

"MYTHS AND THEIR TRANSFORMATIONS, THE MYTHOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF RUDOLFO ANAYA'S THE LEGEND OF LA LLORONA"

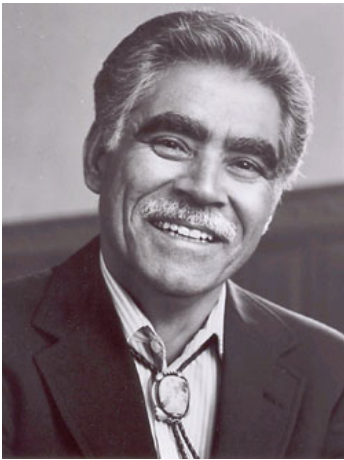
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MYTH IS A PAST WITH A FUTURE, EXERCISING ITSELF IN THE PRESENT.

CARLOS FUENTES

RUDOLFO ANAYA



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STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- ❑ TO BECOME FAMILIAR WITH KEY FIGURES IN THE MESOAMERICAN MYTHOLOGICAL PANTHEON.
- ❑ TO EXPLORE CROSS-TRADITIONAL MYTHOLOGICAL THEMES.
- ❑ TO GAIN A BASIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE HISTORICAL DRAMA OF THE SPANISH CONQUEST OF MEXICO.
- ❑ TO UNDERSTAND THE TRANSFORMATION OF MYTHS FROM SEVERAL PERSPECTIVES, INCLUDING THE CULTURAL, POLITICAL, AND LITERARY DOMAINS.

KEY QUESTIONS

- ❑ HOW HAVE CERTAIN TRENDS



, ETHICS



, & PERSPECTIVES



CONTRIBUTED



TO THEMES



IN CHICANO

- ❑ WHAT SYMBOLS, MOTIFS, AND ARCHETYPES ARE PREVALENT



IN CHICANO LITERATURE, SPECIFICALLY IN RUDOLFO ANAYA'S *BLESS ME ULTIMA*?

NARRATIVE

The Legend of La Llorona is unique among the literary works in the SAUSD language arts curriculum in that it is the only work set in both the mythological and historical worlds of the Aztecs (Mexico, Nahua) at the time of the Spanish Conquest of Mexico. An investigation of its several themes demands an exploration of the mythological context of the novelette, as well as interpretation of the historical and political transformations of the mythological elements. Anyone familiar with Southwest and Mexican folklore will immediately recognize the mythic element of LOL in its very title. What may require unveiling, however, is the mythological symbolism and allusion that stand, sometimes very subtly, behind some of the key characters and events in the drama. My project will therefore attempt to define, in glossary form,

- important deities from the Aztec pantheon that play a significant role in the drama of LOL;
- important historical figures who also play a key role in the drama;
- and significant historical/mythological places that form the geographical setting of LOL.

In addition, there will be ample discussion of the mythological, historical, political, and literary interpretations of the characters (mythological and historical) of LOL. This will include a discussion of the *motif of "transformation" in myth* and how it can be used allegorically for mythological, political, and literary ends.

DISCUSSION OF THE MYTHOLOGICAL ELEMENTS

QUETZALCOATL AND HUITZILOPOCHTLI

Here it will be important to enter into a more thorough discussion of these two gods than what is given in the glossary, in particular with regards to Quetzalcoatl. Indeed, Quetzalcoatl is a multi-faceted god rich in symbolism and lore. Aside from being the god of peace and knowledge, he is a cultural hero and friend to human kind. It is Quetzalcoatl who gives the human race the knowledge of agriculture and the knowledge of the crafts. In this respect, he resembles Prometheus in the Greek tradition. Moreover, Quetzalcoatl is a phoenix figure: He is consumed by fire only to be reborn. This characteristic of the god will play an important role in the political domain of LOL.

