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Trauma in Rudolfo Anaya's Tortuga

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TRAUMA IN RUDOLFO ANAYA'S *TORTUGA*

A Thesis

by

NOLAN ARRIAGA

Submitted to Texas A&M International University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2017

Major Subject: English

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Approved as to style and content by:

Chair of Committee,	Manuel Broncano
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ABSTRACT

Trauma in Rudolfo Anaya's *Tortuga* (May 2017)

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The purpose of this research is to show the universality behind Rudolfo Anaya's *Tortuga* and the characters' individual responses to trauma. This includes their struggles with a manipulating darkness in the hopes to find light, which comes in various forms such as mentors, literature, oral storytelling, and the sun. Theories from Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung help explain certain characters' actions. The protagonist is on a journey to escape from the hospital or unfamiliar purgatory to go back home, which sheds light on an important Chicano issue. *Tortuga* delves into both social realism and magical realism, but the concept of reality is still important to understand in this work. Enlightenment is the crucial weapon against the restricting darkness. In order for light to prevail, these characters need to allow light to shine within themselves. The overall message that Rudolfo Anaya is trying to get across to his audience is "love life and engage it."

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
INTRODUCTION	1
RUDOLFO ANAYA BIOGRAPHY/BACKGROUND	4
CHAPTER	
I SALOMON.....	15
II DANNY	40
III TORTUGA	56
CONCLUSION.....	78
WORKS CITED	82
VITA.....	84

INTRODUCTION

The central focus of this thesis and overall paralyzing theme in Rudolfo Anaya's novel *Tortuga* is trauma. Unfortunately, Anaya was involved in a serious accident in his teenage years when he dove into an irrigation ditch and fractured two vertebrae. This personal experience, including the recovery process, inspired the events that occur in this story. In the afterword of *Tortuga*, Anaya explains, "Memory is a tough old dame, says a character in one of my recent novels. Writing *Tortuga* was a looking back in anger at an event that changed my life. To write the novel I had to dredge up painful memories. I was Tortuga, the boy in the cast, and I had to overcome the fear of revealing what happened that summer" (199). It is apparent that this accident was a difficult and life changing experience in Anaya's life. Perhaps, Anaya considers memory as tough since certain recollections can stick around as long as a person's entire lifetime, including negative and traumatic ones. Therefore, memory is both a gift and a curse. Usually, people avoid looking back on traumatic events that take place in their lives, but Anaya did so when he wrote this novel to overcome his fear of revisiting that dreadful past. In relation, the act of facing one's fears is a recurring struggle for characters like Salomón, Danny, and Tortuga to accomplish. The barrier caused by fear prevents people from finding enlightenment in their lives, which is essential after they experience a traumatic event. *Tortuga* is partly autobiographical because Anaya did go through similar traumatic events that are portrayed. Pain and anger came back to him as he wrote about his experiences, but it led to an inspirational novel with powerful meaning. As a result, Anaya created light out of a dark situation.

Aside from creating a great piece of literature, Rudolfo Anaya did benefit personally

This thesis follows the style of *Arizona Quarterly*.

from revisiting that time in his life as he adds, “Telling the story became a sort of purging, which is what every story is for its writer. I also felt I had to tell the stories of the kids in the hospital” (*Tortuga* 199). Even though Anaya wrote about painful memories, it was also therapeutic for him to share his story. Literature and writing were already important parts of his life that he loved, so the creation of this novel was a remedy and a form of expression that allowed him to release the fear that may have been building up inside of him. Telling stories allows a respective writer to release suppressed emotions and express his or her thoughts in creative ways. This goes for novelists, poets, and even musicians. Anaya also got inspiration from the children he encountered while he was recovering in the hospital and felt the need to write about them in *Tortuga* to tell their stories. In the past, Anaya heard inspiring stories from the people of his homeland, so it is his turn to continue the tradition by telling stories based on influential events and people in his life. In an email from Rudolfo Anaya, he shares that “Danny and the other characters, I knew at the hospital. I take people and make them characters, that’s the art of fiction” (Anaya, “Re: Thesis Questions on Tortuga”). Here he confirms that even though he uses people he has met as inspiration for his characters, there is still the fictional side of things. Readers should understand the boundaries between the author and the people he knew versus the characters he creates. There are important elements and lessons that he took from the people he knew in his characters, but those characters are still works of fiction. As for the character Tortuga, Anaya does say that he was Tortuga, but “was” is the keyword. Perhaps by telling the story of *Tortuga*, Anaya was finally able to completely break out of his psychological shell or bindings of fear.

This thesis will focus on three important characters, Salomón, Danny, and Tortuga, and their individual responses to trauma. There are dangers associated with the darkness brought on

my trauma, which will be explored. These characters need to find sources of light to help them overcome the darkness they face. Since Salomón is an important source of light, the first chapter will concentrate on his methods of enlightenment. His method of communicating to Tortuga through dreamlike sequences is a mystery that deserves to be investigated. It is also a source of storytelling, another important element in Anaya's stories. As for the psychoanalytical lens, Sigmund Freud discusses behaviors associated with trauma victims in his essay "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" that may help put these characters' responses to trauma into perspective, especially the death instinct theory. Each of these characters makes serious life threatening decisions that may fall under this theory. They are also on the search for their own individual destinies, which may differ from one another. Tortuga, the protagonist, figures out his destiny at the end, but there may be a deeper meaning behind it that Rudolfo Anaya wants readers to interpret. Anaya has also been criticized for not including social realism in this story, but there is more to that assumption that needs to be clarified.

RUDOLFO ANAYA BIOGRAPHY

Chicano writer Rudolfo Anaya is best known for his 1972 classic novel *Bless Me, Ultima*, which tells a coming-of-age story about a boy that is struggling with his beliefs. Even though this is the work that most people are familiar with, Anaya has written other works of literature throughout his career that should not be ignored because he is an important writer and voice for Chicano literature. Rudolfo Alfonso Anaya was born on October 30, 1937 in Pastura, New Mexico. He is the fifth child out of seven siblings. Each of his parents, Martin and Rafaelita Mares Anaya, lived very different lifestyles, which Anaya based them as, “the two halves of his life—the wilderness and uncertainty of the windswept plains of east central New Mexico and the stable domesticity of farm life” (“Rudolfo Anaya: 1937—:Author” 11). This is important to note because Anaya includes characters like Antonio’s parents in *Bless Me, Ultima* that represent his actual parents’ contrasting worldviews and the affects they had on him growing up. Gabriel Marez was brought up as a vaquero and wants Antonio to follow that same path, but his mother Maria Marez is a devout Catholic that opposes the idea and attempts to sway Antonio to follow the Catholic path in life. She is the daughter of a farmer, which shows that both Maria and Anaya’s mother were raised around the farm life. Also, Antonio’s family’s last name Marez closely resembles Anaya’s mother’s maiden name Mares. It is obvious that Rudolfo Anaya’s family influenced his writing.

Not too long after he was born, Anaya and his family moved to Santa Rosa, New Mexico, the place of his upbringing for fourteen years. According to the section “Rudolfo Anaya: 1937—:Author” in the *Contemporary Hispanic Biography* collection, “Later, his writings would be filled with images and memories of the people who affected his childhood. His fiction draws heavily on the superstitions and myths of the Mexican-American culture that commingled with

the traditions of the Roman Catholic faith” (11). Rudolfo Anaya’s novel *Tortuga*, like *Bless Me, Ultima*, involves a child protagonist due to this influential period in his life. Children tend to be curious, especially if they are surrounded by various cultures. The journey to comprehend beliefs and information from different cultures can be confusing. Anaya illustrates that frustration and fascination in works such as *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Tortuga*. The land that he lived on has been inhabited by nomadic Indians, Spanish settlers, Mexican settlers, and Anglo-Americans. In the article “The Silence of the Llano: Notes from the Author,” Rudolfo Anaya explains, “Those people who moved in and out of my childhood came to tell stories, and it was the magic of their words and their deep, humble humanity which have sparked my imagination. A writer must be a listener and an observer before he can be a writer” (48). Oral tradition is common in Santa Rosa, New Mexico since the inhabitants share each of their respective cultural histories and connection to the land. Stories are like verbal invitations into the speaker’s world. Every person will have his or her own experience with these kinds of stories. As for Rudolfo Anaya, the words he heard from storytellers meant a lot to him and ignited his imagination. He was inspired by more than one culture, which can be seen in his literature as a mixture. However, confusion may arise as a result of friction between belief systems. Characters like Tortuga and Antonio demonstrate this when they question their own beliefs. Aside from this, most writers will agree with Anaya that a writer needs to be a good listener and observer of influential people before creating his or her own voice in literature. In the listening stage, a person will be able to observe another person or group’s methods of speaking and gesturing. After these demonstrations, the listener will hopefully be able to apply acquired skills and communicate his or her own ideas through spoken words, body language, or writing.

Regardless of the many cultures that surrounded Rudolfo Anaya as a child, “life was filled with unanswered questions, but he knew that he had a place within the very mystery that belied his understanding” (“Rudolfo Anaya: 1937” 11). Placement is an important goal in the journey of life for Anaya, a theme in most of his works. For instance, Antonio in *Bless Me, Ultima* is on the search for answers about his faith and desires to find comfort in the spiritual figures he seeks while not disappointing any of his loved ones and their beliefs. Like Anaya, Antonio needs to find understanding before he can find his placement. In Anaya’s *Tortuga*, the protagonist seeks to leave the hospital, which is more like a hell on earth, in the hopes to get back home. In order to do so, he needs to find enlightenment in his situation to fight and gain his movement back. His destiny is to find a way out. This sense of placement is not only a personal issue, but cultural too, which Anaya learned the hard way since “life in the small, close-knit community of Santa Rosa gave Anaya a sense of security and belonging that was torn from him when his family moved to Albuquerque in 1952. In Albuquerque Anaya was introduced to a cultural and ethnic diversity he had not previously experienced, as well as the painful reality of racism and prejudice aimed at Latinos” (“Rudolfo Anaya: 1937” 11-12). Unfortunately, living in naivety is not always beneficial. The dark can disguise itself as comfort. Sooner or later, most people will have to face the harsh realities of life, especially when it is outside of their native land. Perhaps Anaya’s *Tortuga* is also a critique on this issue by communicating that people should not stay in the dark too long in fear and should prepare to stand up against prejudices instead, an issue that is far from over during this time period.

There was a significant Chicano literary movement during the 1970s that tackled issues of placement in the Southwest, and Rudolfo Anaya’s *Tortuga* is among those literary works. During the 1970s, prejudice and racism was still prevalent in the United States, so Chicano

writers expressed their views on the matters in writing. John R. Chavez discusses those works of literature and their relevance to the movement in his article, "The Image of the Southwest in the Chicano Novel, 1970-1979." He mentions that Anglo-American media regularly depicted people of Mexican descent negatively as illegal aliens, but "through their own media Chicanos demanded recognition of their long presence in the Southwest, claimed the region as their native land, argued that it had been lost, and called for its recovery" (Chavez 41). Based on factual evidence, the Southwest has been the home to more than one cultural group throughout its existence. Sadly, as history shows, many people have been run out of their own lands, but media such as many classic Hollywood films have falsely depicted Native Americans and people of Mexican descent as inferior invaders of the United States. Stereotypically, Native Americans are portrayed as savages while people of Mexican descent are portrayed as illiterate foreigners in old Hollywood westerns for example. This was not acceptable for Chicanos during the 1970s, who wanted justice. As a result, the Chicano novel provided them with a voice to express their concerns about the place they call the Chicano homeland, the Southwest. Rudolfo Anaya contributed to the literary movement with his works *Tortuga*, *Bless Me*, *Ultima*, and *Heart of Aztlan*.

There are four general forms of the image of the Southwest that Chavez explores and defines as:

The first, though least significant of these, is one that presents the Southwest as a land of long-established residence; for example, in a story not specifically about Chicano life, an old barrio may appear briefly as part of the landscape. The second form is more complete: some reference is made, perhaps in connection with an adobe-style building, to the region as a Chicano inheritance from the early Indian, Spanish, or Mexican natives. Through the third type, which reveals greater ethnic consciousness concerning the Southwest, we see the region not only as a native land, but as the lost land, possibly symbolized by the Alamo. The final and most important form of the image of the homeland depicts the Southwest as recovered, visualized perhaps as a Chicano marketplace. (41)

Anaya's *Tortuga* falls under the second form. An obvious reference to this view occurs when the character Clepo tells Tortuga that "[their] forefathers have wandered up and down this river valley for a long, long time. First the Indians roamed up and down this river, then others came, but they all stopped here at the same place: the springs of Tortuga, the place of the healing water" (Anaya, *Tortuga* 4). Early in the novel, Rudolfo Anaya provides the connection between Chicanos and their Indian ancestors. Not only that, but Clepo makes it clear that he believes the Indians were the first people to roam that area. Even though history shows that Native Americans were not treated fairly, which many Chicanos feel strongly about, *Tortuga* does not dwell on that issue. This does not mean that Rudolfo Anaya cares any less about his people's struggles to keep their land and social issues. That urge to get back home is still strongly present in the novel. Clearly, the character Tortuga longs to get back home, but so do most of the characters including the Native American character Jerry. As for the land itself, there is something magical about it that seems to draw people towards it, especially the healing water it contains.

Unfortunately for Rudolfo Anaya, the influence behind *Tortuga* stems from an accident that he actually experienced when he was sixteen years old. In *Contemporary Hispanic Biography*, the section on Rudolfo Anaya explains:

While swimming in an irrigation ditch with friends, Anaya suffered a diving accident that changed the course of his adolescence. Diving into the ditch, Anaya broke two vertebrae in his neck and nearly died. His convalescence was long and painful, but after spending the summer in the hospital, Anaya, fiercely determined to return to his active lifestyle, eventually recovered from his injuries. The experience produced in the teenage boy a passion for life and an appreciation for the ability of adversity to either destroy or reshape one's existence. ("Rudolfo Anaya: 1937" 12)

Rather than dwell on his misfortune, Anaya found light out of the situation through a new appreciation of life. This is definitely not an easy task, which Anaya presents by the struggles

Tortuga faces throughout his journey to understanding. Possibly, the thoughts that go through Tortuga's mind mirror Anaya's thought process during this difficult time in his life. Literature and writing provide him with a safe haven to express his thoughts, including his personal story. He could have done nothing and given up on life, but he chose to share his story with people that are willing to listen. His stories do not need to be completely nonfiction for him to get his points across to the audience though. The situations and characters he created may even represent the reader, especially if he or she has gone through a traumatic event. On that note, trauma is an important element in *Tortuga* than needs to be explored.

However, seeing this novel as a personal story about a child's journey to recovery has confused critics when placing it amongst works that are part of the Chicano Movement of the 1970s. In the afterword section of *Tortuga*, Rudolfo Anaya adds, "A few early critics said the novel didn't fit the social realism we needed in the heady days of the 1970s Chicano Movement. But every community needs the stories of heroes, and for me Tortuga was a hero. He overcame the obstacles and came out stronger" (199). Even though *Tortuga* does not comment about the Chicano struggles for land and placement on the surface, it still represents the attitude of the movement. Many Chicano writers during the movement explicitly voiced their frustrations and thoughts in their works. But in the case of *Tortuga*, the protagonist with the same name shares their determination in overcoming difficult obstacles. There are times that Tortuga wants to give up, but he eventually overcomes the struggles he has to face and succeeds by getting out of the hospital. This is possible with the help of his companions, which may represent Chicanos coming together in the fight against oppression. Therefore, *Tortuga* does fit side by side with novels of the Chicano movement. The character Tortuga is an ideal role model for people that feel the overwhelming weight of life on their shoulders. He goes from feeling powerless to

becoming stronger than he ever was before. As a hero, he may not have magical powers, but his determination is good enough for the children of the hospital that feed off from his positive role. In addition, people can learn lessons and get inspired from fictional characters like Tortuga.

One of the lessons that readers can learn from Tortuga is that life is not always going to be a walk in the park. In his afterword in *Tortuga*, Rudolfo Anaya discusses the symbolism behind Tortuga's actions when he says, "By accepting the blue guitar [Tortuga] would become the new poet of the barrio, the writer telling the tragic tale. The writers I admire dare to probe not only the joy but also the anguish of our lives. I hope I was doing that" (199). Anaya finds inspiration from writers that do not sugarcoat reality. Tortuga, like Anaya, will share his life experiences for generations to come without leaving any important information out that he feels needs to be released into the world. Pain and suffering are major parts of life that cannot always be avoided. Even with this in mind, life does not always have to have a dark cloud hovering above it. Anaya aims to enlighten people with his stories about reality and give them hope through characters like Tortuga. He overcomes his paralysis and makes it out of the hospital, which is inspirational. Moreover, writing on paper is not the only way to share stories as one can see when Tortuga picks up the guitar. Music is another form of expression that can provide emotional connections with others and tell stories. Writing about unnerving personal experiences can even be therapeutic.

