idea of beauty. What is miraculous is beautiful, and Juan hopes that the beautiful will invoke the miraculous.

His trauma is more than just physical. It is spiritual at the core. In a life-and-death decision, Juan must decide between the atheist doctor and the priest. Like the biblical Job, he must choose between faith and humanity. Unlike Job, he curses God (30). He dares self-damnation, violating various orthodox practices in his pursuit of his ideal. Eventually he will burn his wife's rosary and submit to a vasectomy. He curses God because he has to make ugly choices, and his only respite is escaping into the beauty and isolation of the mountains. His move to the mountains suggests the possibility of a spiritual renewal in this appropriate place, the beauty and isolation helping to cleanse him and restore his faith. Instead, more tragedy occurs there resulting in increased anger at God and an intensification of his isolated, existential musings. His love of beauty is his most reliable source of consolation for his dilemma.

His move to the mountains also, of course, has tremendous sociological implications. As a Mexican immigrant attempting to fulfill the American Dream, he is vulnerable to the whims of the mainstream culture. Having isolated himself from his community, he is exercising the fundamental values of individualism and self-

reliance celebrated by the mainstream culture. But for Sanchez, these values are limited and subject to the white culture around him. The border he has crossed to enter the United States is more than just a geographical marker. It represents class and racial distinctions. Like much Chicano fiction, Dokey's story suggests the alienation and ambivalence that usually greets a Chicano protagonist trying to make a smooth transition north of the border. Sanchez settles in a place dominated by whites where the loving couple is considered out-of-place. He is cheated when he buys a rundown shack for one thousand dollars, but this injustice is overcome not in a small part due to the overriding dream of living in beauty. Carranza points out that the Mexican-American who tries to live the American Dream is customarily "cast into the 'inferior' mold by an 'American' view of the world" leaving him with limited options and with the implied need to become "psychologically" an American (*Pensamientos* 45). Such positioning determines the existence of both the dominant and the secondary cultures into a neat, prescribed "world of order and hierarchy, a world of 'Americans' taking care of millions of Anglo-prones, so long, of course, as they remain prone" (45). Octavio Paz has suggested that the Mexican is always a problem for himself (70). Carranza quotes Paz's description of the Mexican-American as one who submits to isolationism and one whose relationships "are poisoned by fear and suspicion. ... "He must live alone, without witnesses. He dares to be himself only in solitude" ("The Mexican-American" 39). In contrast to this description, Carranza writes of the Chicano:

> He has removed the mask and seen himself as he really is–publicly. He is creating new relationships by destroying or modifying old ones. He no longer seeks to escape from himself by forgetting his condition and his link with the past. ... He refuses to live alone, i.e., without witnesses, but lives with *la Raza*–his witness. He dares to be himself in solitude and with his fellowman. (39)

Carranza's distinction may be applied to Juan Sanchez with interesting results. Juan has left his homeland and his heritage. The story provides little, if any, overt longing or grieving for the past.

Juan Sanchez is eager to leave. He plans for two years to get away from the lowland mines and farm labor. The primary focus of the story illustrates Juan's desire to not only leave the valley, but to make his dream come true in the mountains. His desire is not merely escapism, but it is sharply focused in a certain, positive outcome. He *wants* to live in the beautiful mountains. Given Carranza's analysis, however, the question of whether Sanchez is fully, purely Chicano remains. On the one hand, Juan is apparently content to be relatively isolated from other members of *la Raza*, thus suggesting a rejection of community pride and an eager embracing of white culture.

