

## QUERENCIA AND CURANDERISMO in Fajardo-Anstine's "Remedies"

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**Abstract:** In her collection *Sabrina & Corina* (2019), Chicana-Amerindian feminist author Kali Fajardo-Anstine captures the vernacular landscape of the American Southwest and how it shapes the Chicano/a/x experience. Specifically, Fajardo-Anstine's short story, "Remedies" binds the concept of *querencia* into her narrative in a way which resonates with the Chicana-Amerindian experience. Importantly Fajardo-Anstine's female characters in this narrative demonstrate the power of reclaiming traditions and generational knowledge. Through them, Fajardo-Anstine shows how *curanderismo* as a cultural practice creates a space to re-member traditions and culturally ground people into these traditions through a transformative process that acknowledges past knowledges, present experiences, and future hopes.

**Keywords:** *curanderismo, Fajardo-Anstine, gaining voice, identity, modernity, querencia*

Kali Fajardo-Anstine walks out of one culture and into another through the stories she weaves in her collection *Sabrina & Corina* (2019). This collection gives voice to Chicana-Amerindian protagonists who learn to engage their cultural heritage, embrace a sense of origin, and actualize traditions that had once been abandoned or forgotten in their modern lives.

Fajardo-Anstine grounds her female characters in her own *mestiza* identity, which for her come to mean she recognizes the various ethnicities and cultures that inform her sense of self. In various interviews, she has stated how she has learned from her ancestors' storytelling that she is made up of many things. She has come to embrace all the elements that make her who she is:

We were American, we were Mexican, we were Filipino and Spanish and Jewish.... My Picuris Pueblo ancestors lived [there in New Mexico] since the beginning of time... [Yet] I grew up one of seven children in both the suburbs and an older section of Denver called Northside. (Fajardo-Anstine 2020)

Because Kali Fajardo-Anstine grew up in metro-Denver, many of the pieces in *Sabrina & Corina* also focus on this region. Yet, her prose is relatable to the larger Chicana-Amerindian diaspora because it reconciles the loss felt by walking with one foot in either culture; instead of choosing one over the other, Fajardo-Anstine chooses a multiplicity. Understanding all the places her people come from grounds Fajardo-Anstine's fiction. She details the places of her *querencia*—or place-based sense of self and belonging—and she writes her characters' relationship to this *conocimiento* as well.

### **Querencia As a Lens in Chicana-Amerindian Literature**

In *Taos: Where Two Cultures Met Four Hundred Years Ago* (2007), Juan Estevan Arellano, a *manito nuevomexicano*<sup>1</sup> cultural activist, defines *querencia*, as “that which gives us a sense of place, that which anchors us to the land, that which makes us a unique people, for it implies a deeply rooted knowledge of place, and for that reason we respect it as our home. *Querencia* is a place where one feels safe, a place from which one's strength of character is drawn” (50). Arellano was the first to engage the cultural concept *querencia* in academic terms regarding New Mexican land grant issues, cultural identity dialectics, and as a point of departure for hispano place-based literature.

Arellano emphasizes that one's *querencia* is a place-based *mestizaje* because its mere existence is evidence of a mixture of heritages. “We are a walking diversity of bloods, cultures, and languages, anchored in Nuevo México,

*nuestra querencia*” (1997, 37). Arellano draws from José Vasconcelos’s concept of *la raza cósmica*, the evolution of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans to offer a reindigenized and place-based sense of identity wherein:

[We], *la raza cósmica* (The Cosmic Race), might have been an alien presence in this land—because of our Spanish fathers—we have now become as natural in this landscape as the piñón tree. [And,] whether it is acknowledged or not, most of ‘us’ have Native American blood running through our veins. That communion with the landscape ties us to the enduring code of *hermandad* just as the poet makes the landscape itself the carrier of memory... [Therefore] If we lose our language, we will lose most of our environmental history. Our memory has now assumed the form of the landscape itself .... This is the essence of *Querencia*, if we lose either memory or landscape, we lose both. A metaphor has become a reality; an absence has become a presence. *El que pierde su tierra pierde su memoria.*” (Arellano 2007, 32).

Arellano’s point is that *tierra*—as well as a sense of where one comes from, which includes an understanding of one’s cultural *mestizaje* and generational memory—creates *querencia*.