Aside from his accident, Rudolfo Anaya's "teenage years were in many ways typical. He played football and baseball, and spent a significant amount of time with his friends discussing cars, girls, and music. In school he maintained good grades and avoided the troubles and dangers of gang life" ("Rudolfo Anaya: 1937" 12). Despite any prejudice and racism Anaya was surrounded by, nothing seemed to have stopped him from living an ordinary teenage life. His

success in school and avoidance of negative influences says a lot about the author and his upbringing. Anaya was not easily distracted while education remained a priority, which was also important to his mother, “who held education in high regard” (“Rudolfo Anaya: 1937” 11). He accomplished his goals and enjoyed life, which is something he continues to embrace in his later years. It does not stop there though.

Rudolfo Anaya successfully graduated from Albuquerque High School in 1956 and sought to be an accountant by attending business school. However, it was not a fulfilling experience, so “he enrolled in the University of New Mexico at Albuquerque. If the move to Albuquerque as a young teenager rocked Anaya’s world, university life sent him into a full-fledged identity crisis. He was a Mexican American in a social and academic setting dominated by a culture that was not his own” (“Rudolfo Anaya: 1937” 12). Again, Anaya was surrounded by unfamiliar territory at that school due to its lack of Mexican American culture. Initially, it was not a good experience for him because he could not relate to anything there. This sent him on a search for his identity. Finding one’s identity is important to Rudolfo Anaya, which is a driving force in his writing. As an observation, Anaya usually places his characters in unknown territory and situations that make each of them question his or her own identity. For instance, the character Tortuga is placed in an unfamiliarly dark hospital after becoming paralyzed. Both setting and situation are new to him, which is overwhelming. The idea of becoming paralyzed does not only need to stand for literal meanings since one can also feel that way by being placed somewhere that is not familiar to him or her. Anaya does not shy away from the reality of the identity crisis since he has gone through it himself multiple times and wants to share his experiences and resolutions through the form of writing. Adding to this dilemma, “English was still his second language, and he often used speech patterns that were considered wrong by his

English-speaking classmates and professors. He felt different, isolated, and alienated, with no mentors to guide or support him” (“Rudolfo Anaya: 1937” 12). This is important to take into account because Rudolfo Anaya usually provides mentor figures for his struggling characters in his stories. Perhaps, he gives his characters the support he wanted when he was growing up. Unfortunately, he did not have an Ultima or Salomón to guide him through his struggles.

Regardless of the hardships he endured throughout his life as an outsider, Anaya pushed himself to successfully complete his studies and life goals. Actually, the hard times in his life influenced him in a positive way too when “Anaya’s own questions of his place in the world as a Latino, coupled with the traditional angst of moving into adulthood and the emotional pain caused by a recently failed relationship with a girl, pushed him to write as a cathartic exercise” (“Rudolfo Anaya: 1937” 12). Rather than bottling up his emotions and letting darkness take over him, Anaya decided to relieve his stress by writing. Sometimes this kind of writing requires a person to revisit times of despair, but it can also help with the recovery process. Alongside his love for writing, “a freshman English class sparked his interest in literature, and he began to read poetry and novels” (“Rudolfo Anaya: 1937” 12). The novel would later end up being his most used form of writing, so this is a crucial and positive time in his educational journey. This goes hand in hand with the idea that a person needs to be an observer before becoming a writer. He or she needs to find inspiration and a model for reference.

As a result of Anaya’s determination, he successfully graduated in 1963 from the University of New Mexico at Albuquerque with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English. He then became a teacher, married Patricia Lawless in 1966, and continued to work on his writing. Even after all of that experience, Anaya still, “[struggled] to find his literary voice. Although he conjured up images of his past, he found that he was writing in a style foreign to that past. The

words and the characters would not mix” (“Rudolfo Anaya: 1937” 12). The stories that Rudolfo Anaya heard as a child and the style of writing that he learned to appreciate in school were both influences in his own writing, but they did not mix well for him at first. This is understandable since the authors that he studied in school were not of Mexican-American descent and did not suit his needs as mentors. It was like two different worlds colliding. When things did not look very promising, “Anaya had something of a mystical experience that pushed him toward the development of his own unique Mexican-American style. As he labored over his writing one night, he turned to see an elderly woman dressed in black standing in his room. This vision spurred the writer into action and a story began to flow from his pen” (“Rudolfo Anaya: 1937” 13). This marks the beginning of his career as a novelist and the creation of his first successful novel *Bless Me, Ultima*. The woman that he saw that night also inspired the character Ultima, Antonio’s mentor in the story. Mysticism is another common element in Rudolfo Anaya’s works, which is most likely inspired by his personal experiences such as this one.

After Anaya retired from teaching in 1993, he spent most of his time writing and traveling. He still writes and resides in Albuquerque, New Mexico today. Therefore, he has followed in his father’s footsteps by exploring South and Central America over the years while living in the land that his mother called home. His parents’ different but connecting ways of life have stuck with him throughout his life. In relation to his mission, Rudolfo Anaya told *Publisher’s Weekly*, “What I’ve wanted to do is compose the Chicano worldview—the synthesis that shows our true mestizo identity—and clarify it for my community and myself. Writing for me is a way of knowledge, and what I find illuminates my life” (“Rudolfo Anaya: 1937” 14). Finding a voice has been an incredible journey for Rudolfo Anaya and the Chicano people. He shines a light on that issue in his own way with novels like *Bless Me, Ultima*, *Tortuga*, and

Randy Lopez Goes Home. The journey was nowhere near smooth for Anaya, but he learned a lot on the way. He strives to share his stories in the hopes to illuminate and educate others about the Chicano identity and the life lessons that come with it. The power of illumination could not be any clearer than it is in his classic novel *Tortuga*.

CHAPTER 1

SALOMON

In a way, Salomón is a spiritual figure in *Tortuga*, but his appearance causes confusion among people that are not accustomed to such physical features. With this in mind, there are two dissimilar ways that the characters in the story may view Salomón. Edward Elias describes him in his article “*Tortuga: A Novel of Archetypal Structure*,” as “the benevolent sage and guide but he also represents that feared and devouring monster who protects a sacred space. His territory in the hospital is that of the wards of the most sadly incurable children, an area never visited by other patients of the institution—indeed, a territory that is set apart as if it were sacred” (83). Throughout the novel, Salomón communicates to Tortuga through dreams and a form of telepathy, since they are in separate areas of the hospital, to guide him toward finding his destiny. This is a source of light for Tortuga to follow during his dark times, which will be examined in the coming paragraphs. Salomón is also known throughout the hospital for being wise and caring towards the vegetables. All of these traits support the depiction of Salomón as a highly compatible mentor for Tortuga. In addition, it is more than likely that Salomón is based on a biblical figure as “his counsel is akin to that of the wise Solomon of biblical texts; the Salomón of Anaya’s novel, however, is only a crippled boy in an iron lung who, while awaiting the end of his terminal illness, reads voraciously” (Elias 83). Despite his simple and frail appearance, Salomón still positively impacts Tortuga with his wisdom like Solomon from the bible. Woefully, his appearance and habitat may give a person the completely opposite impression at first like when Tortuga does not react well to witnessing Salomón’s ward that contains the children in the iron lungs as he feels that darkness is going to consume him. Perhaps, this is the devouring monster counterpart of Salomón that Elias mentions. He is known

for being the keeper of the vegetables, who are hidden from the rest of the hospital in a place that may be interpreted as sacred since not many people have seen it. All of this shows how something or someone that is a symbol of light can be misinterpreted when not understood, leading to darkness and feelings of “fear and depression” (Elias 83).

With all of this in mind, light is an important element in *Tortuga* that characters like Tortuga, Salomón, and Danny need in order to escape the darkness they encounter towards salvation. Salomón is a prime source of light in various ways, starting with his philosophy of life. In the book *Rudolfo A. Anaya: A Critical Companion*, Margarite Fernandez Olmos explains that Salomón’s “philosophical tenet is to follow the ‘path of the sun,’ a solar theology of transformation: mankind, transformed into a new sun, can shine on new worlds. His ideas reflect a belief in the oneness of all things, a search for harmony, essence, and illumination” (76). Salomón believes that people in darkness need to find and follow the path of the sun to complete a transformation that leads to a meaningful life with the hope for harmony. This path will help him battle the darkness of fear, which has the potential to cause conflicts with others of the same kind due to its blinding affects. For instance, Danny is a victim of fear and takes part in violent acts against others. On the other hand, Salomón believes in the unity of people and nature, which the path of the sun represents. Still, this is easier said than done when a person is against a manipulating darkness. Salomón learns this lesson the hard way, but attempts to use his acquired knowledge to enlighten Tortuga about the dangers of living in darkness.

There is a direct link between Salomón and the path of the sun that supports his role as mentor. Margarite Olmos points out that “[a]lthough his name is associated with a biblical king, his nickname, ‘Sol,’ it should be noted, means ‘sun’ in Spanish” (76). Salomón’s nickname perfectly suits him since it directly translates to “sun,” the crucial symbol of light that he is

advocating others to follow. It is likely that Rudolfo Anaya intends his readers to make connections like this to emphasize familiar ideas or archetypes while incorporating his native language of Spanish as a nod to his roots. Tortuga also gets a suitable Spanish nickname, which translates to turtle in English, after he is put into a body cast that gives him the similar physical features of a turtle. The use of such archetypes in *Tortuga* will be discussed further in Chapter 3: Tortuga.

The sun is a reoccurring symbol that Rudolfo Anaya uses throughout his 1995 novel *Zia Summer*, which provides more insight on its importance in Chicano culture. In the story, the evil and dark character Raven with his followers mistreat the use of the Zia sun symbol and bring darkness upon it. They carve the Zia sun symbol on a dead body, and Raven flaunts the powers he receives from using the sacred symbol when he states, “Ask Tamara. She can tell you about the power of this Zia medallion. Great power, Baca. The power to fly through the forest and see everything. Shit, I’ve got power you haven’t even dreamed about” (Anaya, *Zia Summer* 210). Raven allows the power of the Zia sun symbol to get to his head and feels unstoppable when committing heinous acts. As for its importance, meaning, and origin, “[t]he sun symbol, which originated with the Indians of the Zia Pueblo in ancient times, also represents a tribal philosophy regarding the basic harmony of the universe and the sacred obligation to develop a pure spirit, a clear mind, a strong body, and a dedication to the well-being of the people” (Olmos 114). The Indians of the Zia Pueblo regard the Zia sun as a positive symbol that symbolizes purity, clarity, and strength. Similarly, Salomón is dedicated to the well-being of Tortuga and the vegetables in his ward as well as helping Tortuga reach clarity to gain the strength to fight his way out of his predicament. Salomón embodies the characteristics associated with the Zia sun. There is definitely that battle between light and darkness in both stories too, which is a common theme in

Anaya's works that represents face-offs of good versus evil, understanding versus naivety, and even life versus death. In *Zia Summer*, Raven uses the sun symbol as a weapon for pride and taints it by spreading its image throughout his crime scenes instead of using it as a symbol of clarity and purity. Raven allows darkness to consume him and takes part in wicked acts as a result. In comparison, Danny also becomes a suitable host for darkness in *Tortuga*, but his innocence is still intact. While there is no doubt that Raven commits heinous acts because he is pure evil, Danny is a different case that falls victim to darkness. Really, it seems that Raven embraces darkness. Therefore, *Zia Summer* is a battle between good and evil while *Tortuga* is a struggle between enlightenment and frozen naivety brought on by trauma and fear. However, both stories deal with life versus death in their own separate ways.

Regardless of the differences between the stories, there are more examples in *Zia Summer* that support the importance of light in *Tortuga* and life. For example, Don Eliseo tells Sonny that "Light. That's all there is. The light brings clarity" (176). In relation to the true meaning of the Zia sun symbol, clarity is brought on by light. The sun literally provides light for the world, allowing people to see their true surroundings. Truth is another result of light. Without light, people would be lost in the dark and may find themselves living with a false sense of place. Metaphorically, light stands for illumination or understanding. Without understanding, people may feel a similar sense of misplacement, which can lead to feelings of fear, confusion, anger, and depression as scenarios in *Tortuga* depict. Overall, the Zia sun symbol should be a source of that true light, not darkness. Don Eliseo wants Sonny to take in the light and fight against the darkness that awaits him while protecting the purity of the Zia sun symbol when he advises him to "go out to that other world. The world of the brujos. They're screwing around with the Zia sun. You have to fight evil" (*Zia Summer* 177). Here is light versus darkness, Sonny versus

Raven. Sonny must win this war in order for light to prevail over darkness. But, this is not an easy task to accomplish against an evil person like Raven. Olmos takes into account that “Sonny will be misled by clues set to distract him throughout the novel, something Don Eliseo warns him to avoid” (110). Raven plants distractions for Sonny to keep him off his trail while trying to lead him to his permanent demise. Fortunately for Sonny, Don Eliseo warns him of any danger and gives him advice to keep him on the right path.

There are distinct similarities between Don Eliseo and Salomón that deserve attention. First of all, Don Eliseo is a mentor figure for Sonny Baca as Salomón is for Tortuga. Both of them have a similar philosophy of following the path of the sun, a source of light that guides. As a mini history lesson, the word “mentor” derives from the literature of ancient Greece:

In Homer’s epic *The Odyssey*, Odysseus was away from home fighting and journeying for 20 years. During that time, Telemachus, the son he left as a babe in arms, grew up under the supervision of Mentor, an old and trusted friend. When the goddess Athena decided it was time to complete the education of young Telemachus, she visited him disguised as Mentor and they set out together to learn about his father. Today, we use the word *mentor* for anyone who is a positive, guiding influence in another (usually younger) person’s life. (“Mentor”)

Whether intentional or not, Rudolfo Anaya borrows elements from *The Odyssey* when it comes to his depictions of the mentor figure in his works. *Tortuga*, *Zia Summer*, and even his most notable novel *Bless Me, Ultima* all involve struggling characters that need guidance from mentor figures. Typically, Anaya’s mentors are older than their pupils for the exception of Salomón, whom is a fellow child. *Ultima* is an old curandera, or native healer, that guides a young naïve Antonio through his spiritual journey to understanding. Don Eliseo is an eighty-year-old man that is one with nature, which is another similarity he has with Salomón. Like Filomón from *Tortuga*, who is another mentor figure for Tortuga, he knows the history of his native land and shares that knowledge with Sonny. Also, Don Eliseo knows about the dangers of the darkness in

the community and the manipulating influence it can have on Sonny if not approached with caution. In one instance, Sonny and Don Eliseo are investigating a red goat that is being kept in a pen. Sonny wants to get a closer look at it and tells Don Eliseo to take his truck back home. Then Don Eliseo responds, “No, Sonny, we gotta stick with you. These people are dangerous. They’re not amateurs” (*Zia Summer* 278). Don Eliseo knows that the people who are responsible for castrating a goat are evil and slick. He does not want to leave Sonny alone, possibly due to his inexperience with dangerous people. In spite of this, Sonny points out that Concha is getting rowdy, so Don Eliseo agrees to take her home. On the way out Don Eliseo says, “Cuidate. That woman in there and her friends are bad mujeres” (*Zia Summer* 279). Again, Don Eliseo warns Sonny to be careful around that property because witches live there. He is a source of light for Sonny that wants to guide him towards the correct path and out of trouble while warning him not to fall for any tricks. Unfortunately, Sonny is careless when investigating the home and gets knocked out, which Sonny acknowledges himself when he exclaims, “You walked right into it! Stupido” (*Zia Summer* 281). Luckily for Sonny, Don Eliseo and Rita save him from his impending doom that could have ended his life. This idea of the protagonist walking into darkness while his mentor attempts to save him from its manipulative tricks occurs in *Tortuga* as well when Tortuga allows darkness to convince him that his life is not worth living anymore as Salomón tries to sway him to walk the path of the sun and not give up. Salomón is trying to prevent Tortuga from accepting an avoidable and pointless death. Mutually Salomón and Don Eliseo are crucial sources of light that mentor their pupils and successfully save their lives.

