

**SPECIAL
POINTS OF IN-
TEREST:**

- **Join the Conversation “Walking in Two Worlds” by Toni McMillen**
- **TYCA SW 2015 in New Mexico, NOW!**
- **D.Brian Anderson, “What We Talk About When we Talk About Albuquerque”**
- **“Plotting an Escape,” by Toni McMillen**
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- **About TYCA-SW**

Join the Conversation “Walking in Two Worlds”

Dear TYCA-SW Members:

I could not be more excited about going to New Mexico than I am this year. We are going to have a great time at the Hyatt Regency Tamaya Resort in Bernardo, New Mexico. I am already imagining the great presentations from all of you! The theme “Walking in Two Worlds” really applies to all of us. The possibilities for applying this theme in our classrooms and teaching schemata are endless.

My heart yearns for new teaching strategies, seeing beautiful landscapes, and consuming some great traditional food. This location is so great that you will want to be sure to stay the night Saturday evening.

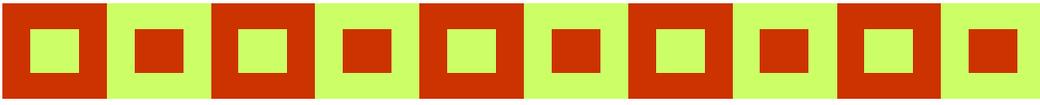
I will be packing my walking shoes and my extra stomach. In the evening, we can sit around the fire pit and enjoy the company of my colleagues. One look at the location pictures, and your heart will long to go to New Mexico with TYCA-SW.

We can all get excited about discussing how we are “Walking in Two Worlds.” We all walk in and out of varying worlds. Our students walk in complicated worlds from the school to the home and community environments. Thus, our role as educators is quite complex, and examining these worlds is essential to making good teachers great.

I am looking forward to seeing you in New Mexico.



The Tamaya Resort, New Mexico



What We Talk about When We Talk about Albuquerque: An Incomplete and Idiosyncratic Literary Survey

By D. Brian Anderson

Do we turn right, left, north, or south near Albuquerque to get to the TYCA-SW Conference this year? In one of the early episodes of *Better Call Saul*, the recently released *Breaking Bad* spinoff series set in Albuquerque, gleefully shady lawyer Saul Goodman remarks, “Two things I know about Albuquerque – Bugs Bunny should have taken a left turn there, and I’ll never know how to spell it.”

The Bugs Bunny reference comes from a running joke in the cartoons, something Bugs says whenever he gets lost, perhaps suggesting that Albuquerque is the kind of place where you either turn in the correct direction or get lost, a town where you stop before going somewhere else (Historic Route 66 also ran through Albuquerque). Or maybe the joke suggests that Albuquerque sits in the midst of mystery, a kind of American Timbuktu; we know it’s somewhere there in the desert but may not know exactly where if we’ve never visited. As the second part of Saul’s line suggests, Albuquerque has a great name for humor, a euphonic and pleasing name that can be mispronounced for the sake of humor, as Bugs does, and proves difficult to spell even with practice.

Albuquerque exists as an oasis and a stopping point, a place to make a wrong turn or to get supplies before trekking into the unknown, and its cultural identity emerges as part of that powerful influence of the landscape.

As the well-received and arguably “high-brow” *Better Call Saul* and its predecessor *Breaking Bad* demonstrate, Albuquerque is a place where its denizens reinvent themselves, and so the fictional and literary landscape of Albuquerque has reflected this propensity for reinvention and meditative epiphany. Albuquerque could be seen as a town on the way to somewhere else, but the deeper, more resonant suggestion of Albuquerque as a place to make a “wrong turn” is that Albuquerque represents a space for transformation, a place where boundaries are fluid and making a wrong turn might not be such a bad thing.

Mystery writer Tony Hillerman successfully exploited the setting’s natural sense of ambiguity and intrigue for his Navajo Tribal Police novels and other works. In his fiction writing, Hillerman displays an affectionate reverence for the New Mexican landscape and its native residents in particular. Although Hillerman, who also taught journalism at the University of New Mexico, died in 2008, his stamp can still be seen in Albuquerque, where both a library and a middle school have been named after him. His legacy also includes the Tony Hillerman prize, which awards an undiscovered novelist \$10,000 and a contract with St. Martin’s for the best mystery set in the American southwest.





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While Hillerman's work garnered international attention and made him a wealthy man, Albuquerque's most distinguished literary former resident would be Leslie Marmon Silko, the heavily anthologized author of such short stories as "Yellow Woman" and "Lullaby," as well as the novel *Ceremony*. Silko currently lives in Tucson, where she teaches at the University of Arizona, but she was raised in the Albuquerque area and attended Catholic school in Albuquerque before earning a bachelor's degree in English at the University of New Mexico.