Quetzalcoatl receives his cultural heroism and phoenix status from the legend of his death and rebirth. The celebrated king and deity was tricked by sorcerers into becoming inebriated and committing carnal acts with his sister. Realizing what he had done, out of a deep sense of shame, he throws himself into a fire at the edge of the sea, consuming himself in flames. Ascending to heaven from the flames, phoenix-like, his heart was transformed "into the star that appears at dawn," the morning star, or Venus. After this, Quetzalcoatl ventures to Mictlan, or the "land of the dead," where he undergoes trials and purification (Knab 73-81). One of Quetzalcoatl's feats during his eight days in the Kingdom of the Dead was the creation of humankind. Spilling his own blood on the "precious bones," the human race was born (Sejourne 69-70).

After creating the human race, the "children of Quetzalcoatl," the god then sought a way to nourish them. After discovering corn hidden by ants within a hill, he transformed himself into an ant and stole a grain of corn, which he then gave to the humans for sustenance. After presenting the humans with this gift of agriculture, thereby tending to their need for simple sustenance, Quetzalcoatl began teaching them the arts: precious stonework, weaving, science, astronomy, and the priestly disciplines of prayer and sacrifice (Caso, Aztecs 25). Thus Quetzalcoatl is the pre-eminent cultural hero. Not only does he create and sustain the human race, he also gives them the means by which to become excellent and more like their creator. He is the god of wisdom, peace, and harmony for the Nahau.

Regarding Quetzalcoatl's rebirth or return, the prophesy maintained that he would return in the year *ce atl*, or "one reed", as the morning star. This was also the year he disappeared, *ce atl* occurring every fifty-two years. This time, *ce atl* fell in the year 1519, the year in which Cortes would arrive on the coast of Veracruz on Mexico's eastern shore, the very direction from which the morning star, the Lord of the Dawn, Quetzalcoatl, would be returning. Legend has it, and most historians agree, although there is now some dissent, that Moctezuma, then priest-king of the Aztecs, believed Cortes to be Quetzalcoatl, or at least one of his emissaries. Quetzalcoatl was often described and depicted as being fair-skinned with plumes on his face. When the fair-skinned Spaniards sporting red beards arrived on the eastern shores Mexico in the year *ce atl*, in ships the likes of which the indigenous peoples of Mexico had never seen, it was quite understandable that they might be mistaken for the much-awaited god (Krauze 44).

These distinguishing qualities of Quetzalcoatl provided post-Conquest Catholic reformers with a plan for yet another metamorphosis of

the god so revered in pre-Columbian Mexico. Due to similarities between certain of the religious symbols and practices of Christianity and the cult of Quetzalcoatl, some ambitious members of the Franciscan and Jesuit orders in the 16th century erroneously identified the two figures as Saint Thomas-Quetzalcoatl in an attempt to establish the precedence of Christianity in New Spain (Lafaye 177-206). A variation of the problem of Quetzalcoatl's similarities--and differences--with Christ is explored imaginatively by D.H. Lawrence in the novel *The Plumed Serpent*.

The etymology of Quetzalcoatl is also revealing of his several aspects: Quetzal is a feather of the quetzal bird known for its green-blue beauty. Indeed, the indigenous peoples of Mexico so esteemed this bird that the very name became synonymous with "precious." Coatl means serpent primarily, but it also means "twin" (the modern Spanish word for twin, "cuate," is derived from this). This may come from understanding Quetzalcoatl's epithet Lord of the Dawn, or of the morning star, Venus, together with this star's twin, the evening star, which is also Venus (Caso, Aztecs 24). Thus, Quetzalcoatl is referred to by various epithets, but most notably Plumed Serpent, Precious Twin, or Lord of the Dawn.

It is also important to note another theory of Quetzalcoatl's origin. It was believed that Quetzalcoatl was once an earthly--and historical--figure, Prince Topiltzin of the Toltecs. Legend has it he left the Toltec nation of Tula on a spiritual pilgrimage, vowing to return one day. One scholar interprets this journey in light of one of Plumed Serpent's motifs, that of a bridge between heaven and earth. His serpent aspect is tied to the earth, and his plumed aspect is tied to the heavens. On his journey he travels both to the underworld (Mictlan) and to the heavens, making it possible for humankind to also take this journey (Sejourne 66). Some scholars have tried to reduce Quetzalcoatl to the historical Quetzalcoatl-Topiltzin, but others maintain there is not sufficient empirical evidence to support this claim, nor can all the lore surrounding Quetzalcoatl--much of it appealing to more universal mythological motifs--be found to exist in the material surrounding the historical figure. Furthermore, the myth of the Plumed Serpent is pervasive in Mesoamerican civilization. Thus the likelihood of the life story of a king from Tula reaching the extremities of Guatemala, to be transformed into a myth with universal motifs, is slim (Sejourne 54).