Environmentalist, nature writer, and eco-critic Barry López, similarly employs *querencia* as a tool in his place-based writing. In his essay, “The Rediscovery of North America” published in *Orion Magazine* (1992), López offers a genealogy of the term, noting that in Spanish, *la querencia* refers to a place on the ground where one feels secure, a place from which one’s strength of character is drawn. It comes from the verb *querer*, to desire, but this verb also carries the sense of accepting a challenge, as in a game.

In Spain, *querencia* is most often used to describe the spot in a bullring where a wounded bull goes to gather himself, the place he returns to after his painful encounters with the picadors and the banderilleros. It is unfortunate that the word is compromised in this way, for the idea itself is quite beautiful—a place in which we know exactly who we are. The place from which we speak our deepest beliefs. *Querencia*, conveys more than “hearth.” And it carries this sense of being challenged—in the case of a bullfight, by something lethal, which one may want no part of. I would like to take this word *querencia* beyond its ordinary meaning and suggest that it applies to our challenge in the modern world, that our search for a *querencia* is both a response to threat and a desire to find out who we are. And the discovery of a *querencia*, I believe, hinges on the perfection of a sense of place. A sense of place must include, at the very least, knowledge of what is inviolate about the relationship between a people and the place they occupy, and certainly, too, how the destruction of this relationship, or the failure to attend to it, wounds people (14).

López’s interpretation fuses place, culture, and community. Without *querencia*, place-based community is fractured. This we see in Fajardo-Anstine’s settings, yet her stories are peopled by characters of resilience. The female protagonists are capable of recovery and reconciliation. They illustrate why it is important to re-member one’s *querencia*. For the most part, the idea of *querencia* was circulated primarily within the manito nuevomexicano community. It was understood, lived, and breathed. Critical inquiry about *querencia* as a literary framework had rarely been conducted.

Works like *Querencia: Reflections on the New Mexico Homeland* (2020) are changing that. In this anthology, scholars, artists, and community activists reflect upon the living idea of *querencia* and how this concept, mined by Arellano, has evolved. For example, in the forward, author Rudolfo Anaya explains:

*Querencia* is love of home, love of place.... The history of *la patria chica*, which included all the *Hispano* villages and the Indian pueblos. *La patria chica* includes all the *vecinos*... From them we learned a deep, enduring love for the sacredness of the earth, for the unity of life, for a harmony that brings peace and happiness. *Querencia* means *vecinos* (xv-xvi).

Here, Anaya attests that *querencia* is an inclusive concept for it draws on neighboring heritages, that of hispanos and Indigenous peoples. It is a Chicana-Amerindian concept which must be taught to the next generation.

These ideas are again emphasized in Levi Romero's (2020) "Introduction: Mi Querencia A Connection between Place and Identity." Romero posits a rhetorical question: "What is the connection between place and identity? ... people have pondered for millennia how these ways of being in the world influence who we are and who we might become. Origin stories the world over feature accounts of where a people came *from* as a way of telling how they came to *be*" (1). Fajardo-Anstine accomplishes this same kind of wondering through the story arcs of her characters. Her Chicana-Amerindian protagonists gain knowledge from their place-based *querencia* so that they learn to accept themselves for who they are.

Lastly, Spencer Herrera in his chapter "New Mexico Triptych: Querencia Etched in Wood, in Media, and in Our Memory," (2020) reiterates Arellano, Anaya, and Romero's call in that *querencia* is not a static concept; it must be acted upon. A place-based *querencia* should not be just a cultural concept spoken of, or an academic concept theorized about. It is also a call to protect ones' relationship with the land, the customs developed therein, and to transmit this cultural practice to subsequent generations.

The collection *Querencia: Reflections on the New Mexico Homeland* acknowledges that some have lost their connection to querencia. The scholars, artists, and community activists in the anthology hope that disconnected individuals begin to search for the un-explored aspects of their identity. One way those who seek cultural knowledge is by tapping older generations' memory in order to recover a collective memory. Herrera explains, "within those memories lies the key to cultural recovery" (2020, 118). Herrera specifies, "Cultural traditions passed on through generational knowledge can and do make significant, positive changes for individuals and their families" (131). This type of work must be done in community, and not in isolation (131). The purpose of reconnecting with a cultural practice is to regain a sense of community, or collective belonging rather than live as disconnected individuals in proximity but isolated from own's cultural heredity. Reconstructing a sense of community is often elusive, yet it can be re-established through writing about one's querencia and preserving cultural practices rooted in marginalized aspects of one's mestizaje identity (Herrera 2020). This point is imperative, for if the intent is to reconcile with lost cultural practices, reconstruction needs to take place by, "re-creating speech, recovering language, and writing about it" (133).