Considering all of this, the mentor figure is an important element in a number of Rudolfo Anaya’s novels that provides light for characters that are surrounded by darkness. Even though the mentors in *Zia Summer* and *Tortuga* warn their pupils about the dangers of the darkness, they

do not advise them to run away from it, but face it. Running away from darkness in both stories has potential detrimental consequences. It is clear that ignoring Raven's dirty business will allow him to taint the image of the Zia sun further, so Sonny has to take physical action against Raven to preserve the purity of the symbol. As darkness is embodied inside of evil characters like Tenorio from *Bless Me, Ultima* and Raven from *Zia Summer*, it takes a totally different form in *Tortuga*. Rather than physically attacking people through evil entities, the darkness in *Tortuga* is an abstract character that mentally consumes its victims. It is a dark force that Salomón encountered firsthand before becoming the wise mentor that Tortuga meets in the ward. Without thinking over his situation, he allowed the darkness to consume him with a mentality that all hope is gone, but an experience broke him out of his trance and saved his life. Now in the present time that *Tortuga* takes place, Salomón shares stories about his experiences, good and bad, in the hopes to inspire listeners to follow the path of the sun.

Accordingly, Salomón shares these personal stories with Tortuga to guide him through his journey. As an observation, there are similarities between their journeys, which supports Salomón's role as a mentor. He has gone through hardships and learned valuable lessons in his life that he can now teach to people that are willing to listen. Even when Tortuga does not want to listen to his stories, Salomón does not give up on him because of his determination to guide him on the right path. It gets to a point that Tortuga needs that last minute push from an outside force to open his eyes to the beauty of life and ultimately find his destiny before there is no hope left. If all goes well, Tortuga will no longer fear Salomón neither after hearing and understanding his stories. Essentially, Salomón did not even find his destiny during his crisis, but his destiny found him. He narrates this enlightening story to a terrified Tortuga in the hopes to sway him away from a familiar darkness when he begins:

[L]ong ago I came with Filomón across the desert...crucified to suffer the paralysis forever, I cursed God and prayed for death. I had the will left to kill myself and end the meaningless suffering, but I did not have the strength. I tried choking on my own phlegm, and they cut a hole in my throat and made me breathe. I could not eat and they fed me through my veins. When my lungs collapsed they placed me in the iron lung and forced the air to make me live. They fixed me for all time...in one place...a worthless piece of flesh rotting in the compost of self pity. (Tortuga 41)

Salomón's personal story actually foreshadows what ends up happening to Tortuga when it outlines a series of upcoming events. Salomón opens up about his struggles with faith due to his paralysis. The trauma of having to accept that his paralysis would affect him forever also triggered his suicidal tendencies since he believed that his suffering was meaningless. From a Freudian perspective, this goes hand in hand with the concept of the "death drive," which is defined as "an aspiration, a drive to be dead. Perhaps Freud was right, even though neither the biologist nor the theologian would find it possible to agree with him. Let us assume that Freud was right; he certainly did not prove his case, because there is nothing instinctual about dying, even though the end is inevitable" (Freud xiv-v). Before moving on, the "death drive" is a theory by Freud that hypothesizes the reasoning behind a person's violent and deadly actions towards the absolute goal of death. There is no concrete evidence whether Freud's theory holds water or not, but there are still similarities between the motives of the characters in Rudolfo Anaya's *Tortuga* and this theory that deserve to be explored. One thing that is certain is that death is inevitable as every human will eventually die, whether it be through old age, a tragic accident, illness, the list goes on. Technically, all human beings end up the same way, but that does not necessarily mean that everyone drives towards death. As for the characters Danny, Salomón, and Tortuga, death may be their ultimate goal at some point in their lives. The quote above mentions that the theologian would find it impossible to agree with Freud, but the following factors may sway a theologian to consider the theory to a certain extent. Freud

believed that humans have two contrasting instincts. Eros or the life instinct favors life while Thanatos or the death instinct is a destructive road towards death. World War I ended not long before he came up with this theory in 1920. Soldiers during this time suffered from anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder, leaving them never the same again. They may have acquired PTSD from their traumatic war experiences, personal losses, and physical injuries. Even families back home suffered with the loss of loved ones. A person that has gone through such traumas would undergo mental changes. This is where the “death drive” comes into play. If Freud believed that people have two contrasting instincts, there needs to be a balance between the two. However, trauma can cause a mental disturbance that leads to the unstable rise of the death instinct. Sadly, many soldiers are known to have taken their lives due to PTSD. People may not be born with a death instinct, but suicidal thoughts caused by a mental imbalance is possible. In the case of Salomón, he experienced the trauma of finding out that he will be paralyzed for the rest of his life. This drives him to attempt suicide with his last bit of strength.

Salomón chooses to share this with Tortuga since he can relate to how he feels at that moment. Both of them curse God during their most desperate times and accept death. After Tortuga’s first encounter with the vegetables, he screams, “I...I’d rather die first! Hear...die! No life like yours...Freaks...hear me...never” (*Tortuga* 40). Self-pity is another trait that Tortuga and Salomón share, which Salomón clearly admits to having felt in the past. Tortuga goes through a rollercoaster of emotions during his first traumatic encounter with Salomón and the vegetables, which include pity for others, anger, and lastly self-pity. These emotions are his defense mechanisms fighting against further trauma, which he also begs, “Get me out of here, I heard my shouts in the darkness—please don’t torment...please God” (*Tortuga* 40). This behavior repeats throughout the story as Tortuga avoids the darkness of the ward. Taking a

closer look at both of Tortuga's quotes from above, they may differ in tone, but both express sorrow for oneself. Tortuga transitions from cursing at the vegetables and Salomón to begging God to spare him from further pain. These quotes complement each other to help the reader understand Tortuga's reason to avoid Salomón's ward. Before concentrating on himself, Tortuga sympathized with the vegetables, so perhaps his attitude changed once he realized that there is a possibility that he could end up like them. This explains why Tortuga shouts at the vegetables that he is not like them and would rather die than be confined inside of an iron lung. In comparison, Salomón tries to kill himself to avoid living with paralysis. Tortuga may also symbolize society, and his outburst critiques the way prejudice people react to others with different physical features. They prefer that victims of paralysis or any abnormal conditions stay out of their sights, which can be a defense mechanism they put up to avoid the realization of the possibilities that they can end up in similar conditions. Later in the story, the children of the hospital encounter similar reactions and prejudices from people that are not accustomed to the sight of crippled or disabled children. Their actions are most likely influenced by insecurities and fears of the unknown. The next chapter will examine that kind of behavior.

In the article, "Spirituality and Resilience in Trauma Victims," Julio F. P. Peres, Alexander Moreira-Almeida, Antonia Gladys Nasello, and Harold G. Koenig discuss the topics of hope and spirituality in relation to trauma victims. According to these authors, "When people become traumatized they often look for a new sense of meaning and purpose in their life. Spiritual or religious beliefs and practices are important components of almost all cultures. Religiosity and spirituality are strongly based on a personal quest to understand ultimate questions about life, meaning, and relationships with the sacred or transcendent" (346). The next chapter will discuss Danny's search for meaning through religion. However, Salomón's initial

reaction to his paralysis demonstrates the possibility that a person can give up without looking for new meaning, especially if he or she feels that there is no meaning to look for in the first place. In a positive turn of events, Salomón experienced a life transformation when he came in contact with a giant butterfly, which he recalls and enlightens Tortuga that he “*felt the golden strands of light which unite all of the creation gather in that marvelous creature...and I sensed a strange salvation working its way into my soul. The numinous soul of the mountain and the sky and the water gathered in the light of the sun, reflected in the fanning of the wings, made music in its flight*” (Tortuga 42). Salomón’s transformation begins with his awakening to the beauty of nature when he observes the butterfly, a representation of nature as its wings reflect inspiring natural elements. All of this is illuminated by the light of the sun, which Salomón felt a spiritual connection as it saved him from the darkness that was consuming him. This transcendent experience does not stop there as he adds, “*The large butterfly fluttered over me then gracefully landed on the ball of cotton which covered the opening to my throat [...] Softly it pushed away the dry cotton which filtered my bitter gasps for air, and then it settled over the opening at my throat...and casting its future with this crippled flower, it pollinated me [...] a love returning when I thought all love died*” (Tortuga 42). In this occurrence, Salomón felt a sense of renewal in his life even after he previously accepted his fate. Perchance, Rudolfo Anaya is communicating to his readers that sometimes people need assistance from outside forces to learn an important life lesson or find a new purpose in their lives. It is safe to say that Anaya provides mentors in his stories to assist struggling characters throughout their journeys, but Salomón does not receive help from a mentor. Instead, he experiences a miracle when the butterfly pollinates him, which causes him to feel the warmth of love that he has not felt in a long while as it was “*the first time since the paralysis another form of life had come to touch [him]*” (Tortuga 42).

On top of that, Salomón feels that the butterfly's actions were not coincidental because "*it knew what it was doing*" (Tortuga 42). Here, Salomón starts becoming one with nature, which is full of life that he never considered before. He then continues to inform Tortuga that, "*as you have been touched by Filomón and Ismelda...and as you will be touched by the mountain and all the forms of life that live at its feet*" (Tortuga 42). Salomón tries to clarify to Tortuga that even though he is creating human connections, nature is also there to help him get through his challenges. He is attempting to convince Tortuga to be aware of his surroundings, or nature, considering that he tells him this early on in the novel. Since Salomón tried killing himself before he noticed the beauty of nature, he is trying to prevent Tortuga from making a similar mistake.

Margarite Olmos examines and compares Salomón's story with the events that Tortuga is undergoing by claiming, "First introduced to Tortuga in a dream, Salomón will also experience a type of death and rebirth that parallels Tortuga's. A crippled child who has despaired and attempted suicide, he is regenerated by an epiphany with nature (the butterfly) and will be reborn in Tortuga" (80). Olmos makes an interesting claim that Salomón is regenerated through an epiphany, which is defined as "an appearance or manifestation especially of a divine being. A usually sudden manifestation or perception of the essential nature or meaning of something. An intuitive grasp of reality through something (as an event) usually simple and striking. An illuminating discovery, realization, or disclosure" ("Epiphany"). Each of these definitions seem to help describe the outcome of the scene and explain Anaya's purpose of including such a miracle in this novel. The idea of a manifestation, not necessarily of a divine being, but a creature with a positive influence, supports the presence of the butterfly to Salomón. Perhaps, this scene is in reference to a real life event that occurred in Rudolfo Anaya's life when a woman

in black appeared to him and inspired him to write *Bless Me, Ultima*. Similarly, Anaya and Salomón did not have suitable mentors to assist them in finding their respective destinies. Then when everything seemed grim, an inspirational being appeared to each of them, leading to some sort of awakening. Anaya gained the motivation he needed to start up his writing career while Salomón acquired a new appreciation of life. As the following will show, the butterfly's actions caused a sudden awareness within Salomón that influenced him to think about the beauty of life and what it truly means to him. The entire situation unfolded naturally as a butterfly performed basic actions that it does every day, but that time in the presence of a hopeless Salomón. He needed to see something as simple as that to find meaning within his own life. Probably the most important definition of epiphany in relation to *Tortuga* is that it illuminates a person towards a discovery. In the case of Salomón, he discovers his destiny in life after considering himself as worthless. As a result of his experience and acquired knowledge, Salomón is able to mentor Tortuga through similar struggles, but also makes this a personal mission, so he can plant a seed of himself in Tortuga as the butterfly did for him. The important life lesson that Salomón learns, which also motivates his new purpose in life is that "*These new winged beauties now burst from my mouth each time I speak. They fly from my soul to carry the words of love I learned that day. Each carries a new story, but all the stories are bound to the same theme...life is sacred, yes, even in the middle of this wasteland and in the darkness of our wards, life is sacred*" (*Tortuga* 42). The imagery of newborn butterflies hatching from their cocoons to fly and spread words of love stands for the countless stories that Salomón shares with others. These stories contain life lessons and meaning for listeners like Tortuga to decipher, but the overall theme in all of them is "life is sacred." In this way, Rudolfo Anaya gives a nod to his Mexican-American tradition of storytelling, which "legend and history were blended together to create

stories filled with mystery and revelation” (“Rudolfo Anaya: 1937” 11). In *Tortuga*, Salomón tells multiple moral stories, but these stories do not always center on him.

At one point Salomón tells Tortuga a traumatic story about newborn sea turtles that are racing towards the darkness of the sea in the hopes to evade the dangers that surround them. This entire story may symbolize the struggles that people or creatures face while living on earth and the reality that death is always lurking around the corner. There is one troubling scenario in the story that has the potential to occur in a real life situation that Salomón is warning Tortuga about when he mentions, “*Those which survive are attacked by the rock lizards, distant cousins of an ancient brotherhood, rough-scaled monsters who scramble to make a meal of turtle meat. Again the cries fill the air, shrill cries which turn my blood cold...What is more terrifying than your own kind turning on you*” (*Tortuga* 81)? In regards to surrounding predators, the sea turtles have to be cautious around their own kind as well. Aside from the obvious, that question is directed at Tortuga in a way to get him to think about the possibilities of other humans turning on him. Salomón does tell Tortuga this story before Danny tries to drown him, so perhaps this is another example of foreshadowing. Another thing that may be nothing more than coincidental, but is still intriguing to consider, is the description of the lizards having rough-scaled skin. This can be in reference to Danny’s skin condition. In that case, Salomón wants Tortuga to watch out for people that will hurt him to satisfy their own agendas.

The connection between the sea turtles in the story and human beings like Tortuga and Salomón is established when Salomón states, “*Full of eggs and blind to the drama before them [mother turtles] crush their own children into the sand, and some, hungry from their journeys to the beach, pick up the squirming young and make a meal of the future they themselves deposited [...]* *Is the light so dim that we don’t recognize ourselves on that wide beach? Is the sun setting*

on this game of life” (Tortuga 82)? This is an interesting excerpt that can be interpreted in multiple ways. For instance, maybe the mother sea turtles became so blinded by the darkness of the sea that they do not realize that they are killing their own children when entering the beach. Irony comes into play since the sea is not safe after all, which Salomón expresses, “*But now the sea itself is a new enemy...and to return to it is to return to live with the ghosts of the past...to live in the sea-darkness*” (Tortuga 82). Here, sea turtles risk never finding enlightenment in the world by living in the past. They will inevitably have to face dangers either by predators on the beach or never understanding their true destinies due to the darkness brought on by fear and the illusive comforts of the sea. It all comes down to choosing a path that is more fulfilling towards a richer life. Clearly, this story relates to Tortuga since the children of the hospital associate him with the turtle figure, and Salomón questions the mother turtles’ actions as if questioning their own. Thus, this interpretation can also be a critique on conflicts in society like war or other unfortunate atrocities. Opposing societies or individuals that engage in blind combat influenced by the fear they have of each other without attempting to fully understand the other can lead to preventable tragedies, which the death of multiple baby turtles symbolizes. Like the sea turtles, these fearful humans may not realize they are killing their own kind. Fear fogs up awareness. As the next chapter will entail, Danny is driven by blinding fear, which eventually leads him to make heinous decisions that could have been prevented if he found enlightenment earlier.

Along with warning Tortuga to be aware of lurking predators, Salomón makes it clear to him that living in darkness “*is not our path, Tortuga, that is not our way. If there is any hope it lies on the path of the sun. That one glimmering cell of light which floats in our dark blood must become a sun...it must shine on new worlds...*” (Tortuga 82). Salomón is trying to prevent Tortuga from falling into the trap of fear, which can be disguised as shelter. Even when it comes

down to the smallest fraction of light left, Salomón urges Tortuga to allow it to grow. He repeatedly emphasizes that Tortuga needs to follow the path of the sun in his stories to make that happen. If not, the darkness will eventually consume him and burn out the last spark of light within him, leading to blindness and fear.