Important in the founding of the Aztec nation, Huitzilopochtli, the war god, is the reigning deity at the inception of LOL and the antagonist, on one level, of Quetzalcoatl. Huitzilopochtli was born of Coatlicue, earth goddess (see below), and saved his mother from death by defending her against his siblings, the moon and stars. This was his first trial as a warrior, a title he would bear henceforth (Caso, Aztecs 52). It is interesting to note that Huitzilopochtli is also known as the sun and the Sun God. He is Tonatiuh, Sun God, whose face appears in the center of the Aztec Calendar. He slew his brothers and sisters, the moon and stars, with a bolt of light, establishing himself as the most powerful and the brightest of the astral deities.

Cortes and Malinche's children, Tizoc and Olin, in LOL, are linked to the two gods, Quetzalcoatl and Huitzilopochtli, via their names and character traits. The following is a brief discussion of the etymology of Tizoc and Olin:

Tizoc: Tizoc's etymology is not as rich as Olin's. However, what is known of it suggests this name was deliberately chosen by the author to represent the son who will follow the path of peace. The historical Tizoc was an Aztec king. Some said he was cowardly (Bierhorst, Cantares 53). Others, not so extreme in their criticism, merely claimed that he was limited in his deeds and did not show himself to be very inclined towards the activities of war (Leon-Portilla, *Los Antiguos Mexicanos* 105). Another telling feature of this figure is that he was told by shamans he would not live long, so he should enjoy his little time on earth (Bierhorst, Cantares 48). Tizoc, in LOL, dies young. It should also be noted that a popular Mexican movie, *Tizoc*, starring Pedro Infante, portrays its protagonist, of the same name as the title, as a gentle and peaceful man of mestizo background.

Olin: More complex, Olin's etymology, derived in part from a Nahuatl verb for "motion," olini, can mean "to stir or come to life (of ghost warriors) especially as they arrive on earth," and the motion of warriors shaking their weapons in battle (Bierhorst, *Concordance* 248). Moreover, we have the connection with Olin Tonatiuh (sun god whose face is seen in the center of the Aztec Calendar, also associated with Huitzilopochtli). His special day on the Aztec calendar is the 17th day of the month, which is the judicial sign in astrology. His name also means "born before his time" (Simeon 354). (In LOL, Olin, too, dies young, and his mother prophesied that his time would be the future.) All of these meanings and epithets correspond most accurately to the war god, Huitzilopochtli, whom the character Olin follows.

Furthermore, it could be said that Malinche and Cortes themselves are linked to the gods through their own character traits, Malinche being more inclined towards peace (Quetzalcoatl), whereas Cortes in many respects embodies the warrior spirit (Huitzilopochtli), but without belonging to that mythological tradition (he is European, a Spaniard). Thus the children, Tizoc and Olin, are extensions (transformations) of their parents who are extensions (transformations) of the gods Quetzalcoatl and Huitzilopochtli. Malinche,

however, is cleverly linked to yet another deity, a goddess.

MALINCHE AS COATLICUE, CIHUACOATL, TONANTZIN, AND LA LLORONA

Malinche (Malintzin in her indigenous idiom) is the protagonist of LOL and by far its most interesting character. She is the tragic heroine who is transformed into the legendary La Llorona of the title. But her lineage can be followed back to the realm of myth. Indeed, her mythological persona is Coatlicue (earth goddess) who also becomes Cihuacoatl (goddess of women who die in childbirth).