One such agent of change within her Chicana-Amerindian community is Kali Fajardo-Anstine. Although her short story collection, *Sabrina & Corina* (2019), was published before *Querencia: Reflections on the New Mexico Homeland* debuted, her work aligns with their call. Not only does her narrative seek to reconcile loss and reconstruct cultural practices, but she also fleshes out characters who are undergoing this journey. Fajardo-Anstine's fiction can be read as a body of work defined by querencia which seeks to re-establish connections between land, place, and people. Her collection is rooted in place, specifically the Aztlán of the American Southwest.<sup>2</sup> Her

prose is set in places such as the west side of Denver—a predominantly Chicana/o/x working class neighborhood; the small fictional and agrarian village of Sagarita, Colorado;<sup>3</sup> and, an un-named pueblo in the Sangre de Cristo Mountain range of New Mexico—presumably Picuris Pueblo, the ancestral Puebloan village of the author’s maternal side of the family (Fajardo-Anstine, 2020). These places root the female protagonists in their Chicana-Amerindian identity and set the stage wherein the characters gain a critical cultural consciousness. The reader observes the characters’ growth toward an understanding of *querencia*, one in which they find solace in nature even amid crisis, so that they can adapt to their present and draw from their cultural traditions.

Fajardo-Anstine’s stories feature characters with Latino heritage who recover their Indigenous roots. Valenzuela (2020) writes that although “we may consider ourselves Mexican, or Hispanics or whatever we want but we are more Indian” (187). Therefore, recognizing all the elements of one’s *mestizaje* helps to remap memories and anchor one’s *querencia* “aquí y allá” (187). In this collection of short stories, the various characters decolonize their *mestizaje*, and embrace the hidden components of their hybridity.

Although the process of unlearning and relearning colonial logics is at times painful, the young female character in “Remedies” also learns to cast off unhealthy patriarchal norms. In particular, the main character, Clarisa, learns from the mistakes of her mother and comes to reject “passive femininity” (Ontiveros 2019, 187). Randy Ontiveros explains that much Latinx eco-poetry writing, like that of Maria Melendez, is meant to “unsettle” and to “upend the moral order” so that there is a “resilience” that departs from the “rhetoric of passive femininity” (187). Likewise, Priscilla Solis Ybarra states that, “Chicana writers consistently work toward constructions of new

ethical systems for the Chicana/o population,” one in which anti-patriarchal approaches are supported, designed, and practiced (2019, 22). Similarly, Fajardo-Anstine’s short stories are also meant to unsettle or upend oppressive paradigms with a resilience that is established through *querencia*.

### **Learning to Embrace One’s Cultural Mestizaje: “Remedies”**

In “Remedies,” Fajardo-Anstine continues her figurative walk between cultures as her narrative addresses several issues pertinent to twenty-first century Chicana women who struggle within their urban modern lives and eventually reclaim the roots they feel they have left behind or never knew as a way to redress their hardships. In particular, “Remedies” is a short story full of hopes for the recovery of family ties, whose characters seek out matriarchal knowledge, one that is tied to *querencia*. Like Solis Ybarra explains, “Mexican American [and Chicana-Amerindian] identity builds upon its mixture, not an essentialized purity, and draws upon this strength from its history of *mestizaje*” (2016, 36). “Remedies” embodies this mixture because the story recalls the protagonist, Clarisa López’s childhood in inner city Denver and leads us to her pastoral nuevomexicano origins. The narrative begins with Clarisa, an adult in her late twenties, looking back on her eleven-year-old self. Clarisa’s hindsight and her Chicana lens guides the story of how she has come to embrace her *querencia*; one that was initiated through an episode wherein her maternal great-grandmother, whom she calls “Grandma Estrella,” comes to the rescue.