His isolation, however, is not simply a desire to avoid his fellow members of *la Raza* or to superficially acquiesce to the white core culture. His individualism and self-reliance is an existential quest toward self-actualization – a chief value advocated by Carranza:

> The Mexican-American has confronted himself with these questions: How should I live? How should I love? How should I die? And he has answered them all with: as an individual who is in possession of everything that is essentially human. The Mexican-American's goal, then, is the humanity of man, wherein each man recognizes himself in the face of his fellow-man and where man addresses himself seriously to the ultimate questions which confront man in every age. (*Pensamientos,* 26)

His isolation is also a desperate attempt to do anything possible to save his wife. It is a wounded, spiritually troubled man who moves into the mountains. His story is the story of a man who feels abandoned by the god and beliefs of his heritage. In something of a heroic attempt to contend with his cursed fate, he seeks a new place to reinvent himself, but this in no way suggests that he is rejecting his essence as a man. He is, as Carranza implies, multi-faceted and sufficiently independent to shape his own version of the American Dream to his unique situation.

When working in the valley, he refuses to participate with his coworkers in their drinking and entertaining prostitutes (30). He does, however, choose to ride in the truck with the laborers, but beyond this, he does not fully participate actively with the group. He contents himself in relative isolation. He dreams in isolation.

He does more than just dream though. He acts independently. He pursues his dream knowing full well that its realization will increasingly separate him from others of his heritage, but as is clear by the end of the story, his longing for beauty is in tune with his ancestral heritage and conflicts with the Americanization of the natural resources in California where the migrants work. By the end of the story, his thoughts reveal his inner confirmation of the vast, underlying distinction between an indigenous and capitalist view of societal resources. Though his desire for self-determination sometimes blurs his sight, he never relinquishes the native foundations of his world-view. Like Fuentes, he wants to modify his particular vision of "progress":

> The unreachable nature of the technological vanguard obliges us to revise our notions of "progress" and conclude that what today passes as such – the North American model – is not, can no longer be, will never be ours. (*La Nueva Novela*. qtd in Sommer and Yudice, 195)

Sanchez wants the bliss implied in the American Dream, but he wants it on his own terms – terms that recognize the dehumanizing effects that American mass commercialization has on migrant workers. Sanchez refuses to be held captive to either extreme: full-fledged participant and approval of American mass production and commercialization on the one hand or the subservient, pliable field laborer on the other. Either extreme robs the human of a necessary essential component of life, essentially enslaving its subjects; both fail to allow its adherents the individualism that Carranza emphasizes.[3]

The fact that he has cursed God and the fearful knowledge that his wife will probably die were she to conceive, further motivates him to live apart from his fellow Chicanos. Before the move to the mountains, he has alienated himself from his religious heritage; and the condition of his wife, virtually guaranteeing a barren existence, tragically, only further separates the couple from the norms of their original heritage. In other words, it could be more bearable for this child-less Mexican-American couple to live in a remote area where they are not in immediate and drastic contrast to their fellow countrymen whose families are an immense source

of pride and evidence of God's blessing.

Juan Sanchez identifies with Carranza's description of the Chicano. He certainly exhibits little, if any, intimidation in the face of injustice or in living in alienation. He is a destroyer of old relationships and a modifier of life's destiny. He dares to leave the homeland; he risks his identification to abandon the expected routines of immigrant laborers. He shows himself publicly demonstrating the courage to venture alone and undaunted to a new place with the dream of making his own mark in the world. He dares to claim the American Dream for himself. In Carranza's words, he sees himself "for what he is: a human being!" (39).

But why would Juan forsake his community to immerse himself in the Anglo culture? He does this for the sake of the aesthetic. To enable himself to fulfill his aesthetic vision, he has saved two thousand dollars, suggesting an upward social identification, yet at the same time, he does not confront his oppressor who cheats him when buying the home. He does not confront because of his anticipation of living in Edenic loveliness. He exercises discretion. He suppresses his Chicano identity as a means to reach his desired end. He is not only a Mexican in the tradition of Paz; he is a rising Chicano, but something transcends even these two categories. That something is the desire for *bellisima*.