Silko's stories are heavily informed by Native myth and seek to affirm the spiritual possibilities of modern existence, and her characters' lives and destinies are indelibly shaped by the landscape and its haunting connection to thousands of years of Native history and storytelling. Her stories are peopled with tricksters and mountain spirits, a merging of the past and present, and the stirring influence of mesas and mountains, sun and cactus. Characters speak in riddles and wander in search of individual meaning and spiritual awakening through an emptying of self and a connection to the old stories.

Although Silko remains Albuquerque's most important literary persona, the contributions of the town as a source of inspiration and as a literary and filmic setting for characters in the midst of spiritual rebirth, cannot be measured. Besides *Breaking Bad*, Albuquerque also served as the setting for *In Plain Sight*, a series about the Federal Witness Protection Program, in which people literally reinvent their identities, and it served as the beginning point for the quirky family's journey in *Little Miss Sunshine*. Those are just a couple of memorable examples.

For this writer, however, perhaps the most interesting if oblique use of Albuquerque as a setting occurs in Raymond Carver's most famous short story, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love." Carver lived mostly in the Pacific Northwest, and there's little impression of the landscape in "What We Talk About." In fact, the entire story, except for memories related by the characters in conversation, takes place in the interior of a kitchen. The story could take place in any city. Yet the mention of the city is explicit and tellingly suggests its unrivaled qualities as a setting for transition and sublimation, as the narrator relates, "We lived in Albuquerque then. But we were all from somewhere else."



The characters in “What We Talk About,” though they are all from somewhere else, connect powerfully on the subject of love, in a story that provides the most stunning example of Sherwood Anderson’s maxim that short stories are about form, not plot. Nothing happens in the story, except in the imagined action of narrated memories. It’s all conversation, mostly in the dominating voice of the narrator’s friend, a doctor who drinks too many gin and tonics, yet the palatable sense of yearning carries the story forward as sure as the setting sun.

“What We Talk About” is a story about existence and the memory of love, and it’s a story about the human need to escape, to experience strong emotions, and to settle down. It’s appropriate that the story takes place entirely in a kitchen, the warmest place of the human home, because it’s a story that relates characters reflecting on their interior lives. The characters forever dwell in that kitchen, the room finally eclipsing into darkness, as if they are trapped by the limits and unknowability of the human heart.

The 2014 award-winning film *Birdman*, a darkly comical outing about a man’s attempt to adapt Carver’s story for the stage, nicely conveys the anonymity of the kitchen setting, with its aqua-colored cabinets and 1950s-era Formica dinette set. In the film, the characters exist inside of a kitchen, on a set in New York City. The idea of place seems to evaporate. In Carver’s story as it exists on the page, the outside setting may seem incidental, yet they live in Albuquerque for a reason.

In addition to Albuquerque’s usefulness as a scene for human transformation, the setting also becomes important in its use of the famous New Mexico sun. The sun sets as the conversation lingers on into the late afternoon, at first providing a “spacious light of ease and generosity” and then its shifting

When the narrator of “What We Talk About” says, “We could have been anywhere, somewhere enchanted,” there’s a double meaning in the line. As with the earlier line that it echoes, the idea that the characters could be “anywhere” suggests that they have reached a middle-age point for spiritual emptying and renewal, and that the relative anonymity of Albuquerque provides the perfect blank slate for projecting a reimagined self. Yet, as with other stories set in New Mexico, the characters also sense a transformative power to the landscape, a possibility for reinvention and, yes, enchantment.

As realized and depicted in fiction and film, Albuquerque is a city of the heart, a place to get usefully lost in the mountains beneath the intoxicating influence of the sky and sun. It is a city where we go to remake ourselves and to find ourselves, even if we only go there through the imaginative words and images of talented writers and storytellers.

D. Brian Anderson teaches at College of the Mainland near Houston and has only visited Albuquerque once before. As such, this literary account of Albuquerque should be regarded with due skepticism.





New Mexico Hot Chocolate or Cha Cha: Add Chocolate, Syrup, Cinnamon, and Milk to make Hot Chocolate

Plotting An Escape

By Toni McMillen

In 2012 at the TYCA-SW Conference in Las Cruces, Denise Chavez invited the TYCA-SW members out to the Pueblo to experience the cultural center near Las Cruces. After dinner at Napilito's Restaurant where we had a savory dinner and the company of our TYCA-SW friends. Later, Michael Berberich, Jill Coe, Michael Gos, and I slipped away from dinner to go back to visit Denise Chavez one more time. Perhaps it was the lure of finding that one great book calling us back, but there some inescapable power drawing us back.