Clarisa’s clarity is gained through her matriarchal foremother’s homeopathic knowledge and interconnection with past traditions. Grandma Estrella López is a *curandera*, or a medicine woman trained in the plant-based healing remedies of Northern New Mexico. Here Fajardo-Anstine draws on other important written works in the Mexican American literary corpus such as Rudolfo Anaya’s *Bless Me, Última* (1972), Ana Castillo’s *So Far From God*



(1993), and irene lara silva's "tecolotl" (2013). All of these works include a curandera/bruja figure who is "deeply respected for [her] ability to heal, but (like all women), are still subject to being... persecuted because of [her] gender, autonomy, knowledge, and power (Ellis 2021, 67). As Amanda Ellis explains in *Letras y Limpias: Decolonial Medicine and Holistic Healing in Mexican American Literature*:

Curanderas are generally understood to be practitioners of traditional plant-based folk healing practices that regard personhood as mindbodyspirit... and aim to safeguard and preserve individual and collective well-being (4).

As the story unfolds, Grandma Estrella's understanding of mindbodyspirit—and how this connection affects all aspects of one's life is made clear; specifically, the tale reveals how a disconnect with one's traditions and identity inhibits one's mindbodyspirit.

Grandma Estrella still lives in her mountain town and remains connected to traditional ecological knowledge, whereas her granddaughter, Milagros "Millie" López, Clarisa's mother has moved away from her birthright to live in metro Denver. Not only is Millie estranged from her roots, but she also is separated from the father of her child. Millie feels disconnected from her origin, but also from the nuclear family she tried to create with Clarisa's white father.

In an attempt to regain some of the family connections, Millie introduces Clarisa to her half-brother, Harrison, for the first time when he is ten and she is eleven. Harrison and Clarisa, who look like twins, share an un-named Anglo father who has abandoned both of his children. For Clarisa, these brief encounters with Harrison orchestrated by her mother, create a love-hate

relationship. Clarisa is excited to get to know her sibling, yet she realizes his existence is the cause of her father's disappearance. Her dad left her family when Harrison's mother became pregnant. Their father shirks his paternal responsibilities because his addictions prevent him from being a responsible and committed parent for either of his children.

As Clarisa and Millie get to know Harrison, they realize that his situation is even more dire than theirs because his mother is also an addict. Essentially, Harrison is abandoned by both parents and has to contend with a life of squalor in a lice-infested apartment.

Because of this fact, Millie feels oddly responsible for Harrison and takes him under her wing. Why she initiates a relationship between the half-siblings is questionable. Is she trying to connect Clarisa to her blood relatives so that she feels like she has an extended family even if her father is not present in her life? Or does Millie do this because Harrison is a perfect miniature of Clarisa's father and it reminds her of what she could have had? Fajardo-Anstine does not make her motivations fully clear and it has disheartening effects on Clarisa's life.

As a result of inviting Harrison into their home on weekends, the home Millie has created becomes compromised and contaminated. The emotional toil of their father's abandonment is apparent as the half-siblings struggle to forge a connection without their father's love and Millie is traumatized by seeing the face of a man she deeply loved mirrored in Harrison. While Harrison looks up to his older half-sister wishing they were twins, his adoration does not protect her from the consequences of his impoverished living conditions. Harrison contaminates the household not only with his father's memory etched on his face, but also with his lice.

As a result, every time the half-siblings are together, Clarisa is literally and figuratively contaminated.

Grandma Estrella expresses opinions regarding Millie's choices and how they have affected Clarisa throughout the tale. "Him [your Anglo father] leaving your life was the best thing that ever happened to you and your mother" (74-75). Estrella is not fond of her granddaughter's absentee partner nor the father of her cherished great-grandchild. He abused Millie's trust. He was unfaithful. Estrella's negative feelings towards Clarisa's father are also because Millie's relationship with him led her to try to live a more American way of life. It took her away from her hispano and indigena roots. It separated her from her querencia. She stopped engaging in her culture and turned her back on her heritage, until her own daughter called her back to it.

In effect, Millie has been colonized by her desires for Americanized conceptions of freedom and autonomy which she encountered in Denver when she moved away from her homespace. Because of this, Millie resists a prodigal daughter role, and hesitates to re-establish her roots. Millie exhibits *el susto*, or soul loss, often caused by the psychological trauma inflicted by her colonization, fueled by Western concepts of freedom, autonomy, and equality which supersede the desire to connect one's mindbodyspirit with one's identity and origin (Ellis, 2021). She is also traumatized by how Clarisa's father has treated her in the past.