First, let us look at Coatlicue ("lady of the skirt of serpents"). As earth goddess, Coatlicue plays a central role in Aztec mythology because she is the mother of the gods--sun, moon, stars, and Huitzilopochtli (Caso, Aztecs 53). Another account of the creation of the gods maintains that the "Dual Principle," Ometecuhtli, together with the "Dual Lady," Omecihuatl, were the progenitors of the four gods Huitzilopochtli, Quetzalcoatl, Red Tezcatlipoca, and Black Tezcatlipoca (Caso, Aztecs 10). This would make Huitzilopochtli and Quetzalcoatl brothers. Leon-Portilla, following Justino Fernandez's lead in his work Coatlicue, links Ometecuhtli and Omecihuatl together into Ometeotl, the Dual Principle, and then suggests that Coatlicue can be seen as the "creative tension" of this dyad (Leon-Portilla, Aztec Thought and Culture 98). In LOL, Malinche is mother to Olin and Tizoc, whose names are associated with Huitzilopochtli and Quetzalcoatl, respectively, rendering Malinche's link to Coatlicue all the more sound. Another epithet for Coatlicue is Tonantzin ("Our Mother"). (Tonantzin would later be replaced by the indigenous Virgin of Guadalupe. Her place of worship, the Basilica of Guadalupe, would be superimposed upon the sacred hill of Tepeyac, outside of Mexico City and once site of worship for "Our Mother," Tonantzin. See Jacques Lafaye's fascinating account of this transformation in Quetzalcoatl and Guadalupe.) Tonantzin is not only mother goddess, but also goddess of destruction and filth because she eats the corpses of the dead. Yet this is a benevolent act, for through this process the dead are purified (Caso, Aztecs 53-54). This throws further light upon Malinche's sacrifice of Tizoc and Olin. Through their sacrifice, they will be purified of any sin or any tainting of their character borne out of the crimes of their parents.

Now let us look at another aspect of Coatlicue, and thus Malinche: Cihuacoatl. Cihuacoatl, or "serpent woman," was the patron goddess of the cihuateteo, or women who have died in childbirth (Caso, Aztecs 54). These women were said to descend to the earth on certain nights, appearing at crossroads and proving fatal to young children. They were known as "the women who wailed and moaned in the night" (Caso, Aztecs 54). These women/spirits were to become the legendary La Llorona, and Malinche would become, in Anaya's LOL, Mexico's most famous Llorona. For she, too, after sacrificing her children, wails in the night, vowing to bring back her children. But her loss, to repeat, was a sacrifice, a sacrifice demanded by Huitzilopochtli, and she knows something will come of it. She knows something greater will be born from the waters of the lake that claimed her children:

"Listen," Malinche responded. "Do you hear the cry of my sons? They cry in the waters of the lake. They call for me to come. I go now, transformed by this deed into the eternal mother who cannot sleep until she finds her sons. I will never tire of that search, not until all of my sons are safe in my arms. I, Malinche, princess and mother of the Mexicans, will forever be known as the woman who cries for her sons...." (Anaya, LOL 89)

Malinche vows that this sacrifice of her children will bring about the birth of future sons: "My sons were to be made slaves," she says, "and I paid for their liberation dearly. Now they are dead...but other sons will rise against you and avenge this deed. The future will not forgive any of us" (Anaya, LOL 89). Here Malinche can be seen as Tonantzin, and the future sons can be understood in light of Quetzalcoatl's phoenix motif. The sons will be born anew, perhaps--and I believe this is what Anaya would have us think--as a combination of Quetzalcoatl and Huitzilopochtli, and as a new warrior who will fight for peace, perhaps a political warrior. Malinche's own vision of the future supports this:

Her sons were warriors ready to go forward: one a warrior of Huitzilopochtli the war god, strong and resolute in understanding his role in the struggle for freedom, the other, a follower of Quetzalcoatl, a follower of the path of light and knowledge, and together they were the two parts of the new man, the new man of Mexico. They would live forever. This was but the first step in their long destiny. Others would come after them, the crest would grow, Mexico would be free. (Anaya, LOL 79)

This is the point at which Anaya himself becomes a mythmaker more than any other place in LOL. For here he combines the two gods into a single entity, a new warrior, one willing to fight for peace and justice. Malinche says to her son, Tizoc, earlier on in LOL,

"Perhaps that is the only hope left for Mexico...that the wise god return, he who creates harmony between heaven and earth. Or it may be he will come in the form of a man, or a woman, some poor person who rises from the earth of our land and comes to show the people the way. That hope will always be there" (Anaya, LOL 46).