In Juan Sanchez, a mix of identification and pride of heritage exists with a cessation of any visible link to the past. This intermingling of immigrant and citizen, Mexican and Chicano, enabler and possessor of the American Dream seems clear when Juan, in retrospect, wonders why he named his boy Jesus. The miracle of Jesus's birth cost the life of La Belleza. Stoically, honorably, Juan stayed in his dream place "to show him [Jesus] the loveliness of the Sierra Nevada" (35), but after raising of the boy, Juan's painful thoughts are not easily dissuaded: "But Jesus. Ah, Jesus. Jesus the American. Jesus of the Flotill. Jesus understood nothing" (35). In his thinking, Juan demonstrates the often tragic irony experienced by migratory people: Crossing the various borders necessary to pursue the American Dream comes with a cost that involves not only separation from heritage and cultural identities of the homeland, but also an immediate violation and termination of the familial unity that encourages and enables a migratory family

to pursue the original dream. Sanchez's melancholia echoes the terse lines of Gonzales: "I shed the tears of anguish/ as I see my children disappear/ behind the shroud of mediocrity,/ never to look back to remember me" (82). The climactic line in Paz's poem "The Return" illustrates the complexity of Sanchez: "it is not we who live, it is time lives us" (302). On the surface he apparently embodies Paz's aesthetic vision of destiny valiantly seeking to compensate for the natural limitations of his existence, but when this aesthetic vision is interrupted, Juan Sanchez acts instead of passively submitting to fate.

Dokey's structure frames a contemplative father and ambitious son at the Flotill with the final fire scene, but the middle of the story, the memory of Juan's life recounts his fulfillment of his dream. Even if only temporarily, Juan beat the systems and successfully managed the constraining borders, achieving bliss while holding death at bay:

> Now the life of Juan Sanchez entered its most beautiful time. When the first snows fell he became delirious, running through the pines, shouting, rolling on the ground, catching the flakes in his open mouth, bringing them in his cupped hands to rub in the hair of La Belleza, who stood in the doorway of their cabin laughing at him. He danced, made up a song about snowflakes falling on a desert and then a prayer which he addressed to the Virgin of Snowflakes. That night while the snow fluttered like wings against the bedroom window, he celebrated the coming of the whiteness with La Belleza. (33)

The purity of his fulfilled aesthetic vision powerfully confirms his courageous choice to leave the desert. Religious imagery abounds in this passage where in child-like ecstasy Juan transforms the desert of his memory into a present-tense holy ritual. The playful sublimity of his sexuality with La Belleza parallels a renewed sense of grace and satisfactory religious certainty that all but erases the ugliness of choosing the advice of the atheistic doctor over the priest.

The white imagery, however, serves to underscore the tension of the story, keeping alive the undercurrent of racial and class

distinctions that Juan has encountered. His most happy time is a white time, a time when their dream seems fulfilled, seems in line with that of the mainstream. Of course, this dream is short-lived.

The ideal of beauty, being realized in Juan, makes love possible. In Juan, love for La Belleza is not unlike love for the mountains, nor is it unlike love for the holy (though no longer the Catholic God as demonstrated by the priest at the tragic moment of his wife's pregnancy). This love is a love for all things indigenous, undefiled by the social and economic barriers and geographical borders surrounding his existence. Living in the mountains, he realizes that love is:

> an enlargement of himself, that it enabled him to be somehow more than he had ever been before, as though the pores of his senses had only just been opened. Whereas before he had desired the Sierra Nevada for its beauty and contrast to his harsh fatherland, now he came to acquire a love for it, and he loved it as he loved La Belleza; he loved it as a woman. (34)

Being in the place of beauty redeems him thereby enabling him to truly be the embodiment of a new ideal, an immigrant temporarily fulfilling the American Dream, trying to forever be rid of the shadow of servility. Transformation, whether social or spiritual, is beautiful, and in "Sanchez," beauty is the agent of both spiritual and sociological transformation.