Walking through the pueblo doorway of the Casa Camion Real, we were transported in to a wonderful world of old

and new books. It was as if we were entering a world that enveloped us with histories both modern and distant, bound in varying ways some slick others bound in worn earth toned leather.

Every wall, surface, and corner seemed to be filled with books. I imagined running away from home to spend a summer there curled up in a chair or sitting in the playa with the sun on my face reading the coveted books. During the week I could backpack across the countryside visiting remote places and climb the mountains, and in the evenings I could seek out the cool embrace of the pueblo. But in that moment, I had the honor of being a guest enveloped by the simplicity and beauty of captivating company.

Chavez spoke to us with her authentic ideas and experiences just as she does in her books. Her eyes studied my face as though she could see my thoughts. While Chavez plied us with Cha Cha, hot chocolate New Mexico style, she recalled stories of her thought processes when writing *The Last Menu Girls*. She discussed how she researched and developed some of the characters. She shared with us her work with those who come from Old Mexico. I was not yet the Chair of TYCA-SW, but I thought to myself, this is why we travel. This is why we strive to host TYCA-SW in a new place each year.

As I gingerly tore in to my baked goods, secretly longing for a second helping, I wondered when I would visit New Mexico again.

Touring Literary New Mexico

By Brian Anderson

B.J. Welborn's book *Traveling Literary America* highlights two oddball literary sites in the state: the D.H. Lawrence Ranch and Shrine near Taos and the Ernie Pyle House in Albuquerque. Although Lawrence, author of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, lived only briefly in New Mexico, his widow returned to the ranch after his death and eventually had his

body removed there. She donated the ranch to the University of New Mexico. Journalist Pyle's home now serves as a library and museum and is open to the public.

Though sites associated with the wildly popular AMC series *Breaking Bad* have also attracted attention, series creator Vince Gilligan recently implored fans not to visit --- and especially not to throw pizzas

on the roof of -- the home that served as the exterior for Walter White's house. (The pizza-throwing pays homage to a well-remembered scene.)

Show your appreciation of a TYCA-SW Member

Robert W. Wylie Service

Each year TYCA-SW honors one person for outstanding contributions made to the profession through long-term service. The Wylie Award is our highest distinction. To nominate a colleague for this award, send the nominee's name and a description of his or her contributions to the profession. You may include comments from others in your nomination as well. Include the information listed below on this form along with any supporting documents.

Go to tycasw.org to nominate a colleague for the Robert W. Wylie Service Award and Susan Faulkner Excellence in Teaching Award.



Susan Faulkner Excellence in Teaching Award

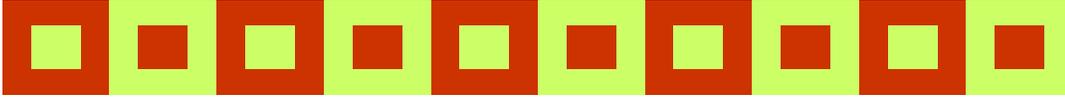
The Susan Faulkner Excellence in Teaching Award is presented at the annual TYCA-SW conference. It honors the memory of Susan Faulkner, professor and coordinator of the English Department at Cedar Valley College in the Dallas County Community College District in Texas. Susan loved teaching, learning, the English language, TYCA-SW, and her grandchildren most of all.

We urge you to nominate a friend or colleague who merits special recognition for his or her hard work and inspired teaching. Send your nominee's name and a brief description of his or her outstanding work. In addition, you may include brief comments from this individual's students and peers, if possible.

Go to tycasw.org to
nominate a colleague for the
Robert W. Wylie Service
Award and Susan Faulkner



TYCA-SW Remembers our Members



*If you wish to reflect
on the work of a
TYCA-SW Member,
please submit a*

500 word

Article

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by Dec. 1, 2016



About TYCA-SW

In 1966, the founding members of the Southwest Regional Conference on English in the Two-Year College (SRCE), the original name of TYCA-SW, met in San Antonio, Texas.

Since then, the Conference has met yearly in each one of the six states making up the Southwest Region: in Denver, Little Rock, Bossier City, Hobbs, Oklahoma City, and in various cities in Texas, including Amarillo, Austin, Corpus Christi, Dallas, Fort Worth, Laredo, and Waco.

Members enjoy not only the professional growth of attending the annual conferences but also the personal interaction with old and new friends that sparks enthusiasm, confidence, and solidarity.

Programs feature speakers of regional and national reputation. Host colleges traditionally schedule recreational activities that showcase their cities, such as a moonlight cruise in Corpus Christi or a visit to the Cowboy Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City.

Visit

TYCASW.ORG

for updates and

Information.