But this was before Malinche was aware that she had been betrayed. Yes, this savior of Mexico may still be a poor man or woman, and yes, the goal must still be peace, Quetzalcoatl's path, but now mere passivity may no longer be the answer. Moctezuma fell because of it. Now the new man must also embody the strength of Huitzilopochtli, the warrior spirit, as well as the wisdom of Quetzalcoatl.

This leads us to the next domain, the political.

DISCUSSION OF THE POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL ELEMENTS

Why did Rudolfo Anaya write *The Legend of La Llorona*? Although not a militant Chicano activist, Anaya is clearly a spokesperson for his people, as can be seen by his reworking of traditional Mexican and Southwestern myths and legends into contexts which serve as aids for exploring and understanding many of the cultural and political issues of Chicano culture.

In *LOL*, Malinche represents indigenous Mexico because she is seduced and violated by the foreigner in her own homeland. As a result of this forced coupling, a new, hybrid race is brought into being, one which does not belong fully to either world. This race is known as the mestizo (literally "mixed"). Cortes and Malinche's sons are symbolically the first mestizos. Malinche is concerned they will not be respected if they emigrate to their father's world, Spain, as Cortes wishes, thus she ultimately sacrifices them. But before this happens, Cortes also rightly fears the boys will never be treated fairly in Mexico, where he believes the indigenous people will look upon them with contempt, as the sons of those who conquered and subjugated them. Thus he desires to take the boys with him to Spain where they can be educated and receive the due respect their European blood commands. Yet at the same time he would deny them their native culture and their own mother as well (whom he ultimately gives to a friend). This theme of not belonging is sometimes described as the plight of the Chicano: not at home in either world, the Anglo-American or the Mexican.

Malinche's tragic insight is that she allowed herself to be seduced by a man (she says she was "blinded" by love) who would use her as an interpreter and concubine--leading ultimately to the betrayal of her own people--and then abandon her. She (Mexico) was seduced by the foreigner, the man with "blue eyes" who ultimately had no regard for her own dignity or that of her people and their native culture. In a discussion of the (usually) pejorative Spanish verb *chingarse*, Octavio Paz, in his *The Labyrinth of Solitude*, maintains that Malinche was the first *chingada*, the "violated mother." Thus future Mexican generations, the mestizos, would be *los hijos de la chingada*, "sons of the violated, or raped, one" (Paz, *Labyrinth* 85-87). This is the worst insult that can be hurled against someone in Mexican Spanish. To this day a *malinchista*--a "traitor"--is someone who prefers the foreign over the Mexican, someone, in political terms, who courts foreign interests over the interests of the Mexican people, or someone who has been corrupted by the foreign (Paz, *Labyrinth* 86). Such Mexican leaders as Porfirio Diaz (an indigenous man who powdered his face white to appear European and married a second wife of French origin) and Salinas de Gortari (Mexican drafter of the North American Free Trade Agreement) have in the minds of some earned this disparaging epithet.

Can anything positive or productive rise out of such degradation and rape? Some revisionist historians claim that Malinche was the first Mexican feminist. She stood up to the man who violated her by sacrificing their son (Novas 61). But is infanticide an appropriate retribution for injustice? In Anaya's version of the legend, it is not so much the murder/sacrifice of the children that is the ultimate act of Malinche's vengeance. Rather, it is what will be born, phoenix-like, as a result of this sacrifice. It is the second-coming of Quetzalcoatl, his return as a new breed, a warrior (Huitzilopochtli) who fights for peace (Quetzalcoatl). In Anaya's retelling of the legend, Malinche is looking forward from the time of the Spanish Conquest of Mexico, using the maternal foresight given her by the mother goddess Coatlicue/Tonantzin, to the future warriors who will fight--not always violently, frequently politically--for the liberation of her people. She knows there will be an Hidalgo, a Juarez, a Zapata, a Cesar Chavez, and a Dolores Huerta. She knows there will be figures in history that will embody the most refined qualities of Quetzalcoatl and Huitzilopochtli.