Therefore, it is up to Clarisa, to finally seek help from her bisabuela, Grandma Estrella, who resides back home in her traditional nuevomexicano village. Millie doesn't reach out to the woman who raised her because she chose to leave for Denver and gave up the traditions that tied her to the land and her people. Millie forbids Clarisa from contacting Grandma Estrella for

help even though Estrella is a renowned curandera because Millie fears her foremother will judge her, rather than help her. It is possible that as Ana Castillo points out in “Brujas y Curanderas: A Lived Spirituality” found in *Massacre of Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma*, a woman, such as Fajardo-Anstine’s character Grandma Estrella, “who cultivates well-being is often maligned contemptuously because of her power to heal” (1994, 156). Grandma Estrella was denigrated as an old-timer, someone who had not advanced to accept Anglo cultural expectations, and modern health prescriptions. Instead, she embraces her traditional ecological knowledge that is gleaned by both her Chicana and Amerindian heritages.

Millie commands Clarisa to never tell her great-grandmother they have lice because according to Grandma Estrella, piojos symbolize dirt, sloth, and unworthiness. Clarisa later learns about Grandma Estrella’s experiences with racial bias during her childhood that left her with this particular attitude. Sarah D. Wald and her coauthors in *Latinx Environmentalism* explain, “The stories that we tell to and about ourselves are key to how we understand and interpret the world” (2019, 12). Grandma Estrella formed her own staunch beliefs out of self-preservation due to discrimination when her “teachers called her a dirty Mexican” (83). This public shaming, “never left” Grandma Estrella and she took pride in proving her prejudicial elders wrong.

Grandma Estrella’s strength presides in her querencia. Although as a child Estrella is derided for her heritage and language, as a matriarch curandera she has embraced who she is. Estrella is recognized as a repository of cultural knowledge. She is central to her community in New Mexico but whose influence spreads throughout its diaspora. Like other curandera characters in Chicana literature, she is a healer who imparts her knowledge through oral histories and teaches others through this lore (Ellis, 2019). Her strong

character is built upon knowing her origin and the remedios that were passed down generation after generation, from great-grandmother to her daughters. Grandma's talents are her knowledge of herbs; what cures headaches, eases stomachaches, soothes broken hearts, or rids one of piojos—those maldito lice. As such, Grandma Estrella is an extremely important figure in the short story "Remedies." Her pride in her *querencia* explores, "the power and limits of language in expressing the relationship between human and nonhuman nature" (Ontiveros 2019, 179). With this character, Fajardo-Anstine creates a successful role model for Clarisa, as well as for Harrison.

Grandma Estrella is an example of someone who has maintained the "goodlife" / "la vida buena" (Solis Ybarra 2016, 36; Valenzuela 2020, 187). According to Solis Ybarra, the good life "embraces the values of simplicity, sustenance, dignity, and respect" (4). Grandma Estrella enacts these cultural values and practices that include a respect for nature that Solis Ybarra references (2016). Rather than adopting a white cultural appreciation for consumerism and accumulation, Grandma Estrella has chosen to live amongst her community of origin and adhere to their traditional ways of life. Through her ethnobotanic practices, Grandma Estrella tries to soothe the pain caused by "trauma of coloniality" (Ellis 2021, 6); which are the effects of colonization as an enterprise that privilege the knowledges of the conqueror rather than the original peoples, and in this case the Chicana/o/x-Amerindian heritage prevalent in the San Luis Valley. Rather than allowing for cultural loss to continue, like what happened with her granddaughter Millie, Estrella is an agent of change for those descendants who seek her help.

Knowing she needs her bisabuela's expertise, Clarisa contacts her beloved matriarch against her mother's wishes, once she is "expelled due to health hazards" (Fajardo-Anstine 2019, 79). Clarisa is willing to face Grandma

Estrella's disapproval and reaches out to her. Clarisa refuses the passivity her mother has chosen and looks toward the strength of her maternal great-grandmother. As Jenny Shank explains, Grandma Estrella, "brings stability through her staunch love and practical caregiving, offering simple remedies derived from a Mexican-American/Indigenous heritage" (2019, 24). Although Clarisa, Harrison, and Millie are on the "verge of slipping into the abyss, [they] are saved from it somehow, mainly by the profound pull of indestructible family ties and shared culture in the form of stories, rituals, and remedies" (24). Thus, Grandma Estrella passes on the importance of querencia grounded in her Chicana-Amerindian traditions whose practicality function in her descendants' present day lives.

