

THE LOW COUNTRIES CONFERENCE 2011

TRANSLATION AND NATIONAL IMAGES

Antwerp & Amsterdam, 16-17-18 November 2011

Jointly organized by Lessius Antwerp and the University of Amsterdam

An van Hecke (Antwerp, Belgium)

Mexican Icons and Images

Chicano writers have always been very creative in their representation of Mexican history and mythology. This Mexican background, with a great variety of national symbols, images and icons, is of course fundamental in the complex search for identity of the Chicano community. But at the same time, for Chicano authors who write mainly in English, there is undoubtedly the desire to transfer and integrate these Mexican images into their own specific context, as a minority group in the U.S., and to “translate” these images to their English-speaking readers, whether they are Chicanos or not. In this study of inter-linguistic and inter-cultural transfer of national images, I will focus on the narrative of Rudolfo Anaya. In many of his works appear the Mexican mythical figures and historical icons that have become stereotypes in Mexican and Chicano culture: Quetzalcóatl, the Virgen of Guadalupe, Malinche, La Llorona, Pancho Villa, among others. My aim is to examine how these images are represented in Anaya’s work, how the paradoxical dynamic of mythification and demythification is reflected, and how the transfer into English-written texts either consolidates and reinforces the stereotypical views on these images or, on the contrary, transforms them. Within this context, it may be significant that Anaya maintains the Spanish word “La Llorona” in *The Legend of La Llorona: A Short Novel* (1984). In English La Llorona is mostly known as “The weeping woman”. There are even other translations, as in Sandra Cisneros’ *Woman Hollering Creek* (1991). Besides Anaya’s most known works, *Bless me, Ultima* (1972) and *Albuquerque* (1992), I will try to include as many works as possible, in order to get an overview of these images along his work. For this analysis, the book of Rosana Blanco Cano, *Cuerpos disidentes del México imaginado* (2010), will be particularly useful. Blanco Cano considers the transnational position of Chicanos of great value in the reflection on the (re)construction of identities. She insists on the notion of cultures in constant transformation and on the constant crossing of borders (Blanco Cano 2010: 14-15). In the case of Anaya I am particularly interested in the revision and reconfiguration of the concept of nation, through the analysis of the Mexican icons and images.