Indeed, such a character exists in one of Anaya's own novels, *Heart of Aztlan*. The protagonist, Clement Chavez, struggles to provide for his family in the barrios of Albuquerque. He must pit himself against a powerful railroad yard that exploits its workers. After embarking on his own hero's journey, which leads him, with the aid of an Orpheus-like helper, to a fantastic underworld, Clement Chavez finds what he sought, the legendary Heart of Aztlan. He returns to his people with renewed strength and inspiration to lead them in a strike against the great railroad. But before doing so, he must squelch the violent attempts made by some more impudent members of the community to burn down the railroad yard. He shuns violence. Clement Chavez, like his contemporary Cesar Chavez, embodies the qualities of Anaya's hero Quetzalcoatl-Huitzilopochtli in a most refined way. The novel ends with the people of the barrio marching down the street towards the railroad yard. (See Anaya, *Heart of Aztlan*.)

As he does in many of his other mythic novels--Bless Me, Ultima; Heart of Aztlan; and Tortuga--Anaya, in *The Legend of La Llorona*, leaves his readers with the burden of responsibility. They must pick up where his characters leave off.

However, Anaya was by no means the first thinker to use Quetzalcoatl's phoenix quality to invent heroes. It was already a practice of many Mexican writers and artists before him. Octavio Paz said of Zapata, for example, "Like Morelos and Cuauhtemoc, [Zapata] is one of our legendary heroes." Further, he says, "As a political myth...in the popular imagination, many of our heroes are only translations of Quetzalcoatl" (Baldwin 143).

More recently artists of the "Mexican Renaissance" movement of the early part of the 20th century succeeded in reviving Quetzalcoatl as a symbol of Mexico's native vigor: "The looming role of *hombre-dios* Quetzalcoatl was re-imagined and reborn in many works of major muralists of the Mexican modernist period (as well as succeeding generations)" (Baldwin 146). Rivera's Quetzalcoatl in the Ancient World, 1929; Orozco's *The Epic of American Civilization: The Coming of Quetzalcoatl*, 1932-1934; and Siqueiros' *The Resurrection of Cuauhtemoc*, 1951-1952, and *Cuauhtemoc Against the Myth*, 1944, are just a few examples (Baldwin 153-158). The Mexican Renaissance was a rebirth of Mexico's indigenous past in the creative imagination of its contemporary artists. What better symbol than Quetzalcoatl, patron deity of the arts and creativity, forever renewing himself in phoenix-like fashion, to lead this cultural revolution.

In the United States the Chicano movement would also look to its indigenous past. However, its people would not need to look so far as Tenochtitlan because at their very back door lay Aztlan, mythic homeland of the Mexica, or Aztec, tribe: "In the spirit of a new people...we, the Chicano, inhabitants and civilizers of the northern land of Aztlan...declare that the call of our blood is our power." And yet at the same time they would recognize their mestizo forefathers and mothers: "With our heart in our hands and our hands in the soil, we declare the independence of our mestizo Nation....we are a bronze people with a bronze culture" (Rendon 9). Here we come closer to Anaya's vision in *LOL*, for as the first mestizos, Olin and Tizoc submit to their sacrifice in order to preserve their culture for future generations, and for future incarnations of Quetzalcoatl. They die, in the style of true Aztec warriors, in a struggle. Their sacrifice is an act of war against their oppressors. Had they gone with their father, Cortes, to Spain, they would have negated their Nahua upbringing, and they would have submitted to the enslavement of the dominant culture. Malinche tells them, "Don't think that this is the end of life, it is but the beginning of a new cycle of time" (Anaya, *LOL* 78).