The story of Juan Sanchez is a tragic romance. The beauty of his life is not permanent, and the transitory nature of life begins to dawn within his consciousness. He began "to understand something more of the fear or dread that seemed to trail behind love" (34). In Paz's emphasis, time is living Juan Sanchez, and in an ultimate sense, he is powerless to control the destiny approaching him. Carlos Fuentes' words aptly prophecy the destiny of this dreamer who has excommunicated himself to live secluded in beauty:

> dreaming, loving, rebelling and dying will all be the same for you–the delirious fiesta in which you rebel in order to love, and you love in order to dream and you will dream in order to die; cover your body well with earth, son of mine, until the earth becomes your

> mask, and the masters are unable to recognize, behind it, your dreams, your love, your revolt or your death. (306)

Juan eventually senses that beauty cannot be retained. The Socratic world-view of ideals materializes into bodily death. The ideal of beauty may always exist, and for Juan Sanchez it has been a most powerful, creative force in his imagination. But its physical manifestation cannot be retained, and finally, it cannot prevent his pain. His wife dies as a result of the miraculous conception of his son. In his quest for the beautiful, Juan had compensated for his childless existence, but the unimaginable event of her surprise pregnancy signals the beginning of losing what he has at great cost acquired. La Belleza gives him a son, but he cannot fully appreciate the sublimity of the experience for he loses his twin in the process, the embodiment of his determining principle. The ideal of beauty will once again resurrect within him, however.

By the time Jesus is old enough to leave home and work as an independent man, Juan is "beyond disappointment" and this factor is the guiding force of his life, the pragmatic interrupting the aesthetic. His son speaks of honor (28) but not of beauty. Juan has raised his boy in the beauty of Twin Pines, in the memory of La Belleza, but honor is the dominant theme of their conversations, and after leaving his son at the Flotill, instinct becomes the operative term for his action (35). Is a man right to pursue the beautiful, even at the expense of survival, even in the face of tremendous disappointment? The ideal of beauty really never completely leaves Juan, and when his son leaves home, Juan experiences "liberation" (35).

He goes to his home in the pines, destroys every possession and lays down to sleep. His thinking prevents sleep. His thinking brings "another kind of love" to his conscious:

> A very profound, embracing love that he had felt of late blowing across the mountains from the south and that, he knew now, had always been there from the beginning of his life, disguised in the sun and wind. In this love there was blood and earth and, yes, even god, some kind of god, at least the power of a god. This love wanted him for its own. He understood it, that it

> had permitted him to have La Belleza and that without it there could have been no La Belleza. (36)

The ideal, eternal category of the beautiful regains the prominent position in the mind of Juan Sanchez, and here it is clearly identified with, even shaped by an indigenous, preternatural understanding of self and society. This passage implies finally an overt recognition of mysticism. A comparison of Dokey's passage with John Phillip Santos's autobiography provides an interesting conclusion. Elizabeth Hayes Turner writes that Santos:

> employs it [religious mysticism] not to confront the sins of a region nor to describe his own metamorphosis but as a tool for seeing – a clairvoyance that will interpret the disparate parts of his family's past. *Places Left Unfinished* uniquely probes the intricate paths of Christian mysticism and Toltec wisdom – the beliefs of their ancient pre-Columbian forebears. (136)

Similarly, Juan Sanchez, by the end of his trials, seems to have moved toward a similar ancestral and indigenous understanding of spirituality. Juan realizes that he is but part of a greater reality that predates and supercedes him, one that is largely unaffected by human efforts at stoic individualism, self-reliance or other vain attempts to make hubris commonplace.

Some may argue that Juan commits suicide in the end, and this act is the final expression of a self-induced, perpetual grieving that should have naturally given way to a newer stage of acceptance over time. How can readers expect his son, Jesus, to be a normal rightly adjusted man when his father has evidently failed to emerge from a hermitage of grief high up in the mountains away from his people?

Another view might consider the sin of Juan Sanchez. Giving into despair is but the final step in an escalation of defiance toward God. I would argue, however, that Juan is simply a limited man, tragically coming to the end of his personal heroism, as anyone must inevitably submit to the forces of life beyond one's control. In this sense of tragedy, then, Juan's hamartia is his refusal to live in a world devoid of beauty, and not his burning of the rosary or cursing God or choosing the atheist over the priest. Those apparent acts of sacrilege are secondary and symptomatic of a

dreamer who dared to dream, a man who had to make unwanted choices in the midst of that dream.