In response to this analysis through email, Rudolfo Anaya provides his interpretation of Salomón's sea turtle story as he explains, "For me the beach is to remain land-locked, not daring to face the world. The sea is danger, but also a place to recycle life. These small turtles will grow, return to the beach to lay their eggs, and thus continue life. It's more than just about evolution, it's about the spirit to live. The spirit to leave the sea shore and set sail. Love life and engage it" (Anaya, "Re: Questions on Tortuga/Salomon's Stories"). In a way, the excerpt seems to demonstrate Charles Darwin's Survival of the Fittest theory or Natural Selection, which is "a natural process that results in the survival and reproductive success of individuals or groups best adjusted to their environment and that leads to the perpetuation of genetic qualities best suited to that particular environment" ("Natural Selection"). Unfortunately for the baby sea turtles, they are not suited to live on the beach and struggle to survive as superior creatures kill them off either by mistake or by making a meal out of them. Consequently, they end up being part of a food chain that keeps predators fed, even their own kind. Their young and small bodies cannot match against these bigger creatures. The quicker and slicker sea turtles are able to make it to the sea, but there are more dangers awaiting them there, another place that they need to adjust to for survival. People that believe in this theory picture life as a fight for survival where the fittest succeed to live a longer life. Even though this gruesome scene of sea turtles getting slaughtered as they fight to survive references evolution, Rudolfo Anaya explains that there is more to this moral story than that. He interprets the beach as a place that isolates the baby sea turtles away

from the sea. Darkness may reside deep in the sea, but so do the possibilities for creatures to recycle life by experiencing spiritual rebirths in the magical waters. On that topic, water is a healing element that Rudolfo Anaya includes in multiple works, especially in *Tortuga*. The protagonist experiences a similar rebirth later in the novel, which Salomón's sea turtle story also foreshadows. Therefore, the sea is a place of rebirth and healing while the beach provides the sea turtles a place to lay their eggs to expand life. Despite the dangers that lurk in the sea and on the beach, Anaya considers both locations as necessary environments for the sea turtles. Instead of running in fear of other creatures towards the water to seek shelter for life, Anaya feels that the sea turtles should live out their life to the fullest. They should not be afraid to live in the sea or on the beach. Fear is a negative product of trauma that will only keep creatures or people like Tortuga from enjoying life. Two ways to battle fear is to love life and engage it by appreciating even the smallest beauties in life and not hesitating to take risks that may require a person to leave his or her comfort zone towards a more fulfilling life.

Along with Salomón's wise and inspiring instruction, it is also interesting that Tortuga is able to hear his whispered stories from a separated part of the hospital. They seem to be connected mentally, without physically being in each other's presence, in a dreamlike state. Regarding his use of dreamlike episodes in *Tortuga*, Rudolfo Anaya comments in the afterword that "the use of dreams, or Salomón's whispered stories, reflect my interest in the oneiric" (200). Anaya finds writing inspiration from his own life experiences and multi-cultural background, and does not hesitate to utilize any of those elements in his works. This definitely applies to his use of dreams in *Tortuga* and his other writings. Edward Elias elaborates on the connection between the Hispanic custom of storytelling and the dream sequences found in *Tortuga* when he says, "The hero's constant reveries—the dream sequences—that are in integral part of the

narration are very much in keeping with the Hispanic custom of telling and retelling tales, embellishing them, and learning a lesson from these allegories” (86). Not only did the oral stories that Anaya heard in his early years spark his interest, but they inspired him to carry on the tradition through his own writing and characters while sticking to its core values. In *Tortuga*, Salomón becomes an ideal vessel for this task after his awakening. Through the power of storytelling, he attempts to enlighten Tortuga with his acquired wisdom. Just like the Hispanic custom, Salomón’s stories include many familiar symbols and archetypes that all have a purpose to assist Tortuga in making connections towards a clear understanding about his destiny. As for the mystery of Salomón’s presence, he is always with Tortuga even if it is in spirit as his speeches “are initially represented in the text by cursive in order to signal their dream-like nature; in later passages this device is discontinued” (Elias 83). Anaya provides the reader with paragraphs in cursive texts to signify when Tortuga is experiencing a dream-like episode as he hears Salomón’s whispered voice, separating from typical dialogue amongst physical beings. However, just because Salomón is not physically in Tortuga’s presence, it does not mean that he is non-existent to Tortuga or that the concept of Salomón is entirely mythological in Hispanic culture. Elias observes this and comes to the conclusion that “[t]he sage’s words then appear constantly in the narrative as if they were reflections of Tortuga’s conscience, his reveries or intuitions” (Elias 83). Salomón is an actual being in the story, but his spiritual presence may be a representation of Tortuga’s own conscience or instincts based on the stories that the children of the hospital tell about Salomón and his teachings. There is a positive energy that surrounds Salomón where Tortuga wants to find truth and ultimately his destiny, but his doubts are battling his instincts. The trauma he has been experiencing since his accident is causing him to fear for further traumas. He wants to believe in Salomón’s teachings, but his protective shell is holding

him back from following his instincts. Salomón's whispered dialogue along with his actual being are both real to Tortuga even if those dream-like episodes are products of his imagination. This way of perceiving reality aligns with the beliefs of Anaya's culture as Paul Beekman Taylor adds in his article "The Writer with Wings: Flight as Chicano Survival in the Fiction of Rudolfo A. Anaya" that "For Anaya, as for Native American writers as a whole, dreams and visions as well as story are ontologically equivalent to 'reality'" (136).

Rudolfo Anaya clarifies the combination of reality, culture, and the use of dreams in his literature when he continues, "In my recent novels my character learns to *walk in dreams*. I continue to explore the images of the collective unconscious, and so those symbols appear clothed in the spirit of my place" (*Tortuga* 200). In the article "Thoreau, Jung, and the Collective Unconscious," Neil B. Yetwin quotes Carl Gustav Jung's explanation on his collective unconscious theory as, "'the deepest layer of the psyche, containing the experiences, fears, memories, and all cognitive perceptions shared by all human beings on earth' [...]. Each unique individual, he wrote, 'also represents the 'eternal man' or 'man' as a species and thus has a share in all the movements of the collective unconscious'" (4). Moving on with the notion that Salomón's whispered stories are reflections of Tortuga's conscience or intuitions, perhaps these stories are a result of the collective unconscious at work. According to Jung, all human beings share a collective unconscious that include common experiences, fears, memories, and perceptions of the world. Hence, in the case of Tortuga, he hears a voice that instructs him to follow a path of light and confront the darkness without fear perhaps because of the culture he has been brought up in that believes in such traditions or the collective feelings and beliefs that are shared amongst the people in the hospital. The concept of a culture's beliefs engraved inside of an individual like second nature references placement, specifically Anaya's Chicano roots.

However, Jung clearly states that the collective unconscious is shared between all humans on earth, so it triggers common intuitions that any human being can feel. With this in mind, the fear that Tortuga experiences when facing and running away from the darkness is a result of the collective fear of the unknown. Humans tend to feel anxious when confronting an unknown force and even more so when they are victims of trauma. Tortuga unconsciously knows that he has to face the darkness to find his destiny when he hears Salomón's whispered messages, but the trauma he has experienced is making it harder for him to get over the idea that more dangers may lay ahead, causing a barrier. The next chapter will explore Anaya's purpose of putting his characters through unfavorable situations, but so far it is evident that Anaya wants his characters to simply live life and engage it instead of living in fear. Sometimes following one's gut or inner voice leads toward the right path. Maybe the remaining sea turtles in Salomón's story survived at the end because they followed their instincts and lived life to the fullest, which does not completely follow the theory of evolution.

Whether Salomón's whispered stories stem from Tortuga's conscience or collective unconscious, or even the supernatural, Salomón is definitely a symbol of positivity and hope. He revisits and shares his own terrible experiences and awakening with Tortuga to help him avoid similar downfalls while attempting to guide him towards the path of the sun. Both Salomón and the path of the sun symbolize guiding light out of darkness. Magical realism and symbolism are important elements that bring Rudolfo Anaya's works to life. Karen Kenyon discusses this and more in her article "Visit with Rudolfo Anaya," which includes excerpts from her conversations with Anaya. On the topic of magical realism, Kenyon explains, "Since the Chicano movement began in the early 1970's, two paths of writing led from it. One was the school of social realism, and the other was a more universal path growing from myths of the Hispanic or Native American

culture of which Anaya is a key figure and leader. The world of magic realism, of myth and dream, weave in and out of his work. It is this subject which interests Anaya most” (126). As mentioned in the history of the Chicano movement, placement was and still is an important social issue that Chicano writers highlight in their works. The hardships that they endure and observe within their own cultural groups are cruel realities that they aim to shed light on through their writing. In relation to trauma, these hardships can be very traumatic for individuals, especially when society harshly treats and removes them from their own homes. Tortuga and the children in the hospital symbolize that displacement and longing to return home. On another front, Anaya incorporates a mythical component in *Tortuga* that ties with the beliefs of his culture. Throughout the story Tortuga has dreams that contain religious and cultural symbolism. Typically, each dream is a meaningful allegory with lessons that he has to decipher. Even if Salomón’s whispered dialogue is a figment of Tortuga’s imagination, there is one interesting mystery that Tortuga considers when he asks, “why had I seen him in my dream before I knew him? Now, when I listened very carefully, I could hear his stories as they made their way up and down the ward. Salomón had sent me a stack of books, but reading reminded me of him [...] The words struck chords and a remembrance of things past would flood over me” (*Tortuga* 54). Before meeting Salomón for the first time, Tortuga had only heard of him from the children and staff in the hospital. One may interpret his first dream episode seeing Salomón as a supernatural event since science would not be able to explain such a phenomenon. Unless, Tortuga’s first representation of Salomón was created from the stories he heard about him. His image stays alive and well within Tortuga’s mind as he actively reads the books Salomón has sent him. His close connection with the stories causes him to experience them in dreamlike sequences that are real to him. This follows that same Native American belief that stories and dreams are part of

their reality. There is a form of flight present when Tortuga and Salomón are separated because Tortuga is still able to connect with him, other places, and other times as a result of his imagination.

Paul Beekman Taylor describes this idea of flight in Anaya's works as "the flight of the imagination, which is dream as well as flight within dream, collaborates with waking experience to move events across place and time. In this sense, dreams and visions are latent story in wait for the writer's flight to realize them" (137). This flight of the imagination allows characters, readers, and Anaya himself to visit places and different times through writing and storytelling. Salomón also enlightens Tortuga about this wonder during a dream sequence when he voices, *"The words are like the wind, Tortuga, they sweep us up from this time and place and allow us to fly like butterflies to other places... When we think we are not of this time then we encounter absolute freedom, because we have created another universe, that's how powerful our imagination is"* (Tortuga 54). Dreams and storytelling allow people to visit other worlds, but only when they open themselves up to that idea. The concept may seem unrealistic since a person would not physically be visiting these places. However, a person's imagination has the power to create new realities fueled by stories that capture the essence of new worlds that he or she may not have ever visited. Restrictive barriers are then destroyed, and people like Salomón finally experience absolute freedom. Even though Salomón is confined to his ward, he can still visit places by reading books, which he tries to emphasize to Tortuga. There is more to discover in life than what is literally in front of people's eyes. Perhaps, Salomón is also traveling through Tortuga when he plants seeds of wisdom inside of him.

Rudolfo Anaya writes about the multiple worlds that can be found in libraries filled with books in his essay "The Magic of Words," which he muses, "A million worlds. And the beauty

of it is that each world is related to the next, as was taught to us by the old ones. Perhaps it is easier for a child to see” (277). Each book contains a different world or worlds that connect with one another through the power of imagination. Anaya may find it easier for children to understand this concept because that age group tends to have a vast imagination, something that a lot of adults lose when they grow up and live a linear life. As a writer of magical realism, he does not lose sight of that and wants others to know about those other worlds that are waiting to be explored. He starts off this essay by reminiscing back to when he sat under the stars as a child listening to “the stories of the old ones, los viejitos. The stories of the old people taught us to wonder and imagine. Their adivinanzas induced the stirring of our first questioning, our early learning” (Anaya, “The Magic of Words” 275). As mentioned before, Anaya was raised around storytelling and was greatly inspired by the stories told by his elders. These moral stories contain questions about life and vivid descriptions for the listener to imagine, just like Salomón’s stories in *Tortuga*. The elders wanted the children to think beyond the typical and ask questions. The custom of storytelling is more than a source of entertainment. It is a bridge to enlightenment. Rudolfo Anaya then adds that this power of illumination is not limited to the stories of his people as he “trembled in awe when [he] first entered that library, because [he] realized that if the books held as much magic as the words of the old ones, then indeed this was a room full of power [...] My tattered library card was my ticket into the same worlds my grandfather had known, worlds of magic that fed the imagination” (“Magic” 277-8). When Anaya entered a library for the first time in his life, he quickly realized the potential power that lives inside each book. Therefore, he constantly returned to that library and discovered that those books hold the same magic that his elders had taught him about.

Along with the ability to travel between worlds through literature and oral stories, Rudolfo Anaya also emphasizes the freedom that is attained in the process. As more stories are told and books are written every single day, the sky is the limit when it comes to the endless learning experiences and new worlds that become obtainable. Anaya elaborates about these endless and unrestricted possibilities by stating, “Books on every imaginable subject, in every field, a history of the thought of the world, which we must keep free of censorship, because we treasure our freedoms. It is the word *freedom* that eventually must reflect what this collection, or the collection of any library, is all about” (“Magic” 278). Literature provides writers with the freedom to write about anything and a safe haven to express themselves without the worry of censorship. Yet, there are some societies that even censor certain literature, contradicting Anaya’s belief. This is a clear example of his point though. He is able to express his values on the importance of literature, freedom, and abolishing censorship through his writing. If it was up to him, there would be no censorship in the world of literature. Technically, any writer can still get through restricting barriers and experience absolute freedom by writing down anything that is on his or her mind and not sharing the content. Readers experience a different, but similar kind of freedom by being able to interpret literature in their own ways and visit new worlds inside books, which then expose them to more ideas. From there, they can consider or disregard those ideas when coming up with their own views on life, any issues, and the list goes on. Reader, writer, or oral storyteller, all of these new worlds are powered by the imagination. This is the same freedom that Salomón tells Tortuga about in the novel. Once again, Rudolfo Anaya successfully communicates his views on life through his characters. The imagination is another source of light that Tortuga can follow on his journey to recovery and a weapon he can use against the effects of his trauma. While trauma can cause a person to feel paralyzed physically

and mentally, the power of the imagination allows a person like Salomón or Tortuga to fly and explore the meaning of life.

Although Salomón is a product of fiction, Anaya created him based on inspiration from his real life experiences. This is not the first or last time Anaya does this in his writing. For example, he talks about the inspiration behind the golden carp in *Bless Me, Ultima* that sets a recipe for his other creations as he considers it to be ““a reflection of world myth. I created the myth from my experience and from my subconscious. When I had written the golden carp into the novel I was very proud of myself. Look what I’ve created,’ I said. ‘Out of the raw energy and creative impulse to know myself, and aspects of the world, I had created myth”” (Kenyon 126). In a sense, Rudolfo Anaya is defending that myth is a creation of reality, at least when it comes to his works. He felt real emotions when he tried to find himself and understand the world around him while he was writing about the characteristics of the golden carp. Similarly, but to a different degree, Anaya had to face his fears by revisiting painful memories of his traumatic accident and the recovery process that followed when he wrote *Tortuga*. Fear also fuels the consuming darkness in the novel, which will be explored in the upcoming chapters. This shows how a writer’s true feelings and thoughts can inspire the content in his or her stories. Both Salomón and the golden carp are fictional sources of light that were created based on Anaya’s search for answers about life. Tortuga is on a journey to find his destiny and has to fight his way through the darkness. Since Rudolfo Anaya did not have any mentors, he creates spiritual beings in his works that teach lessons to his characters to help them find their way in life. Those lessons mirror lessons he had to learn on his own or is still in the process of understanding. The world of literature allows Anaya to address his questions and experiences in any creative way.

CHAPTER 2

DANNY

Staying in the dark without understanding one's destiny may be the true danger in *Tortuga*. The character Danny is on the search for his own answers and hopes to find a cure for his skin condition throughout the story, but that hope deteriorates in the process as things do not pan out in his favor. This becomes the fuel behind his bitter episodes, which Tortuga witnesses as he also becomes the center of Danny's attacks. For instance, Danny shows him his scaly hand and exclaims, "It's been drying up like this for a year, and nobody can do anything about it! I used to believe in Filomón's crazy stories, but that didn't do any good either [...] So you're supposed to be the new Tortuga, huh! They gave you a large shell, just like the mountain, huh! Well I'm going to find out if Filomón's story is true or not! Let's see if you can move" (*Tortuga* 15). At this point, Danny has already given up on his faith in Filomón and may be trying to sway Tortuga to do the same. He is the voice of doubt that Tortuga needs to avoid. As the reader learns in the story, Danny attempts to put faith in various mentors for a cure, but responds violently when he feels ignored. This is demonstrated when he tries forcing Tortuga to move, so he can take control of the situation, which is a Freudian theory.