The notion that sacrifice is a cosmic necessity for ushering in a new era, one in which oppressed people enjoy new liberty and dignity, was shared by other Chicano thinkers: "The Fifth Sun [Quinto Sol] is born out of man's sacrifice" (Rendon 8.) The sacrifice is the sweat, persecution, and denial of years of non-recognition. The goal is unity: "We can think of ourselves as a community of the future and of the past seeking its identity in the present" (Rendon 8). Anaya's myth in *LOL* foreshadows this vision. It takes its readers to the roots of the vision, to the very mixture of soil and blood in Conquest Tenochtitlan that would incubate the seeds and then nurture the tree that would bear the fruit of the "new man," the mestizo. His Malinche, La Llorona, would bear the scars of being this man's mother.

CONCLUSION

If myth is a past with a future, exercising itself in the present, as Carlos Fuentes says, then Rudolfo Anaya is one of our important contemporary myth-makers. In his *The Legend of La Llorona*, Anaya takes a traditional legend, La Llorona, with roots in Nahau mythology, sets it in an historical period, the Conquest, and transforms it into a myth for the present. He employs and exercises timeless and universal mythic elements--peace, war, sacrifice, liberation, and motherhood--for a contemporary audience, and perhaps a future one. The story is not only relevant for Mexicans, or Chicanos, but for any oppressed people struggling for liberty, dignity, and identity. As the great Mexican muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros said of his Cuauhtemoc murals, "The value of the Mexican hero is rooted in history as a symbol of the struggles of all the oppressed peoples of the world" (Baldwin 158).

"MYTHS AND THEIR TRANSFORMATIONS"

7

GLOSSARY

AZTEC, the Mexican tribe that would dominate the Valley of Mexico and found the city called Tenochtitlan. They were also called the Mexica.

AZTLAN, mythic home of the Aztecs believed to be somewhere in what is now the Southwest of the United States: California, Arizona, and New Mexico. The tribe to be known as the Aztecs were exiled from Aztlan, but legend claims they will return.

CE ACATL (Say-ah'-katl), the year of "one reed" on the Aztec calendar, or Sun Stone. In this year it was prophesied the god Quetzalcoatl would return. It is also the year Cortes arrived in Mexico.

CIHUACOATL (See-wah-co'-atl), literally "snake woman." An aspect of Coatlicue, she was patron goddess of women who died in childbirth (Cihuateteo). See also Tonantzin.

COATLICUE (Co-at-lee'-kway), known as the Earth Goddess, she was a very important figure in the Aztec pantheon. A mother goddess, she gave birth to the stellar deities and to Huitzilopochtli, god of war. See also Tonantzin.

CORTES, leader of the Spanish conquistadors who defeated the Aztecs.

CODEX, sacred book of pictographs used by pre-Columbian peoples throughout Mesoamerica.

CUAUHTEMOC (Kwow-tay'-moc), last Aztec emperor to rule Tenochtitlan. A heroic figure, ironically his name means "eagle who fell."

QUINTO SOL, the "Fifth Sun," an epoch on the Aztec calendar, believed to be the ultimate period for the Aztecs.

GUCUMATZ (Goo-coo-matz'), Mayan version of the god Plumed Serpent.

HUITZILOPOCHTLI (Weet-zeel-o-potch'-tly), Aztec god of war. Reigning deity of the Aztecs. He required sacrifices. Also the Sun God. See Tonatiuh.

IZTACCIHUATL (Eetz-ak-see'-watel), legendary—but actual—volcano outside of Mexico City. Legend says it was once a princess.

LA LLORONA, literally, "weeping woman," a legendary woman who, betrayed by her lover, drowned their two children in a river. Forever after she was transformed into the weeping woman who roams lonely roads at night, seeking her children and killing any others she finds unattended. There are many versions of this story.

MALINCHE/MALINTZIN, translator/interpreter to Cortez, she was also his mistress and mother of his children. Sometimes she is understood to be synonymous with "traitor" for her role in helping Cortes conquer the Aztecs.

MEXICA (Me-she'-ka), the tribe also known as the Aztecs, from which Mexico derives its name.

MOCTEZUMA (Mawk-te-zum'-ah), emperor of the Aztecs when Cortez arrived to Mexico, he was defeated by the Spaniards. Also known as Montezuma.