He is "beyond disappointment" (28) he tells his son, and I doubt that Jesus (in his attachment to the community of the fields) understands his father. The numb existence of Juan Sanchez gives way to one last acting out, destroying the home and possessions, and then he settles into thinking. His thinking, overcome with loneliness and loss, leads him to the conclusion of fire. Three options for interpretation are possible: One, he has damned himself earlier by denying the god of his heritage and rather than living without hope of redemption, he takes matters into his own hands. He fast-forwards to judgment. Whatever will be will be, and he courageously confronts his judgment. Two, the fire scene is an act of redemption, as if he is helping God in the process of necessary penitence. Juan destroys by fire the evidence of his carnal desires of beauty and finally submits to an asceticism more in keeping with saints of his orthodox religious tradition.

A third possible interpretation, one that I prefer, suggests the fire is a purgative symbol, a cleansing of soul and body, one that Juan initiates himself. Like Oedipus putting out his own eyes, Juan acts in freedom and with a sense of self-directed, cathartic justice. His actions prepare him for an eternal reunion with La Belleza. In this admittedly romantic vision, he comes to understand the world is but an image of a greater pre-existing reality, and in Platonic terms, rather than existing in the shadows, he is willing to relocate into the brilliant and eternal light. If beauty is removed from him, he will pursue beauty, even into the next world, and as some might say, that is where the reality always is, in contrast to this artificial world of physical limitation. He reminds me of Singer's "Gimpel the Fool" who, in a Spinozan way, comes to recognize a similar truth. Or, in the common vernacular, John Lennon's line, "I won't live in a world without love" seems to fit. Indeed, Dokey's last line is important: "Juan Sanchez had simply gone home" (36).

For Juan to accept the possibility of living in Twin Pines, or anywhere for that matter, he would have to fully embrace instinct as a means for achieving honor and justice, but these ideals, though important to him, do not capture his imagination like the sublime does. For him, justice cannot exist, if it means beauty is not possible.

His courage and honor matter little if they are muted means to achieve his celebration of the beautiful. Really, he is rather holistic in his approach to life. He is not a merely fragmented man unable to see other possibilities of coping with pain and loss. Rather, he sees the greater whole, and in a Socratic epistemology, he not only sees but whole-heartedly believes in the inter-connectedness of the great ideas. Unlike modern proponents, who encourage honor but doubt the possibility of truth, and who talk about justice but see the world as a place of only vile expression, Juan recognizes that the category of beauty cannot be eliminated from consideration. To him, it is absurd to consider justice and honor apart from beauty. His last conscious thought:

> An image went off in his head and he remembered vividly the lovely body of La Belleza. In that instant the sound that loving had produced with the bed was alive in him like a forgotten melody, and his body seemed to swell and press against the ceiling. It was particularly cruel because it was so sudden, so intense, and came from so deep within him that he knew it must all still be alive somewhere, and that was the cruelest part of all (36).

For Juan Sanchez, the American Dream is an aesthetic vision, and perhaps that is implied for all who seek the American Dream. Freedom of economic determination seems to enable the dreamer to not only embrace but also retain his ideal of beauty. As Dokey's story suggests, however, other factors conflict and interrupt the dream, but at least in the character of Juan Sanchez, readers are led to reconsider the possibility of the eternal forms. Juan's love, is still alive somewhere.

NOTES

1.Also see Anzaldua's *Borderlands/ la frontera*.

2. Two examples include: Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* and John Phillip Santos's *Places* Left *Unfinished at the Time of Creation*.

3.Carranza writes: "Chicano realism ought to include a careful analysis of the Mexican-American's betrayal from the perspectives of the language of history, psychology, sociology and economics. Such an analysis however should not end with studies about the group, or the class, or the people. For all such studies exclude

the individual. Each Mexican-American ought to be allowed, at his own choice, the opportunity for an analysis of his betrayal" (*Pensamientos*, 46).

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