

## BOOK REVIEW

**BOOK: "The Cave of Naltzátlan"**

**AUTHOR OF BOOK: Arnaldo Carlos Vento**

**AUTHOR OF REVIEW: Lic. Mariano Leyva Domínguez**

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*"The dawn breaks! Let no one stay behind. Not one, not two."*

POPOL VUH

Arnaldo Carlos Vento was born of Mexican ancestry in the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas. He is a professor of Spanish-American Literature and Ethnic Studies at the University of Texas-Austin. His academic background includes literary criticism, creative literature, founder and developer of Ethnic Programs in various universities as well as co-founder of *Canto al Pueblo*, a national artistic and literary Mexican American/Native American festival whose roots are in the Aztec celebration *In Xochitl, In Kuikatl*. His publications are cross-disciplinary, numerous and varied; from Spanish Literature, Mexican Literature, Chicano Literature to Pre-Columbian culture and philosophy.

His first novel of a trilogy in 1987, is published by the prestigious Fondo de Cultura Económica and is entitled *La cueva de Naltzátlan*. This will serve as a base for his translation in English (*The Cave of Naltzátlan*) as well as a screenplay (*The Quest*). This is followed by his second novel of the trilogy (*En el nombre del Padre y del Hijo*). While the first novel probes into Aztec culture and the Conquest, the second moves into the Christian Crusades and Medieval Christianity. As a critic, the following forms the major corpus of his works: *La Generación Hijo Pródigo: Renovación y Modernidad*; *Mestizo: The History, Culture and Politics of the Mexican and Chicano*; *Tres Civilizaciones del Mundo Medieval: Crítica, Análisis y Crónicas de las Primeras Cruzadas*; *El Hijo Pródigo: A Critical Index of XX Century Mexican Thought*; *Antología del pensamiento mexicano*; *The Ricardo Sánchez Reader: Critical Essays and Anthology*; *Antología del pensamiento Chicano a través de la literatura*; and *Two Worlds in Collision: Native American and Western Worldviews*.

*The Cave of Naltzátlan* presented here in translation as the first of a trilogy is written in Magical Realist style. It examines the Conquest through the main protagonist who experiences part of his ancient past via parallel characters. Similarly, it questions the traditional colonial and institutional interpretations of Aztec culture from the times of *Kuautemok* to the present. Aztec codices as well as the preserved oral tradition by *Tlamtinimeh* of today, serve as a cultural and philosophical base to project autochthonous realities as experienced by the protagonist Santos Aguila de la Paz. It is a both a departure that is at once his arrival within the boundaries of reality which suddenly vanish between the past and the present, becoming one revealing synthesis of reality.

Arnaldo Carlos Vento is a tenacious researcher who is not deceived by colonial interpretations of official history. His mind and heart like that of the obsidian flint penetrates the essence of reality so that we as readers can discover a liberating truth.

Within his spirit as a Professor, is the expansion of his horizons to student classrooms, colleagues, a barrio embrace, of ordinary folks, *campesinos* and the oral tradition; all of which expand his cosmic perception in his quest for the discovery of ancient ideals and authentic identity.

Arnaldo Carlos Vento is a great *Tezkatlipoka* that bears an implacable mirror that awakens the dormant conscience within us.

It is with gratitude that we honor Professor Vento for his creativity here at the Nahuatl University in Kuaunauak (today Cuernavaca), a place that sheds light within the womb of the ever prevalent colonial adversary.

Lic.Mariano Leyva Domínguez  
Founder, Náhuatl University