Estrella accepts her great granddaughter's request for help and doesn't admonish Millie for her obstinance. Instead, Estrella offers comfort for their *susto* because she knows her ways of knowing that are grounded in her intuition, informed by her sense of connection to nature and rooted in her expertise and craft will aid them. She reassures, "*Mi'ja*, Don't worry. This time it'll work.... That man and his choices are behind you now" (Fajardo-Anstine 2019, 84). Millie relents to her abuela's soothing hands; but it is Clarisa who consciously chooses their family's traditions and her matriarchal community because she knows her bisabuela is a trained specialist. Clarisa connects to the sacred rather than succumb to the suppression of her multicultural identity. Clarisa chooses the knowledge bestowed by the matriarch in her family rather than the exploitation through domestic violence that her mother suffered at the hands of her white father, his addictions, and the "trauma of coloniality" (Ellis 2021, 5).

Although Clarisa may not have been aware what her bisabuela's comments meant at the time, in her adulthood where the story ends, these words and

their consequences inform her outlook on life as a grown woman. Clarisa learned from the remedies that Grandma Estrella administered that love can be tough. She learned to respect her elders and to not lose sight of her culture. She came to understand that a Chicana doesn't need a parasitic man in her life. Like other Chicana feminists who write curandera characters into their work, Fajardo-Anstine recognizes "the history and complex ideological terrain tempered by a misogyny that flattens out and divisively plots curanderas and brujas on distinctly opposing ends of the same continuum" (Ellis 2019, 68). Rather than mirroring the polarization in her short story, Fajardo-Anstine's "Remedies" shows that a revered woman can cast her influence within her community, and over a spellbound great-granddaughter, so that past hurts are not propagated in the future; and that multi-generational pain can be cured through love and knowledge.

Latina/x creatives like Clarisa and her foremother Estrella, push against traditional social relationships by refusing to conform to the categories or power relations of false dichotomies such as Indigenous wisdom versus Western knowledge (Wald et al 2019, 19). Instead, with the support of her bisabuela, Clarisa has come to recognize a wide range of kinship structures like the pre-Columbian curandera knowledge of her grandmother, the connection to a place of origin in Nuevo México, and how that ties into familial bonds because of a shared *querencia* (even to those family members outside of said paradigm such as Harrison).

Here, Clarisa draws upon her great-grandmother's "vision of healing". The *limpia* of ridding her progeny of lice, is also a cleansing of mindbodyspirit. "Healing emerges from tactics, rituals, epistemic contributions, and cultural knowledge production that people preserve, pass on, and continue to enact, espouse, inscribe, and creatively reimagine" (Ellis 2021, 9). Estrella passes this on to Clarisa, and she then creatively reimagines it in her own adulthood.

The final page of the story brings the reader to Clarisa's present. She is an adult, confident and aware. Ironically, she has reconnected on her own with Harrison who is, "a bass player in a punk band called the Roaches" (Fajardo-Anstine 2019, 85). Clarisa is witty in her big sister love, when she points toward his blue Mohawk and mouths, "Nice hair" (85). This connects them to their shared past and the episode when Grandma Estrella expressed her love through action and not words.

Fajardo-Anstine deftly closes this story with a tone of forgiveness and unspoken love in sibling relationships. Both adult-children are resilient. They have learned from the consequences of their parents' choices. In Clarisa's case, she has embraced her *querencia* by taking up the study of her Grandmother Estrella's remedies, and is assured in knowing that her Chicana identity is influenced by a strong matriarchal *herstory*.

### **Healing through Querencia and Curanderismo**

Kali Fajardo-Anstine's fiction is framed by *querencia* because her characters transform throughout the narrative into confident Chicana-Amerindians who reevaluate past oppressions and reconcile loss of family traditions. Her protagonists reconstruct cultural practices based on matriarchal connections, shared cultural memory, and a sense of place, which is the American Southwest. In so doing, she "invests in scoring new possibilities for Chicanas of the twenty-first century" (Ellis 2019, 83).