In "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," Freud provides an example of an unusual activity that he observed of a child that threw around small objects to make them disappear while it is believed that he was yelling the German word for "gone." As for this child's family background, upbringing, and behavior, Freud specifies that he "did not disturb his parents at night, he conscientiously obeyed orders not to touch certain things or go into certain rooms, and above all he never cried when his mother left him for a few hours. At the same time, he was greatly attached to his mother, who had not only fed him herself but had also looked after him without

any outside help” (8). Taking this into account, the child followed reasonable expectations that were placed on him by his parents while keeping a good relationship with his mother. So, it is odd that he would throw small random objects as a sign of some kind of rejection. He never showed any objection when his mother left him for a while, something that attached children normally do at a young age. Freud found this intriguing to take into account. Eventually, he made a connection after observing a pattern in the child’s “gone game,” and speculates that the game “was related to the child’s great cultural achievement—the instinctual renunciation which he had made in allowing his mother to go away without protesting. He compensated himself for this, as it were, by himself staging the disappearance and return of the objects within his reach” (9). The game prepares the child for dealing with the feeling of abandonment. By throwing an object and then bringing it back soon after, the child builds an understanding that he will feel sadness when the object disappears, but that will fade into joy when it returns. Then, he applies this outlook to his mother’s departures. The child may feel the pain of abandonment when his mother leaves, but does not express his sadness because he has trained himself to look forward to the rewarding return. This is not the only interpretation that Sigmund Freud considers though.

In the same essay, Freud considers the possibility of a bitter reason behind the child’s actions. It is possible that the act of “throwing away the object so that it was ‘gone’ might satisfy an impulse of the child’s, which was suppressed in his actual life, to revenge himself on his mother for going away from him. In that case it would have a defiant meaning: ‘All right then, go away! I don’t need you. I’m sending you away myself’” (Freud 10). This shows the child’s attempt at gaining control of the situation by taking matters into his own hands and rejecting the objects in response to the rejection he felt from his mother. In comparison to the previous theory, this one has a negative approach to rejection. His desire for revenge to gain back

satisfaction for the wrong doings done to him can be viewed as a hostile act. This odd activity may provide a way for the child to release negative feelings that he restrained in himself onto an inanimate object, but that resentful and bitter attitude may eventually transfer towards others and their ideas in the long run. Sigmund Freud does state that “no certain decision can be reached from the analysis of a single case like this” (10). These examples are theories, but should still be considered as possibilities. One thing that is certain is that the child is acting out as a defense mechanism against the anxiety and trauma brought on by his feeling of abandonment, which can be for the better or worse. Regardless of a child’s reasons for rebellious or weird behaviors like the example above, “it is clear that in their play children repeat everything that has made a great impression on them in real life, and that in doing so they abreact the strength of the impression and, as one might put it, make themselves master of the situation” (Freud 11). Children typically soak up everything that they observe like a sponge since they are still developing and trying to understand the world around them. Even though they do not find pleasure in certain situations, it is common for them to act out and try to take control. At times, this will result in a child acting out the role of the one causing pain or restricting others from the same pleasures he or she was seeking. Perhaps, a child like this rather inflict pain than be the one receiving pain or wants others to feel the pain that he or she has gone through.

In Rudolfo Anaya’s *Tortuga*, Danny’s actions and attitude correspond with these behaviors and Freud’s idea of mastery over a situation. Plus, he is also a child. Sadly, his use of defense mechanisms against the hardships he is enduring turns out to be for the worst. The first thing to note is his attitude towards Tortuga as a newly found symbol of hope. After sharing his doubts about Filomón’s stories, Danny forcefully takes matters into his own hands when he holds a lit match close to Tortuga’s face and shouts, “I’m going to find out if you’re Tortuga!

[...] Move, mountain! Come and cure my hand! Move, Tortuga! [...] Move! Show us the secret” (*Tortuga* 16). In this scene, Danny shows that he has no patience to wait for Tortuga’s slow recovery and wants to see immediate results that will support Filomón’s theory about the magic mountain. He demands to see physical proof, even if it is at the expense of Tortuga. Selfish impulses like this are an indicator that his defense mechanisms are becoming hostile towards others. Danny may not have ill intentions, but his desperation is growing stronger, influencing him to take worse actions as the story moves along. There are the possibilities that he is either clinging on to the last glimmer of hope or wants to forcefully prove to Tortuga and everyone at the hospital that there is no hope left for anyone, but the latter seems unlikely. Before making that assumption, there are still more episodes to take into consideration, which will be discussed in the upcoming paragraphs. Either way, this is how Danny begins his attempts to take control of his situation.

Filomón’s stories are not the only thing Danny tries to believe will direct him towards a cure for his skin condition. During a discussion with his peers about how the world views cripples, Danny contributes, “You gotta trust in God” (*Tortuga* 91). The narrator then informs the reader that “Danny had turned to religion in an effort to understand what has happened to him. He walked around reading the Bible, and he stopped kids in the hallway and read passages to them. [...] He was looking for a clue which would point to a cure for his arm. He knew in detail the stories of every cripple in the Bible” (*Tortuga* 91). By examining this excerpt, the reader can see that Danny is trying to find answers through the Christian religion. This may be a critique on the way people turn to religion in times of need, which is not entirely a negative act. In life, human beings need to have something to turn to or believe in, especially when things go south. On the other hand, people that only turn to religion when they are desperate for help may

hurt themselves and possibly others in the long run. A person like Danny is setting himself up for disappointment when he does not receive and expects immediate answers to his questions. It is clear that Danny is trying to understand the words in the Bible, but seems to only pay close attention to chapters that he feels relates to him. Perhaps, this is showing his impatient attempt at trying to find immediate answers in the Bible by going straight to those chapters. If Danny tried to convince others that Filomón's stories were false, it is highly possible that he is now trying to convince everyone that the Bible has the answers to all of their problems as he reads specific passages to them, or he really wants to believe in the Bible and looks to his peers for that assurance. According to the narrator, Danny made false statements like "Did you know that Job limped" and "Lot's wife was pigeon-toed" to the children in the hospital, but "nobody believed him" (*Tortuga* 91). These made up stories reveal that Danny only reads and interprets what he wants, which is possibly another product of his defense mechanisms attempting to protect him from further disappointment, but it is actually doing the complete opposite. At first, it may seem like he is doing a harmless deed by spreading the word of God around the hospital, but he may only be doing this because that is what he believes in at that moment and wants others to think like him for his own benefit.

Surprisingly, Danny also gives in to anything that people tell him is wrong about his current beliefs, so he can feel that he is protecting himself from future attacks or disappointments, but that protective shell is restricting him. More than once, this leads him to have incoherent thoughts that he does not take the time to understand himself. In regards to the Christian beliefs that Danny tries to apply to his life, Ronco laughs at Danny and tells him, "Sometimes I think God doesn't give a damn about this place! He's forgotten it," and then Danny uneasily replies, "Don't say that! [...] Why doesn't He visit here" (*Tortuga* 92)? The

narrator even mentions that “curiosity got the best of his faith” (*Tortuga* 97). Here, it is apparent that Danny does not want to believe that God has abandoned him, but now that Ronco has put that idea into his head, he begins to question that possibility himself. Once again, Danny’s faith is put on the line as he eagerly waits for “God’s reason.” Ronco, with a wink, answers, “Because He’s afraid of getting polio” (*Tortuga* 92). From a reader’s perspective, it does not seem that Ronco is serious when he tells that to him, but Danny’s reaction shows that he understands otherwise as Tortuga reflects, “So it was Danny who spread the rumor that God doesn’t visit the hospital anymore, you see, because God’s afraid of getting polio” (*Tortuga* 93). Danny took Ronco’s statement to heart and is spreading that message around as a result, which the reader can now clearly see a pattern in his behavior. Like Tortuga, Danny also seems to have a protective shell to hide in for shelter when he feels anxious or does not understand the reasoning behind something. The difference is that Danny tries to take control of the situation by forcefully putting a stop to anything that he feels is threatening him while Tortuga rather avoid situations that he feels he does not need to venture into altogether. Also, Danny is quick to change his mind about something when there is an opposing claim to his beliefs because he does not want to feel abandoned. If he feels that one of his beliefs has abandoned him, Danny will oppose it to avoid disappointment or demand answers.

While Tortuga’s protective shell prevents him from facing and understanding his fears, Danny’s protective shell similarly prevents him from completely understanding the things he opposes, but through forms of violence. In addition to spreading the word throughout the hospital about God abandoning them, Danny and his two henchmen Mudo and Tuerto “got hold of the preacher [...] they cornered him and demanded to know why God wasn’t visiting [the hospital] anymore. Mudo and Tuerto held him against the wall while Danny stuck that ugly arm

of his right under the Reverend's nose" (*Tortuga* 93). This is another example of the struggle Danny is going through to keep the little faith he has even though he is telling everybody that God has abandoned them, including himself. He still believes in God during this scene and wants to know why God has chosen to abandon them all. So, he chooses to violently attack the reverend since he is a man of God. Perhaps, Danny does not know any other way to handle his feelings, but through violence. As his desperation grows, his violent actions are getting worse. Since his arm is the source of his despair, it is interesting that he shoves it under the reverend's nose. As a matter of fact, Danny seems to force everybody that he seeks answers from to witness the deterioration of his arm up close. Maybe this aligns with Anaya's use of pity in the novel. It is possible that Danny wants people to sympathize with him and acknowledge the suffering he is going through. He does not want to be ignored. Also, Danny is most likely spreading his "disbelief" in Filomón's stories and God because he is protecting himself from further pain, which includes looking like a fool. He may have that "if anyone is going to deny hope it will be me" mentality, which is very similar to the defiant attitude that Freud observed from the child that was playing the "gone game." Therefore, Danny continues to try to take control of his situations.

Mark Bracher discusses the influence trauma has on a person's violent behavior and identity in his article "Healing Trauma, Preventing Violence: A Radical Agenda for Literary Study," which Danny may be struggling with when he demands to be recognized. In the article he states, "Trauma functions in two clear and direct ways to produce violence: it renders one's identity so vulnerable that it must rely on quick fixes like violence in order to sustain itself, and it precipitates violent behavior by injuring or threatening an already vulnerable identity" (Bracher 518). In Danny's case, his arm has been slowly getting worse and doctors cannot find a cure

during and before the time in the story. Obviously, this is already a traumatic experience for him, especially because he is still a child that has many questions. Unfortunately, the people and figures he has looked up to for answers have not provided him with enough physical evidence that points to an eventual cure. His faith is diminishing along with his identity as he feels abandoned by everything that he directs his faith towards. Bracher's theory and Danny's behavior coincide with one another. Danny's violent behavior is without a doubt due to his ongoing traumatic experience. However, he is also hurting himself further by believing anything and anyone without fully reflecting on his own beliefs as long as they "promise" a cure for his condition, which he does not even grasp the actual meaning and expectations behind those beliefs either. It is understandable for a person to not think clearly in desperate times, especially if he or she is hoping for a miracle and only responds to the "promises" of a cure for his or her problems. Danny seems to be a prime example of this.

There may be endless possibilities for a cure in anything that Danny is told to put his faith towards, but he fails to consider practical outcomes though. In one scene, a janitor tells Danny about a church "people had been visiting [...] to cover their sores and twisted limbs and every kind of infirmity with the holy sand, and many had been cured" (*Tortuga* 91). It is more than likely that the janitor believes in the curing sand enough to share his story and give Danny hope, possibly to help him maintain his faith. The janitor may have thought that he was telling Danny a harmless story, which he believed, but things do not turn out that way. After Danny heard the story, "He got hold of the church's address and wrote the priest, and the priest said yes, for five bucks he would send Danny a pint of holy sand, with the understanding that when Danny was out of the hospital he still owed a pilgrimage to the church. [...] The day the jar full of sand arrived Danny was ecstatic with joy" (*Tortuga* 91-2). The cycle continues as Danny swiftly acts

out in the hopes to finally have found a cure. That want for hope is present as he joyously accepts the jar full of holy sand. Regrettably, Danny gets carried away as “he praised the Lord and cried that surely now he would be cured of the strange illness which was withering his arm. [...] Danny had already been using the holy sand for two weeks and a strange mold had begun to grow on his arm, irritating the disease and spreading it faster” (*Tortuga* 92). It is a good sign that Danny has found faith in a figure to motivate him to get better, but he is very reckless, a common characteristic of a child. There is probably a proper way to apply the holy sand onto a wound, but Danny does not have the patience to learn. As a consequence, his wound is only getting worse due to the irritation from the sand with more possibilities of infection. Therefore, the holy sand cannot perform its true duty. This is probably a contributing factor in Danny’s questioning of God too since the sand is not doing what he expected. Once again, he sets himself up for disappointment by confidently counting on figures like God and remedies to cure him from one day to the next. Consequently, Danny puts himself through an emotional rollercoaster.

Not only that, he continues to lash out at the people around him for answers to his disappointments and for recognition, which is “the single most important factor in both the construction and maintenance of identity or as Charles Taylor puts it, ‘our identity requires recognition by others’” (Bracher 520). It is human nature for a person to desire the recognition of others because that is a crucial part of creating an identity among the group of people that person is associated with. Danny and the rest of the children in the hospital are isolated from the rest of the world, but crave to eventually leave one day, so they can explore the rest of it. Sadly, these children are labeled as incurable cripples, which many people look down on them. That reality is displayed when the children are taken on a fieldtrip to the movies for a short escape from their imprisonment in the hospital. Upon their arrival, people in the town harshly greet the

children with offensive remarks. An old lady in a store said, “[They] were a bunch of freaks, and [they] just wanted to make trouble” (*Tortuga* 146). Shortly after, a jock sarcastically asked, “Have the freaks escaped?” (*Tortuga* 146) This may be a reflection of how people viewed cripples during Anaya’s time in Albuquerque whether he heard people say those kinds of remarks, or they implied those attitudes. The stigma cripples endure as a result of their conditions is a critique on society. These kinds of people fail to acknowledge crippled people as human beings and rather not deal with them like the old lady in the store. Anaya may also be pointing out that age plays no factor in the way people think and treat cripples since both the high schoolers and the old lady insult the children from the hospital, a wide age range. Thus, this is a representation of how this society treats people with abnormalities as a whole. It is highly possible that these people fear the children because they are not accustomed to seeing cripples daily and react in such manners as part of their defense mechanisms. Aside from the children’s physical looks, the idea of taking a person out of his or her comfort zone and exposing that person to the unusual is Rudolfo Anaya’s intention for his audience to experience as well. This connects back to Anaya’s statement from the afterword following *Tortuga* that he hopes to “probe not only the joy but anguish of our lives” (199). It is not an easy task for somebody to experience realities, especially when it involves a reevaluation of oneself and the world we live in. Probably more times than not, people do react to others with abnormalities like the high schoolers in the story that prefer the cripples to stay in hiding. Instead of continuing this cycle by pretending the world is perfect, Anaya wants to expose the hardships that the cripples endure. Again, he strives to “tell the stories of the kids in the hospital” (*Tortuga* 199) to give them the spotlight for a change. In a cathartic manner, Rudolfo Anaya wants his readers to experience

anguish vicariously through the characters as they experience certain situations in *Tortuga* to understand the children's perspectives and desires, including the desire for recognition.

Some of the children, including Danny, want to believe that God is looking over them and has not forgotten about them. Danny wants his recognition because God is known for watching over everyone, and he views him as the ticketholder to his recovery. He does not want to feel that he is among the people that God has forgotten and left behind. That thought may cause him to feel unimportant in the eyes of God and the rest of the world. This leads to Danny and his buddies getting "mad because they [are] afraid, right, afraid that if God's not coming around anymore then there's no hope for them" (*Tortuga* 93). This shows how the fear that Danny and his buddies are experiencing begins to turn into hostility. God is already tied to their hopes, so when they feel that God is out of the picture, their hopes fade. In the attempt to prevent God from abandoning him, Danny takes desperate measures. His actions of attacking the reverend and contacting the church for the holy sand support this since these people are believed to have direct connections with God. Also, his attempts at getting the children in the hospital to read the Bible and look up to God may be his way of creating a common interest among his peers. This may even explain the reasoning behind his quick changes in faith. Danny may feel that he needs the approval of others in order to believe in something, so when somebody shoots down one of his beliefs, he questions it. After questioning God and not seeing positive results with his skin condition as it actually spread to his entire arm, Danny panics as he thinks, "no God no cure, right?" (*Tortuga* 93) Danny relies full-heartedly on God at this point in the novel and does not want to lose his connection with him since he feels that God is his only avenue towards a cure. Anything that interferes with his beliefs causes him to panic. Unfortunately for Danny, his peers start cutting down every hypothetical justification he tries to

make for God's absence. This eventually causes him to expose his desperation and thoughts to them by exclaiming, "I don't care what you say, but I know God runs my destiny! He tells me what to do" (*Tortuga* 107). Finally, Danny shares his true thoughts about how he views God in accordance to his life, and the people that counter his claims. He is fed up with trying to adjust his beliefs to the other people's theories. Perhaps, he feels that all their claims are not going anywhere near a cure for him and instead are trying to create distance between him and God, the only being he believes cares about him. Anaya's *Tortuga* includes the protagonist's journey to understanding his destiny, Salomón's destiny, and now Danny's claim that God runs his destiny. However, his behavior takes a turn for the worst, which seems to be a result of his assumptions on what God wants him to do. As mentioned previously, not understanding one's destiny may be a recipe for disaster.