NAHUA (Now'-wah), language spoken by the Toltecs and, after them, the Aztecs. The culture of the Toltecs and Aztecs. Many scholars now refer to this culture and people as Nahuatl, rather than Toltec or Aztec.

NOPAL, Prickly Pear Cactus. Symbol, with the eagle and the serpent, on the Mexican flag and sign given by Huitzilopochtli that the nomadic tribe to be known as the Aztecs had reached their destination, Tenochtitlan, in the Valley of Mexico.

POPOCATEPETL (Poh-poh-ka-te'-petl), volcano outside of Mexico City. Companion to Iztaccihuatl. According to legend, he was once a warrior.

QUETZALCOATL (Kayt-zal-co'-atl), the god Plumed Serpent, or "feathered snake," as his name denotes. God of wisdom, knowledge, light, harmony, and wind. A cultural hero, he created humankind, agriculture and the arts. The legendary Toltec priest-king Topiltzin. The "morning star," the "evening star," and the planet Venus.

PIEDRA DEL SOL (Sun Stone), Aztec calendar, used for determining the epochs of the Aztec cosmogony, sacred festivals, cardinal directions, etc.

TLALOC (Tlah'-loc), god of rain and storms; god of water. Very important deity. Closely allied with Quetzalcoatl, also god of wind (Ehécatl).

TEOTIHUACAN (Tay-o-tee-wah-kahn'), sacred city north of Mexico City. Site of the Pyramids of the Sun and Moon. Believed to have been inhabited by different peoples at different times, including the Toltecs. At its peak, it is believed that Teotihuacan rivaled or even surpassed Rome as a great cosmopolitan civilization.

TOLTECS, great pre-Aztec civilization from Tula (Tollan), north of Mexico City. Known as the "Great Builders," the Toltecs were renowned for their sophistication in architecture, the arts, and well-defined religious doctrines. The Aztecs appropriated much of their own culture from the Toltecs.

TONANTZIN (To-nan-teen'), literally, "Our Mother," this goddess is another aspect of Coatlicue. An important figure who was transformed by the Spanish Catholics into the Virgin of Guadalupe. Also has a parallel with La Llorona (See discussion in narrative section of this unit).

TONATIUH (To-nah-tee'-yew), the Sun God and another aspect of Huitzilopochtli. His face is seen in the center of the Aztec Sun Stone calendar. Human sacrifices were demanded by this god. Also known as Ollin Tonatiuh, he was associated with warriors and the activities of war.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY #1:

1. SELECT A TOPIC FROM THE GLOSSARY OR FROM THE TABLE BELOW

Aztec Sun Stone	Catholic Friar*	Coatlicue	Cortes	Huitzilopochtli	La Llorona
Malinche	Moctezuma	Quetzalcoatl	Shaman*	Tenochtitlan	Teotihuacan
Tlaloc	Tonatiuh				*Not included in glossary

2. MINI-RESEARCH:

- ☐ Who: Who was the character; if a place, who built or founded it.
- ☐ What: What was the character most known for; if a god, what were his/her powers; if a place, what was its purpose, what materials were used in its construction, etc.
- ☐ Where: Where is the character from; if a god, where was he/she worshipped; if a place, where was it located.
- ☐ When: When was the character born, when did he/she die, when did he/she achieve fame, etc.; if a god, when was he/she worshipped (archeological information); if a place, when was it built.
- ☐ Why: Why did the character do what he/she is known for; if a god, why was he/she worshipped; if a place, why was it built.
- ☐ How: How did the character achieve his/her deeds; if a god, how did he/she function, how was he/she worshipped; if a place, how was it built.

7

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*Note: of the works listed in the bibliography are classics or standards in their fields and can be deemed reliable. Particularly useful for material on Aztec mythology are the works of Miguel Leon-Portilla and Alfonso Caso. Hugh Thomas' *Conquest* offers a thorough treatment of the period. For a more philosophical/religious treatment of Aztec and Toltec mythology, Laurette Sejourne's work is helpful. Neil Baldwin's work is an excellent introduction to Mesoamerican history, mythology, and culture viewed in light of the Quetzalcoatl myth.