

100 Years of Corridos: A song for the New Mexico Centennial

In the first chapter
of the Gospel
according to Anaya
Rudolfo writes ...

“All of the older people spoke only Spanish,
and I myself understood only Spanish...”

... in English

¡Bienvenidos Albuquerque!
I myself understand only English

... in Diné

We speak many languages
but mean the same thing
and mañana will be more of the same

Familia.
 Food.
 Fiesta.
 Forever.

(sung) *Come on and sing along!*
We're going to
Familia...
 Comida...
 Fiesta...
 Forever...

For 100 years B.C.
 before the Commodores
 before Lionel Ritchie
 and for a 100 years more
we've farmed, feasted and fixed cars

We've moved people
and mixed razas
we've got an appointment with the curandera
as soon as we leave the doctors

A lust for livestock
like chupacabras

Afraid of God
and the inexplicable...

¡Dinosaur fossils!

So in love with space
and the people who live there
that we speak Chewbacca

The 47th state
admitted to the Union
we might as well have been The Moon

...of Endor
to our forefathers

With the oldest
and highest
state capital in the country
people on both coasts
should look up to us
instead of wondering
if they have to exchange their money
before coming

YES,

dollars is our official currency too
and though
we don't have much of it
money can't buy cultura

Our history book
The King Alfonso Version
is a canon
of wars and peace

A Bible
of you and me

That was written in Madrid
by missionaries and mestizos

We are men of magic
and women of wizardry
who speak in spell and song

Wing words
and fly them like a flag
all yellow
between red and green
like a traffic light
like the state question is
hurry up
or slow down

Never stop

All of the older people sung only corridos
however, in those corridos
me? I only heard gospel

maybe it's me
maybe it's a stage

But every time
I hear the clap of thunder
it sounds like a blessing

Every time
I hear the pitter, patter
of rain

it sounds
like a round
of applause

And even the monsoon roars
“Encore”
and the flash floods flood
our hearts with love

One hundred New Year's Eves
of trying to puncture precipitation
where the sky never dies
and the clouds wear bulletproof vests
where we perpetually live

in the shadow of a hot air balloon eclipse

We are not a city
that speaks “Good Morning”

we are a city that speaks
Mass Ascension

Like Grandpa only spoke Spanish
while he was drinking

Buenos Dias

Like Grandma only spoke Latin
when she was praying

Buenas Noches

Where water
is so sacred and scarce
that we pot it in puddles
on our flat roofs

pool it in vestibule
stoups of steepled temples
where pigeons swirl and roost

pond it in mountaintops
on our not-so-flat horizons

bottle it in our bodies
and then set fire to it in our forests

Where it sounds like
acequias babble “amen”
and bosques smell like baptisms

Where the rain
doesn't speak any language
it only understands dance

and sometimes

We miss it so much
we need TWO rainbows
to promise us it is coming back

After thousands of years of owners
for this little piece of hacienda
it's been us as tenants

together

Roommates for the past hundred
call it a trust
call it a Zia-shaped symbol for eternity
over our right ring finger
call it the interconnectedness of cultures
call it married to each other
speak now or forever hold your "chisme"

We are
actions speak louder than wordsmiths
storytelling rituals

We don't speak Project Runway
we cowboy cosmopolitan
urban Traditional

Where our children dare not say or see
"Cucui" or "La llorona"
but are lucky Santa speaks Spanglish
and has a sweet tooth for leche y biscochitos

Where birthdays are miracles
and each one has a spirit
 Holy Spirit
 or patron saint

Where we celebrate 100

today

In the beginning
the Greatest Spirit
created America
 and the earth
 and it was

Bueno

I don't speak perfect English
barely even speak passable Spanish

but it's okay
because there is no such thing
as "perfect English"
except for the word

Nuevo Mexico

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