Possibly, Danny is the product of religious fanaticism, or just a victim of darkness, which *Tortuga* struggles to confront. Darkness is a devious element that comes in multiple forms in *Tortuga*. The pattern continues even when it comes down to Danny and Tortuga's individual triggers to their actions. There is still that possibility that Danny is trying to find new meaning in his life through religion. This is extremely apparent in Danny's quest to connect with God. He feels that God has assigned him to complete his tasks, so he takes part in questionable acts as a result. Therefore, Danny may not be as selfish as some readers may interpret. He is a child that is trying to find his way after feeling that everyone has left him to deal with his skin condition by himself. God is the only being he still has full faith in and a common figure that people look towards during and after traumatic events. Every now and then, Danny gives hints that he still has a little hope in Filomón's stories and Tortuga's movement, but that hope is dim.

It is interesting that Danny is doing his best to spread the word of God and complete tasks that he feels God has assigned to him while he feeds Tortuga the idea of death. At a quick glance, this may seem contradictory since Danny is serving a figure of faith when he supports Tortuga's decision to die as a result of hopelessness. Nevertheless, on the next paragraph, Tortuga adds that "sometimes [Danny] talked to me, wished me to die, confessed his fears, cursed the vegetables, blamed me for listening to Salomón and not to God" (*Tortuga* 122). This quote is crucial to finding the overall reason behind Danny's upcoming acts, specifically the word "fears." Those fears are the driving motives, but it may not be clear what each of them are yet. One that is certain is Danny's fear of being abandoned by God, which explains his constant purpose to serve him. He will do anything for God, even it means hurting or possibly killing others in the process. Consequently, he does not approve that Tortuga is considering Salomón's instructions instead of listening to God.

Aside from the reason that Tortuga listens to Salomón, Danny provides more insight into his motives when he tells the story about a husband and his crippled wife. He shares that the husband "told her he loved her and he would do anything for her. One day he kissed her and he realized she wasn't happy and she wanted to die. That's what she was trying to say when she smiled. He knew what he had to do, so he got real close to her and told her that if she wanted to die she should blink her eyes twice, like this. And she blinked twice" (*Tortuga* 122-23). Another reason for Danny's insistence on ending Tortuga's life seems to be based on his way of showing mercy for Tortuga and his suffering. At the end of Danny's story, the husband "covered [his wife's] face with a pillow until she suffocated" (*Tortuga* 123), resulting in her death. The reader should know by now, based on the other children's perspectives of Danny and the events that have led to this, that he is known for believing everything that he hears. His constant search for

signs from God may have influenced him to interpret the story as instructions given to him by God. Thus, Tortuga ends up on the wrong side of luck as Danny feeds him the idea of accepting his own death like that is his only option. When Tuerto asks Danny if they are going to throw Tortuga in the water, he confirms, “Yes, we’re gonna drown him” (*Tortuga* 123). Danny seems to have no problem killing Tortuga, which is a violent behavior that can be caused by the death instinct. Freud indicates that “clinical observations led us at that time to the view that masochism, the component instinct which is complementary to sadism, must be regarded as a sadism that has been turned round upon the subject’s own ego. But there is no difference in principle between an instinct turning from an object to the ego and its turning from the ego to an object” (48). In other words, somebody that is a product of the death drive can easily turn from hurting oneself to hurting others. This may be the case with Danny due to his ongoing traumatic experience with the deterioration of his arm and feeling of abandonment. He does not express that he wants to die, but he does attempt to kill Tortuga without thinking much of it. Despite Tortuga begging, “No. I’m not ready. I can’t make the journey alone. Can’t you see! They’re not there,” (*Tortuga* 124) Danny shouts “shup up” (*Tortuga* 124) with no compassion and proceeds to drop him in the water.

This is not the only time that Danny tries to kill others in the novel. At the end, he successfully kills all the vegetables in Salomón’s ward. Lucky to be alive, Tortuga makes sense of the terrible news by thinking, “it all makes sense. All the questioning and all the wondering and the pain had suddenly made some sense to Danny, and that’s why he had done it” (*Tortuga* 183). One may conclude that Danny killed the vegetable as an act of mercy for their ongoing suffering. On the other hand, Anaya argues in an email that “at that point in the novel Danny does not understand mercy. He is afraid he might wind up like the “vegetables,” and he must kill

them” (“Re: Thesis/Questions on Tortuga”). This is evident before he commits the deed and exposes his fears to Tortuga when he yells, “You want me to go see for myself! That’s it! You want me to go into Salomón’s ward and crawl in one of those machines and stay there forever! You want me to become one of those rotten vegetables! I see it now! I see the plan now! To get me in there! [...] Well you’re not ever going to get me to go in there and become one of those vegetables! I’d rather die (*Tortuga* 161). A part of Danny may feel sympathy for the vegetables, but his violent actions are caused by his fear of becoming one of them. Actually, Tortuga has a similar response when he encounters the vegetables for the first time. He does not take such extreme measures though, which will be examined in the following chapter. Adding on to the idea that Danny kills the vegetables out of fear, Mike describes to Tortuga that “[I]ast night, or early this morning sometime, [Danny] took a surgical saw and cut off his arm...He was in surgery all morning. He lost a lot of blood, but I think he’s going to make it” (*Tortuga* 183). Danny cut off the main source of his suffering. The killing of the vegetables and losing his arm can symbolize Danny’s attempts at getting rid of his fears. This would also mean that Danny is not sadistic after all, putting Freud’s death instinct theory to rest. He does not kill or hurt others to gain gratification like the characters Tenorio from *Bless Me, Ultima* and Raven from *Zia Summer*. Instead, Rudolfo Anaya considers Danny as “a lesser, fallen angel” (“Re: Thesis/Questions on Tortuga”). He is still a child that has a lot to learn.

Danny’s final words in the novel brings a sense of hope for the character to finally find the light out of the darkness that consumes him when he whispers, “Ah, Tortuga [...] you’ve come at last...I knew you would come—I’ve been so afraid, Tortuga, so afraid...A terrible darkness seems to suffocate me...but now that you’ve come, I feel everything’s going to be all right...Oh, such sad things have happened to us...” (*Tortuga* 184). Danny makes it clear that he

has been suffocating in darkness. Even though he put Tortuga and others through hell, Danny seems to have always held on to that last glimmer of hope that is Tortuga, but did not know how to take in that hope until now. Anaya clarifies that Danny, like the others in the hospital, “is in a kind of purgatory, wanting to overcome the prison he is in (Tortuga in the prison of the cast) and see the light. The light must shine within, not out there” (“Re: Thesis/Questions on Tortuga”). All of the children in the hospital want to break free from the prison they share. Aside from the hospital, each person has his or her own prison to break out from too. Tortuga yearns to break out of his cast, which symbolizes his imprisonment, while Danny hopes for a cure for his arm. Light is the ultimate weapon against darkness, but there is more to that than what is on the surface. The children are counting on Tortuga to leave the hospital to gain hope for their chances, including Danny even if he denies it at first. Nevertheless, Rudolfo Anaya believes that people like Danny need to allow light to shine within themselves in order to find enlightenment. Danny was trying to forcefully find the light to answer his problems when he demanded Tortuga to show him tangible proof, but he needs to understand his own destiny instead. He now acknowledges the darkness that is consuming him and finally accepts Tortuga as a source of light that he may use as an example for himself to follow.

CHAPTER 3

TORTUGA

Fear is the opposing force in Anaya's *Tortuga*. Both the author and characters from the story share the struggle to overcome it. At the beginning of the novel, Tortuga is taken from his home and placed in an unfamiliarly dark hospital to receive medical attention for his paralysis. Early on, he makes it clear that he wants to "walk and run free again" (*Tortuga* 11). However, as Tortuga and the reader soon find out, that is not an easy task. While cutting Tortuga's hair, Cano brings up questions and a saying that Tortuga will need to figure out himself along the course of his journey when he speaks, "Ah, life is full of accidents. Too many kids get hurt nowadays. Polio, epilepsy, everything...sometimes I get sad when I see it all. Wonder why God would do a thing like that. One day I asked Filo. [...] He said it's just a waystation on the journey of life. I don't know what he meant. Do you?" (*Tortuga* 12) These questions show the uncertainty that the people in the hospital feel, which influences Tortuga to ask the same kind of questions and sets him on a journey to find the meaning behind Filomón's saying. It is common for people to seek answers for the suffering of others, especially children. Not only that, most people turn to a religion or deity for answers, comfort, and hope. When a religious believer sees unbearable suffering and receives no direct answers from his or her god, that person may blame that god for the wrongs of the world, which can lead to a feeling of abandonment. This can cause a person to have negative feelings of loneliness, fear, and hopelessness. People need something positive to believe in because these negative feelings can consume anybody, putting him or her in a dark place. Filomón is trying to help people like Cano understand that there are many bumps in life, but that does not mean that life completely stops. It keeps going and people need to understand

that their purpose in life is to keep moving too. Enlightenment is the key element in *Tortuga* that these characters need to grasp to help them get out of darkness.

Even though Tortuga and Danny ask similar questions, their individual responses to the results greatly differ. Quickly, Tortuga makes a little progress when he feels pain and can slightly move his toes, which astonishes the people around him including Dr. Steel. His response to the progress is positive when he states, “Then I had tried so hard to make my legs move, and finally I had given up and withdrawn into resignation. Now there was movement, slight and feeble, but with it returned a sense of hope” (*Tortuga* 33). Tortuga did feel hopelessness and had given up at one point. However, the little progress in his movement brings back a sense of hope that he graciously welcomes. This actually shows that he does not completely give up when a small sign of improvement presents itself even though Tortuga recently felt like he had hit rock bottom. Right after having a dream about Salomón’s destiny, he wakes up to physical pain after wetting the bed and immediately yells, “I’m alive! Hey! Come and see! I hurt! Oh I hurt! Come and see! [...] I looked, but it was too dark to see, still I was sure something had moved. I cried again. Hey! Dr. Steel! Nurse! Anyone! Come and see! Get me out of here” (*Tortuga* 26). This shows Tortuga’s determination to recover from his paralysis to leave the hospital for good. In addition, the amount of hope that he has at this moment is beyond inspiring. While most people would demand to see concrete evidence before their eyes, Tortuga believes in his miraculous progress enough to not need the lights on for certainty. Even though he is showing improvement at this point of the novel, this is also the beginning of his painful, but enlightening journey to recovery.

Tortuga’s high spirits and strong character, which are also characteristics of a hero, should be noted during the reading of the story. In the afterword following *Tortuga*, Rudolfo

Anaya explains his reasoning behind writing fiction as “facts do not make fiction, and for me fiction was the only way to address questions I raise in *Tortuga*. Why is there pain and suffering in the world? Bone and flesh can be broken, but can the spirit” (199)? The pain and suffering that Tortuga experiences himself and witnesses in others represents that reality. Unfortunately, as humans, pain and suffering is inevitable, and each of us will have to face those hard times in our lives at one point or another. Anaya shines the spotlight on topics that most people would rather avoid in *Tortuga*. Through the character Tortuga, the audience is able to observe his physical and mental struggles, which are based off of Anaya’s actual traumatic experiences. One major struggle that is presented and carried out throughout the novel is the fight to keep one’s spirit intact. In the case of Tortuga, the reader can assume that he stays in high spirits when he makes a little progress with his muscle movement, but more difficult obstacles get in his way, making it a harder task. After gaining his new sense of hope, Tortuga wonders, “I looked out the window at the mountain. I thought of Filomón and what he had said. I thought of my first night at the hospital and the woman in the dreams, Ismelda, the woman who had led me to the springs where we entered the mountain” (*Tortuga* 33). At the beginning of the novel when Tortuga is traveling to the hospital, he is too drained and weak to put faith in anything like the magic mountain that Filomón shows him. But now, he has enough strength to take a look at the mountain and wonder about Filomón’s words. Tortuga wants to believe that he will get better, and positive symbols like the mountain, Ismelda, and the messages in his dreams can help him build up his faith. Tortuga is surrounded by positive symbols that he needs to interpret, but he is still in danger of falling into the hands of fear if he allows it to consume him. Unfortunately, the character Danny falls into that hole.

When it comes to Filomón's stories, Danny expresses his thoughts about them when he exclaims, "So Filomón says everytime the mountain moves somebody in here moves! That's his story. And he thinks you can beat the paralysis that keeps you on your back like an overturned turtle. Well, I think that's a bunch of bullshit" (*Tortuga* 15). In the first chapter, Danny already has a negative aspect on Filomón and the mountain, which both symbolize hope. Filomón believes that the children in the hospital can make full recoveries with the mountain looking over them. It is a little ironic that Danny, the boy who claims he does not believe in the mountain, gives Tortuga his nickname in the first place. Perhaps, subconsciously he still wants to believe in the magical mountain, but fear is preventing him. By writing *Tortuga*, Rudolfo Anaya even wants to answer the question, "What did the symbols which rose from my unconscious mean? The boy as turtle, the hospital in the desert, the mountain as a turtle, its healing waters, the iron lungs of the polio patients, the blue guitar. These universal symbols are also personal" (*Tortuga* 199). The turtle is an obvious symbol throughout the novel since Tortuga is the Spanish translation, which is the nickname given to the protagonist and the mountain. On top of that, Tortuga perfectly fits the role of a turtle as Mike points out to him that "like the mountain, fits now that you got that body cast...you kinda look like a turtle" (*Tortuga* 16). Along with these similar physical features, Tortuga's paralysis prevents him from physically moving his body like a turtle that is stuck on its back. The process in gaining back his normal movement may feel like it is as slow as a mountain shifting to him. This portrays a test of one's will power and how far a person will push towards recovery when dealing with extreme trauma. All of these symbols are universal and correlate with one another to help tell Anaya's personal story.

The turtle, along with the other personal symbols that Anaya listed, are all archetypes with their own individual purpose. Edward Elias explores this in his article "*Tortuga: A Novel*

of Archetypal Structure” by writing that “the reader watches [Tortuga] pass through one maturing archetypal experience after another as well as interact with that tragicomic group of fellow patients—long-term and terminally crippled children—that populate the fictional world of the novel” (82). First off, it is interesting that Elias uses the term “tragicomic” to describe the patients in the hospital because that same term can even be used to describe the mood of the entire novel. There is a mix of tragic and comedic elements throughout, but one scene perfectly captures this. As Tortuga waits helplessly for assistance, he thinks to himself, “I felt the bedsores burning on my ass and my feet and still I felt like laughing” (*Tortuga* 26). In life, people will experience times of pain and mirth, but sometimes these feelings can be felt simultaneously. It may feel as awkward as hitting your funny bone. The example above portrays the physical tickling pain that Tortuga is experiencing, but may also symbolize the reality that Anaya is trying to address. He finds it necessary to show both the anguish and comedic scopes of life since it will not always be joyous or miserable. There may be times when a person will find humor during a tragic event. Thus, Anaya displays his versatility by not assigning his writing strictly to tragedy. Yes, his accident is tragic, but he has a lot more to say than that. Perhaps, Rudolfo Anaya’s purpose in using multiple archetypes or universal symbols is to assist the reader in experiencing the world in *Tortuga* with familiarity section by section. The story of *Tortuga* is an archetype in itself as Anaya defends in the *Tortuga* afterword that “[he] believe[s] there is a universality in *Tortuga*. Who has not undergone a traumatic event in life? The hospital, by any other name, is where we go to heal ourselves. It can be an actual place or the cocoon we build around the stricken spirit. It can be the realm of the unconscious” (200). It is very rare for somebody to not experience a traumatic event sometime in his or her life. Therefore, Anaya’s *Tortuga* is an ideal story about a hero on a journey to recovery, which the

hero and journey are also archetypes, for somebody that may be struggling with personal trauma or has in the past. Most people can relate to a hospital as a place of recovery for injuries and illnesses, but there is more to say about that than what is on the surface. The hospital as an archetype can represent a place for physical, mental, and even spiritual healing. Maybe it is not even the hospital that is the archetype, but more the idea of a protective shell that shields from opposing outside forces. Another example of that idea is Tortuga's cast, which is helping him in the recovery process. Aside from the positive purpose of the cast, it also limits his movement. This sets up his goal of wanting the cast off to be able to leave the hospital, so perhaps when he says, "Get me out of here," (*Tortuga* 26) he actually means out of the cast, hospital, and his difficult situation. By all of these examples, the reader can connect the pieces together and understand that Rudolfo Anaya uses archetypes as tools to help bring out his full vision.