In some ways, Clarisa López's experiences and subsequent gaining of knowledge in "Remedies" parallel Kali Fajardo-Anstine's own acknowledgement of how she learned to access who she is and where she comes from. Fajardo-Anstine explains that when she writes, she does so from a multicultural positionality. She doesn't have "a simple one-word identity



response,” (Fajardo-Anstine 2020). Like her female protagonists, Fajardo-Anstine’s *querencia* is comprised of many things.

From these varied heritages, she crafts stories associated with the people who lived in the metro Denver area, the pueblos in Northern New Mexico, and within the Aztlán of the American Southwest. In an interview about the short stories in *Sabrina and Corina*, Fajardo-Anstine indicated she wanted these stories to express “the ways we are able to heal ourselves from the earth and how that is a form of ancient wisdom” (Isaad 2019). Additionally, Fajardo-Anstine reiterated how much *querencia*, or place-based knowledge informs her narratives. She stated that her stories, “offer an account of the American West, both urban and rural, from an Indigenous Latinx perspective. I wrote this collection to represent the American West as I know it, a populated urban center with skyscrapers, universities, homelessness, gentrification, a legacy of racism, and an on-going historic cycle of boom and bust... my region is one of great beauty, but it is also a place of destruction where violence cuts into the landscape as much as the people. Still, the West survives and that endurance informs my work” (Isaad, 2019). Therefore, her writing helps reclaim space on the page as well as reclaiming cultural heritages connected to the playscapes of the American Southwest. Her writing mines the stories of her ancestors; those whose shared experiences reside in the Amerindian and Chicana/o/x community. She speaks of prejudice. She addresses the idea of people needing to leave their place of origin in order to establish a new sacred space elsewhere, or a returning to one’s origins whether physically or metaphorically. This is her *querencia* which seeks to encompass multiple aspects of identity and social justice (Wald et al 2019, 23).

Stories like Fajardo-Anstine’s, give voice to a marginalized community and need to be excavated and written down. Herrera (2020) suggests that “the key

to reorganizing the place of communal life lies in re-creating..., recovering... and writing about [one's *querencia*]" (133). Fajardo-Anstine's work takes on this call to reconcile loss and reconstruct cultural practices through storytelling. Her creative process is, "enriched because of the trail that leads to where she comes from". This is mirrored within the oral traditions exemplified through Grandma Estrella's storytelling in "Remedies" and it is Fajardo-Anstine's hope to retain these stories, so that her people's narratives are kept alive in spoken and written word (Fajardo-Anstine 2020).

As a twenty-first-century writer and cultural worker, Fajardo-Anstine contributes to the wider effort to mollify the anguish caused by colonial wounds that still exist and are encountered by those living within the Chicana-Amerindian diaspora. When she writes, *herstories* create a collective memory for her community gathered upon the page. Her story "Remedies" constructed around an unfortunate incident due to systematic poverty, is healed through the sage knowledge of a grandmother who stresses the importance of one's roots, homeopathic healing, and connection to community. Kali Fajardo-Anstine's writing embodies a place-based *querencia* and celebrates *curanderismo* as a cultural practice and in-so-doing honors our human interconnectedness with past, present, and future.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> "Manito," a derivative of "hermanito" is the term used by Spanish-speaking residents of New Mexico to refer to themselves.

<sup>2</sup> Solis Ybarra (2016) defines *Aztlán* as an imaginary homeland yet one that exists, "wherever a Chicana/o individual or community dwells and embraces the ideals of dignity, sovereignty, freedom from prejudice, and opportunities for self-determination. *Aztlán* has helped many Chicanas/os feel a sense of belonging, if not to a particular territory or nation, then at least to a cultural imaginary," (21).

<sup>3</sup> *Saguarita* could be modeled after Antonito or San Luis, Colorado which are in the San Luis Valley. This agrarian mountainous region lies on the border with New Mexico. Centuries ago it

was populated by Indigenous peoples, as well as Spanish heritage colonialists who established small villages under the Spanish Crown. When Spain lost its colony, control was succeeded to Mexico and then in 1848 to the United States. Boht historically and contemporarily, this area reflects a variety of cultural influences.

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