Since the cast represents healing and restriction, the true intentions of it becomes foggy for Tortuga. He needs to fight in the slow and painful battle of regaining back his muscle movement in order to be able to break out of his shell, but obstacles along the way make it difficult for him to understand his destiny. This battle comes in forms that are also beyond physical, such as the psychological darkness he has to face. Tortuga has the option of avoiding the darkness by comfortably staying in his protective shell or facing it to overcome his fears towards recovery. This shows that something positive like a protective shell can turn out to be a negative roadblock in progress when one gets too comfortable. It is apparent that Tortuga's accident is an extreme external disturbance that changes his life, which leaves him physically and mentally paralyzed, especially when he sees the grotesque side of the hospital. The grotesque is the distortion of the familiar in relation to the human body, which Tortuga witnesses

when he comes across the other children of the ward and the vegetables. His actions towards his new unfamiliar surroundings and situations may be signs of his defense mechanisms at work.

One important scene that displays this is when Tortuga sees a child inside of an iron lung in a worse condition than he previously observed in Salomón's ward and fearfully reacts:

What I saw was burned into my memory forever. Even after I closed my eyes I could still see the comatose, shriveled body of the small child, and I could smell the putrid odor of the excrement that passed from the withered cocoon as it twisted with pain. [...] Except for an occasional spasm of pain there was no sign of life, and yet they were alive. [...] 'No!' I pleaded, 'Salomón! No! Please no more! I've seen enough! I've suffered enough! Let them die! Dear God, please let them die. (*Tortuga* 117-18)

This is definitely a traumatic scene in Tortuga's journey that he cannot stop thinking about. Seeing other kids suffering in horrific conditions causes him to feel fear, confusion, and pity towards them. He may pity them strongly since he is still going through his own painful recovery and can loosely relate, but their unrecognizable features frighten him to the point that he refuses to look at them any longer. This is too much for him to process in one moment as he tries to figure out whether the child is alive or not, triggering the confusion he feels. All of these negative emotions are packaged together and push him to plead for god's mercy. Tortuga begs god to allow the vegetables to die and end their suffering. He feels that keeping them alive is inhumane. At the same time, it is painful for him to see them in that state and rather have God spare him from that reality since he feels that will cause him more suffering. When it comes to these emotions, Rudolfo Anaya adds that "pity for the protagonist and then fear that we, too, may suffer as he suffers are the elements of tragedy. Tragic tales allow those emotions to rise to the surface and thus we purge ourselves. I hope Tortuga's story provides a catharsis for the reader. It did for me in the telling" (*Tortuga* 199). This story definitely contains tragic material like Tortuga's accident, the hospital for incurable children, and the demise of the vegetables. These

examples are all surrounded by tragic elements such as pity and fear, which both the character Tortuga and the reader can sympathize. While Tortuga pities the vegetables in the iron lungs, the reader pities Tortuga through his painful journey. Fear gets a hold of Tortuga when he has doubts while the reader may fear the possibility of similar situations happening in his or her life. Hence, Anaya's purpose of writing out such morbid situations is to create that emotional connection between the reader and the story. Tragedy exists in the real world, and Anaya understands that firsthand, so he created a world in *Tortuga* that represents that reality to show people that they are not alone. Even though, *Tortuga* is partly tragic, it does have a hopeful ending. Writing the novel successfully helped Anaya release suppressed emotions, which he hopes will be a similar outcome for each of his readers, especially if he or she has experienced trauma.

Taking Freud's theory into account, Tortuga's protective shield was breached when he experienced the accident that left him paralyzed and created too much excitement. For reference, excitement is "the disturbed or altered condition resulting from stimulation of an individual, organ, tissue, or cell" ("Excitation"). In other words, too much energy was released as a result of Tortuga's accident, which threw his normal mental stasis off-balance and led to the rise of negative feelings within him. Unfortunately, these feelings cause him a lot of anxiety. Sigmund Freud explains the difference between the terms fright, fear, and anxiety in relation to danger through his perspective as "anxiety describes a particular state of expecting the danger or preparing for it, even though it may be an unknown one. 'Fear' requires a definite object of which to be afraid. 'Fright,' however, is the name we give to the state a person gets into when he has run into danger without being prepared for it; it emphasizes the factor of surprise" (6). With these distinctions in mind, it is possible that Tortuga is experiencing fright when he sees the

children in the iron lungs for the first time and refuses to walk through the darkness in front of him because he is not mentally prepared to face those situations. As the reader may analyze, these situations do not appear to be putting Tortuga in any danger, but the ‘uncertainty’ brought on by them is the danger. According to Freud, anxiety is a mental reaction that prepares a person for incoming danger even if it is unknown. This may seem like a positive response that is preventing harm to the person, but too much anxiety may cause someone to lose his or her mind. Yet, Freud does not believe that “anxiety can produce a traumatic neurosis. There is something about anxiety that protects its subject against fright and so against fright-neuroses” (6-7). Then again, somebody may already be experiencing traumatic events like Tortuga, so this does not really apply to him. He is already beyond the anxious stage and feeling the fright of the unknown. One cannot expect a young child like Tortuga to be prepared for an unfamiliar journey that puts him in an important role that he does not understand. He does not know what to do and needs guidance, which he does receive through his mentor Salomón. Luckily, Tortuga also has the support of the majority of the patients and staff at the hospital, but that pressure does cause him more anxiety since they are counting on him to recover as a sign of hope for their own recoveries, and he does not want to let them down. Therefore, Tortuga’s mission is to understand the darkness by facing it and find the meaning behind his journey in order to prevail at the end of the novel.

Whenever Tortuga gets too comfortable in his protective shell in the hopes to avoid darkness, he is actually letting darkness consume him in a different way. He may be avoiding the literal and scary darkness of the ward of cripples, but he is keeping himself from understanding the truth about his destiny, which is another form of darkness. After Tortuga witnesses the children in the iron lungs and begs for their deaths, he becomes vulnerable and

claims to not care about anything. Then, Mike tries to convince Tortuga to “care enough to get out! That’s what you have to do! Get angry” (*Tortuga* 119). This is interesting to note since violence can spring out of anger as a result of trauma, which is Danny’s defense mechanism against his trauma. On the other hand, Tortuga’s defense mechanism is passiveness since he seems to have given up on everything after seeing the suffering of the vegetables. Even though anger is typically not viewed as a positive emotion to express, especially when associated with trauma, passiveness is not a positive response either. Essentially, Tortuga’s passiveness causes him to retreat back into his protective shell as he says, “I wasn’t listening...I was retreating, moving deeper and farther into my shell, covering my hurt and pain with layer after layer of silence...meaningless silence” (*Tortuga* 119). This specific quote is important because Tortuga clearly states that his act of reclusiveness is “meaningless.” He is aware that his actions to avoid further confrontation with the darkness that awaits him, as he does not want to feel any more pain, will not benefit him in any way. Anaya demonstrates to his readers how easy it can be for somebody to avoid pain by going into his or her safe place, keeping that person from finding his or her destiny. In this case, darkness is disguised as comfort in which Tortuga is allowing it to restrict him of further knowledge by not listening to Mike. Though, he may not even be aware that this form of darkness is slowly taking over him as he gives up.

In the attempt to help Tortuga battle this, Mike tries to be the voice of reason that he needs to motivate him to find his purpose in life. Mike wants Tortuga to use anger as motivation to demand a way out of his situation. This does not mean that Tortuga has to resort to violence in the process like Danny, but he should still somehow release enough suppressed emotions to continue on his journey to recovery. However, if it does come down to violence, Mike is willing to sacrifice himself and others as punching bags when he yells, “Strike out! Hit me! Come on, hit

me again like you did out there in the hall! Hit anyone, but just hit! Don't give up on us, Tortuga" (Tortuga 119). Mike is desperate for Tortuga to snap out of his passive trance by hitting anything, which would symbolize the breaking out of his shell. Again, Mike does not want Tortuga to go on a hitting spree to spread violence, but instead motivate him to care enough to hit anything for a purpose. He is pushing Tortuga's buttons to get a response from him towards progress. The cripples and Mike are counting on Tortuga to recover and leave the hospital since he is a symbol of hope for all the children there. Despite Mike's attempts at motivating Tortuga to move, he does not budge. Shortly after, Tortuga's passive thoughts transform into aggressive thoughts as he thinks to himself to "tell Salomón to shove it [...] Tell him to take his stories and his singing and his path of the sun and shove them up his ass. And you take your number one rule, which you're always preaching and which you never obey, and shove it. All of you, leave me alone, go away, I have no need for you" (Tortuga 120). Tortuga's reaction to others that want him to keep fighting demonstrates how a person's passiveness can turn into resentment. Although he claims to not be angry, Mike's constant begging is annoying him, and his thoughts and attitude towards others share similar characteristics to anger. It also seems that Tortuga is starting to mirror Danny. They are both tired of people telling them what to do or believe and refuse to listen to anyone any longer. This is bad news for Tortuga since he is falling into a similar hole of darkness like Danny, preventing him from understanding his true destiny.

Tortuga's hope is almost extinguished when he wants to be left alone. Throughout the novel, he tries to put faith and hope towards the stories he heard from Filomón and the fight to gain back his muscle movement, but the reality of the vegetables and their severe conditions has drastically altered his perspective on life and faith. He definitely hits rock bottom when he

convinces himself that he “doesn’t believe in anything anymore. I am free. I am nothing. I won’t be responsible for anything. I denounce my destiny. There is no destiny...there is not fate...there is no God, no universe...only my thoughts, and I can learn to silence those” (*Tortuga* 120). In contrast to Danny’s doctrine of life through God, this quote shows the thoughts that can go through a person’s mind when he or she has no faith left in a higher spiritual being or life in general. The quest for answers about life, meaning, and relationships with a higher being that Peres and company were talking about is no longer in motion for Tortuga. At this point, he feels that there is no meaning left in life, not even in himself.

Rudolfo Anaya depicts the anguish of the worst case scenario brought on by trauma, which he may have or almost experienced himself during his personal road to recovery. These negative thoughts of hopelessness are not exclusive to people that have met similar or worse fates. It is possible for ordinary people that do not believe in something meaningful in their lives to think these kinds of thoughts. Anaya shows his readers what the power of religion and spirituality has on people’s lives by their absence. People may lose their minds without having something to believe in, so there is a constant search for that meaning of life when it does not present itself in one form or another to a person. Even when people believe in a higher being, a traumatic event can still throw them off-balance, leading them to seek answers. As for Danny, he may not have been as devoted to God before his skin condition, but his story shows how trauma has influenced him to look for meaning in places he previously may not have considered. Sadly, Tortuga has lost faith in everything that he once considered hopeful and is not willing to open himself up to new avenues. In the article, “Tortuga: A Novel of Archetypal Structure,” Edward Elias comes to the conclusion that after Tortuga witnesses the conditions of the vegetables in Salomón’s ward, “it renders the hero physically ill and depressed for days” (83).

Unfortunately for Tortuga, the site of the vegetables is too much for him to process at that moment since he does not understand his purpose in relation to them and god's reasoning for keeping them alive. He feels that he "couldn't love them or touch them...[He] hated their depravity, the cruel, obscene joke which allows them to exist in that plane of life, that shade beyond life, that first circle of hell where pain is still felt, where love is dead...and they don't know they're alive" (*Tortuga* 120). Tortuga finds that the idea of someone keeping the vegetables alive while prolonging their suffering is cruel. At first he begged for God to let them die, but now he does not want to believe that there is a god anymore. Perhaps, he cannot fathom how any god would allow that kind of suffering to take place. He feels no emotional connection with the children in the iron lungs, except his pity for them and fear of them.

In addition, Tortuga considers Salomón's ward as the first level of hell, which Anaya may have been referring to Dante Alighieri's version of hell from the first part of his epic poem *The Divine Comedy* called *The Inferno*. In Dante's *Inferno*, the first circle of hell is Limbo, a place known for holding people that are not assigned to either Heaven or Hell. It is important to note that unbaptized children are also destined for Limbo according to the Christian religion, which is mentioned in Dante's *Inferno* when the narrator explains:

Of infants and of women and of men.

To me the Master good: "Thou dost not ask

What spirits these may be, which thou beholdest.

Now will I have thee know, ere thou go farther,

That they sin not; and if they merit had,

'Tis not enough, because they had not baptism

Which is the portal of the Faith thou holdest. (4.30-36)

This is significant since the children in the iron lungs are shriveled up infants that have not committed any personal sins in their lives as it is impossible, but they may not have been baptized and are stuck with original sin. Therefore, their current vegetable states symbolize a version of Limbo since the iron lungs are keeping them alive, preventing them from passing into the afterlife. There is nothing that the vegetables can do about that. The feeling of hopelessness and confusion that Tortuga is experiencing from this traumatic event is adding more weight on top of his personal trauma, leading him to feel ill and depressed. Up until seeing the vegetables, Tortuga has been determined to gain back his muscle movement, but now he feels that there is no point. Seeing the children in the iron lungs in terrible conditions may have caused him to think that nothing gets better, at least when it comes to them. He pities them, but at the same time would rather not see them just like the high schoolers and the old lady do not want to see the children of the hospital in their paths. As mentioned before, Anaya wants to place his characters and readers out of their comfort zones to face realities that do not get explored much, which may be crucial for them to understand for their own individual destinies. There is a lesson for Tortuga to learn, but he needs to walk through the dark ward and face the obstacles up ahead to find his answers, which his passive-aggressive behavior is preventing.

Shortly after Tortuga reflects on his new outlook on life, he makes a harsh decision as he considers, "Perhaps it was that ache which I could not dissolve and which I could no longer beat that made me say yes to Danny when he asked me if I wanted to die" (*Tortuga* 122). This is the moment when Tortuga reaches his lowest point in the novel. Not only does he feel that life is meaningless, but now he has accepted his own death. He believes that he is ready to die. In terms of Freud's death instinct theory, Tortuga does not display the same behaviors. It does not seem that Tortuga is trying to kill himself, but he does accept death if it comes knocking at his

door. The only character that stayed within Freud's theory is Salomón since he willingly tried to kill himself with the ultimate goal of death. But, he broke out of that mindset through his epiphany with nature.

On the way to meet his untimely demise, Tortuga thinks he can hear Clepo and envisions Filomón and Ismelda, but they all fade away as he nears the pool. He begins to break out of his trance when he calls out to them and receives no responses. Reality finally reaches Tortuga when he realizes that "they were gone. They weren't going to make the journey with him. [...]" [He] turned to Danny. "No. I'm not ready. I can't make the journey alone. Can't you see! They're not there" (*Tortuga* 124). At this moment, Tortuga breaks out of his passive trance and begins to fear the idea of going on his new journey into the afterlife by himself. Backing up for a moment, Tortuga was wheeled passed the moon multiple times, which is a source of light. He even reflects on the effects the moon has on him when he acknowledges that "it was the first time I had been aware of my surroundings in a long time" (*Tortuga* 123). Tortuga has been surrounded by darkness during his depressive state, so those rays of moonlight have provided him with a positive change in scenery. He is finally out of complete darkness. This leads him to observe his surroundings, especially the sleeping Tortuga Mountain. Perhaps, the sleeping mountain represents Tortuga's passive and still state of mind, and the light shining on the mountain's back symbolizes Tortuga's sudden awakening from that. Hence, he begins to remember the people that have been guiding him on his journey to recovery and fears to lose that guidance now. In contrast, Danny and his buddies "kept to the shadows" (*Tortuga* 123). Sadly, these characters are already lost in darkness and avoid the light. This makes it harder for Danny to break out of his trance, which can be attributed to his stubbornness.

As Tortuga begs Danny not to throw him in the water, his mentor Salomón enlightens him by warning, “*you have come to the edge of the sea...you have run your race and suffered as much as any man...but you must turn back, you must face the blinding sun...you must cast off your shell and come to sing the songs of man*” (*Tortuga* 124). In this dreamlike episode, Salomón is still trying to guide Tortuga towards his destiny. However, Tortuga needs to step out of darkness and walk the path of the sun for himself in order to recover and understand his destiny. This path symbolizes a road to enlightenment. Salomón also sympathizes with him by acknowledging the trauma that Tortuga has gone through and agrees that he “was not ready” (*Tortuga* 124) for the new journey. Moreover, Salomón informs him that he has seen all that he needed to see in the darkness he faced. Previously in *Tortuga*, Salomón shared his personal traumatic experiences with Tortuga through dreams, visions, and whispered conversations. There are similarities between Salomón’s past experiences and Tortuga’s current journey, especially when it comes to the search for meaning in one’s life, which can turn south if that person gives up.

Just like Salomón, a paralyzed Tortuga was taken across the desert by Filomón. The desert may symbolize death since there is not a lot of life in that kind of environment. This does not necessarily mean that the person going through the desert will literally die, but will instead undergo hardships as death lurks nearby. In support of this claim, Clepo clearly states, “It’s a journey of death” (*Tortuga* 4) while Filomón argues, “No, a journey of life” (*Tortuga* 4). Regardless of the outcome, both characters agree that it is a journey nonetheless. It all comes down to perspective and the drive to find one’s destiny. For instance, Margarite Fernandez Olmos points out in her book *Rudolfo A. Anaya: A Critical Companion* that “for Clepo, crossing the desert is a ‘journey of death,’ perhaps a reference to the fact that the ambulance used to

transport patients is indeed a converted hearse” (67). This is interesting to note since a hearse is usually associated with death, but Filomón has transformed that vehicle into an ambulance, which now transports people to a hospital in the hopes to save their lives. Rather than be doubtful and consider the road to the hospital hopeless, Filomón remains hopeful for the recovery of the children. Maybe, the converted hearse symbolizes that transformation of death to the possibility of an extended life. As for Clepo, he still sees the ambulance as a death ride for hopeless incurables. The conflicting theme of life versus death, especially with trauma victims, is set up from the beginning of the story whether it be through one’s interpretation of the meaning of life or literally the fight to stay alive.

By now it is apparent that Tortuga faces many obstacles, which includes his encounters with doubters of faith. As a matter of fact, Clepo even expresses his doubt about the hospital’s abilities to cure the crippled children when he says, “Yeah, but they didn’t fix my limp [...] And they sure as hell don’t believe in all this mumbo jumbo you’ve been giving the kid” (*Tortuga 6*). This quote gives more insight behind Clepo’s doubts in faith and the hospital as it is revealed that he used to be a patient there. He feels that the hospital never cured him of his limp and, it also “gives [him] the shivers” (*Tortuga 7*). Even though Clepo does not physically stay in the hospital any longer, he still allows the darkness of fear get to him when he visits. Unlike Filomón, Clepo does not see the bright side of things. Actually, Danny and Clepo are similar when it comes to their doubts in Filomón’s stories and the hospital staff’s ability to cure them since they still have complications. Without faith or a path of light to follow, these characters are lost. On this topic, Filomón brings up that he found and picked up Clepo during one of his drives. He was lost “in the middle of a sandstorm, crying” (*Tortuga 5*). This portrait of a lost person in the desert that eventually receives guidance from a wise mentor is a recurring theme in

Anaya's stories. Additionally, this depiction in *Tortuga* is key since it provides a literal situation of a lost character that can also be used figuratively, which gives the audience a closer sense of how that struggle feels and the impact a mentor has on a struggling person. Characters like Tortuga, Danny, and Clepo at one point or another feel misplaced, but mentors such as Filomón and Salomón try to help them get on the right track. Plus, Rudolfo Anaya may have intentionally given these mentors similar sounding names due to their roles in the story. For example, Filomón is helping Clepo restore his identity when he reminds him that "it doesn't matter, [he's] been a good assistant," which "seemed to satisfy Clepo" (*Tortuga* 5). This satisfaction is a result of Clepo's new sense of meaning in his life. Unfortunately, his previous outlook on life may have diminished when he was traumatized and isolated in the desert, so the new role that Filomón has given him is helping to restore it slowly but surely. He still has doubts when it comes to Filomón's stories and the miracles of the hospital, but this does not discourage Filomón as he continues to mentor Clepo in the hopes to stir him on the right path, a similar stubborn trait that Salomón embodies as he continuously tries to enlighten Tortuga to follow the path of the sun even when things look grim.

By the time Tortuga realizes that he is not ready to die, he comes too close to the edge of darkness and is pushed into the water by Danny. As he drowns, Tortuga has spiritual visions, which he recalls, "My grandfather appeared before me and told me to awaken slowly, because I was entering a new dream...my mother prayed to her saints, the lifeless, plaster statues that would remain forever with their backs to her because I hadn't returned...and in the blinding light which flashed around me the girls of my first holy communion entered the water and swam like mermaids around me, singing a song of life, singing the song Ismelda whispered from the shore" (*Tortuga* 125). Even though Tortuga is drowning at this exact moment in the novel, he is also

experiencing his rebirth in the water without realizing it. His visions communicate the importance of life, his life. Salomón and Tortuga's grandfather want him to wake up while his mother waits for his return. Perhaps when Salomón tells Tortuga that he is not ready for the "new journey," he means the journey in the afterlife. It is not his time to die. Instead, Tortuga needs to find, understand, and fulfill his destiny. Obviously, there are Christian symbols throughout this baptism that also provide light for Tortuga to take in. Salomón's sea turtle story foreshadows this event since the surviving sea turtles that enter the water and return to land experience a rebirth as well. After this dream sequence, Tortuga is pulled out of the water to complete the baptism.

Now that Tortuga has walked through the darkness he once feared and experienced his rebirth, it is time for him to shed off his restraints as Dr. Steel "pulled at the wet plaster. He cut through the wet cotton and gauze and tore apart the cast, ripping with a carelessness I had never felt in his hands before [...] The worst was over, I felt all right" (*Tortuga* 126). Finally, Tortuga has successfully broken out of his shell that symbolizes the trauma, fear, and suffering he went through. He feels at ease knowing that. Not only that, he understands that he cannot drown in the water because that is not part of his destiny, which Ismelda assures him that "no you can't drown in Tortuga's waters [...] It's not your fate...and now that the cast is gone you look like a lizard, so you'll have to think about living on dry land" (*Tortuga* 127). Looking back at Salomón's sea turtle story, living in the sea for too long is like staying stuck in the past. Ismelda wants him to consider living on dry land for a positive change, which is where the sea turtles lay their eggs. Perhaps, Anaya is also referring to the Chicano struggle of finding a place to call home. After a long fought battle with restrictions, Tortuga can now return home and live out his life. He does not have to keep swimming anymore. At the same time, Tortuga does not have to

be afraid to get back in the water when he desires because he cannot die there. With his fears behind him, he is determined to put the pieces together to ultimately unveil his destiny when he plans, “I had to create it, to create it out of Mike and Ismelda and Salomón and all the rest...that was the clue...to make some sense out of it...just like so long ago when the paralysis came I hadn’t died, and the movement returned, for some purpose...but it was to be my purpose, not God’s purpose, not Mike’s, not Salomón’s, not the past which haunted my dreams” (*Tortuga* 127). Tortuga no longer has a barrier that is holding him back from understanding his destiny. He is determined more than ever before to connect the pieces together to understand his purpose and his purpose alone. This is in contrast to Danny’s way of thinking, who thinks he is fulfilling God’s purpose. Maybe Anaya is communicating to his audience that everyone has individual purposes in life that he or she needs to figure out alone. Salomón tries to help Tortuga understand his destiny, but he cannot force Tortuga either. Tortuga needs to be willing to understand it, which he is now.

As Tortuga gets stronger through physical therapy and searches for any missing pieces that will lead to the meaning behind his destiny, he receives a package and letter from his mother that reads, “Do you remember Crispín? The old man who lived across the alley? He is dead. May God rest his soul. He died and with him so many dreams died. But he died fighting for justice. That is why I am writing. He left you his guitar, the one he would play in the evening. He did not tell us why, but he said to send it immediately. [...] He said you would know why” (*Tortuga* 168). This may be another example of Anaya’s use of the collective unconscious. Tortuga needs to search within himself for the reason behind Crispín’s last wish. He is dumbfounded by this information as he thinks, “But how did Crispín know? Did all of these people know something about my destiny which was revealed to me only in flashes of insight, like now, when everything

suddenly seemed to fall into place and make sense” (*Tortuga* 169). As confusing as this sudden news may be to him, Tortuga still feels that it all makes sense. His intuition is in sync with Salomón and Crispín through the idea of the collective unconscious. They all know that Tortuga’s destiny is to carry on a tradition. Crispín also appears in Anaya’s novel *Heart of Aztlán*, which provides important background information about him that will shed more light behind the purpose of his blue guitar as Crispín recollects, “I was apprenticed forty years to the man who handed it to me...and some day I will pass it on, but a part of the history was missing, stories never recorded on the blue guitar. I had to search the past to find myself...” (28). This excerpt sounds very familiar to Tortuga’s journey. Before finding his destiny, Tortuga also needs to visit the past by listening to Salomón’s stories to understand his role. Even Anaya had to look back at his past when he wrote *Tortuga*. At this point in the novel, Tortuga is trying to make sense of his recent past hardships, relationships, and miracles. These acquired understandings will bring light and clarity into their lives. As for the blue guitar, it is a tool that is used to record stories through song when a person plays on it. It has been passed down by the man before Crispín, and possibly before that man. Crispín continues the tradition by now handing it down to Tortuga, whom he feels will keep the stories alive and add more.

In addition to history books and traditional oral storytelling, music is another way to record history, which Salomón enlightens Tortuga by verifying, “*But he left you the guitar. He sang his time on earth and now it’s your turn. Oh, how can we be sad when a man passes away but leaves us so much of his life...leaves another to take up his place. Now it’s your turn to sing, Tortuga. My heart is full of joy that this has come to pass*” (*Tortuga* 171). With the passing of Crispín, it is now Tortuga’s turn to pick up the guitar and continue from where he left off. Tortuga knows what he needs to do, but it is up to him to decide whether he wants to go through

with it or not. The children in the hospital count on Tortuga to continue the tradition, so they will never be forgotten or swallowed up by darkness. This may be in reference to the struggles Chicanos have faced. These people continue to tell stories to make sure their history and identity in relation to the land they call home is never forgotten. For light to succeed over darkness, Tortuga needs to take it in and let it shine within himself. This revelation may still be a part of his collective unconscious since Salomón's whispered instructions can very well be a part of Tortuga's subconscious. He needs to follow his gut feeling, which his traumatic experiences filled with feelings of fear and hesitation prevented him from understanding before. Fortunately, Tortuga has successfully gone through the darkness and overcame his paralysis, mentally and physically. After getting upset at Salomón for "making him sing," Tortuga reflects on Salomón's strength despite his physical disabilities and decides, "All right [...] I'll sing you a song...there is much to sing about. I want to sing about going home, and about returning for Ismelda and her love, and I want to sing about climbing the mountain, and about walking through the dark halls of the cripples...oh, there are so many things that lie so heavy on my soul that must be sung. So I strummed a chord and sang my song" (173). Tortuga realizes that there are so many stories that he can tell through song writing about his own personal experiences, which include the stories about the people in his life. This also allows Tortuga to release any suppressed emotions that he has been keeping to himself. He has found his destiny and plans to fulfill it.

CONCLUSION

Rudolfo Anaya's *Tortuga* centers around the traumatic experiences of the characters involved. Trauma is a universal issue that is inevitable in life, which can be a result of personal loss, injury, and any other life changing event. Despite the hardships in life, *Tortuga* demonstrates the obtainable possibilities of a person finding the light at the end of the tunnel and conquering trauma. At one point, the protagonist is completely paralyzed and even accepts death, but with his will to live and understand his purpose, he makes a miraculous recovery. However, the novel also displays the different and sometimes similar ways other characters handle trauma. There is a constant battle between life and death for each character as they search for new meaning in their individual lives. A traumatic experience can influence people to shelter themselves from further traumas, but fog their understanding of a situation. This misunderstanding allows darkness to creep in through negative feelings of fear, hopelessness, and anger. Salomón tried to kill himself due to hopelessness while Danny tried to kill Tortuga and successfully killed the vegetables as a result of fear. Also, Rudolfo Anaya himself felt the need to write *Tortuga* to face his fear of looking back at his own unsettling traumatic accident, release suppressed emotions, and tell the stories of the children he encountered during his healing process. This reflection allowed Anaya to find understanding and purpose behind his experience. Writing this novel was part of his destiny.

In some ways *Tortuga* can be interpreted through a Freudian lens, but in other cases not so much. Danny does display similar characteristics to Freud's theory of mastery over the situation. He constantly tries to be in control of his situation by forcing Tortuga to show him the miracle that Filomón speaks about, violently attacking others who oppose him, and ultimately killing the vegetables and cutting off the main source of his despair. Danny and Tortuga also

seem to have defense mechanisms in action, avoiding further traumas. Their protective shields have been breached due to their initial traumas. These defense mechanisms are clouding their judgment and causing them to feel fear, anger, and confusion. As for Freud's idea of the death instinct, Salómon is the only character that seems to be a product of this. He aims for death by trying to kill himself at some point, but that changes as a result of his epiphany. Danny is not sadistic after all, but he is scared to turn into one of the vegetables. Therefore, he kills the vegetables to avoid that possibility. He does not kill them to fulfill a need to kill them like the characteristics of a sadist. On another front, it may seem that he kills them as an act of mercy, but Anaya clarifies that he does not know what mercy is. His acts are carried out as a result of his fear brought on by his defense mechanisms.

Darkness is a common illusive force in Anaya's works. To battle this, Anaya provides various forms of light to help guide his struggling characters to follow the path of the sun, which is a symbol for harmony and clarity in Native American culture. Aside from this, the most influential sources of light in *Tortuga* are Salomón's stories. Before Tortuga can find and understand his destiny, he needs to visit the past and confront the darkness of the ward. These moral stories enlighten Tortuga and allow him to enter new worlds, which help him make sense of his destiny and outlook on life. Storytelling is an important tradition to Anaya and Chicano culture that is powered by the imagination. It allows people to travel to different places and time periods with ease. Oral storytelling, literature, and music help keep cultural histories alive, which are also sources of light that Tortuga comes in contact with. This novel portrays the importance of literature in this manner. Libraries are filled with power and endless opportunities for enlightenment.

The source of Salomón's whispered stories is not certain, but it very well can be a product of the collective unconscious. This becomes more apparent when Salomón knows about Crispín, which Tortuga cannot understand how that is possible. Regardless, Tortuga's intuition is telling him that it all makes sense. If so, Tortuga's imagination has created the whispered voice in his head that is fueled by cultural stories, stories from the children in the hospital, and the books that Salomón gives him. This does not necessarily mean that the stories he envisions and Salomón are not real. Salomón is a real person in the story, and the visions that Tortuga has of Salomón when they are separated is still part of reality since visions are part of reality in Native American culture. Anaya also considers that myth is a product of reality since he has created mythological creatures and characters in his stories influenced from real life experiences. In a nutshell, reality is not strictly reserved to tangible evidence and what is literally in front of someone's eyes. This is actually Danny's issue throughout *Tortuga*. He relies too much on fast physical evidence and loses faith as a result. On the other hand, Tortuga does not need to see his toes move with his eyes to know that reality exists, which gives him a boost of faith. Reality can be the literal world and real emotions a person feels from a story, vision, instinct, etc. It all depends on a person's perspective.

Speaking of literal, Rudolfo Anaya's *Tortuga* was criticized for not representing social realism during the Chicano Movement in the 1970s. However, these critics may have missed a lot by interpreting the novel straight forward and not reading in between the lines. The characters in the story all share that longing to go back home. Chicanos have struggled and fought to keep their lands for years. That longing for home is portrayed beautifully in this novel. Also, Salomón tells Tortuga to continue the tradition of telling stories through song, so the darkness does not consume them all. One way to interpret this is that Chicanos fought to keep

their identities and voices known, so they would not be lost forever in darkness. Tortuga needs to keep the tradition alive. Lastly, *Tortuga* contains a hero that overcomes his obstacles and makes a full recovery. In relation to the struggles Chicanos have felt or anyone who is currently struggling, this novel shows that it is possible for anyone to conquer his or her opposing forces. Tortuga is an inspirational survivor.

Rudolfo Anaya's most important message in *Tortuga* is to love life and to engage it. People should not live in fear, but should spread love, especially the love to live. *Tortuga* is an extremely underrated novel that more people should read. It is entertaining, but also filled with multiple life lessons. Hopefully, this thesis shines a spotlight on the rich content inside *Tortuga*.

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