OLD MAN
Ricardo Sánchez

remembrance
(smiles/hurts sweetly)

October 8, 1972

old man
with brown skin
talking of past
when being shepherd
in utah, nevada, colorado and
new mexico
was life lived freely;

old man,
grandfather,
wise with time
running rivulets on face,
deep, rich furrows,
each one a legacy,
deep, rich memories of life . . .
"you are indio,"
among other things,
he would tell me
during nights spent
so long ago
amongst familial gatherings
in albuquerque . . .

old man, loved and respected,
he would speak sometimes
of pueblos,

san juan, santa clara,
and even santo domingo.
and his family, he would say,
came from there:
some of our blood was here.

1. indio (in’ dyo) n. Indian; Native American.
2. pueblo (pweh’ loo) n. here, Native American
towns in central and northern New Mexico.
he would say,
before the coming of coronado, 3
other of our blood
came with los españoles, 4
and the mixture
35 was rich,
though often painful . . .
old man,
who knew earth
by its awesome aromas
40 and who felt
the heated sweetness
of chile verde 5
by his supple touch,
gone into dust is your body
45 with its stoic look and resolution,
but your reality, old man, lives on
in a mindsoul touched by you . . .

Old Man . . .

3. coronado (kō rō na’ dō) Coronado explored what is today the American Southwest.
4. los españoles (lōs es pā nyo’ a) n. the Spaniards.
5. chile verde (chī’ ĝahr’ de) n. green pepper.

Literary Analysis
Sensory Language and Imagery: How does the image in lines 9–12 appeal to one of the five senses?

supple (sō’ pə) adj.: flexible and pliant
stoic (stō’ ik) adj.: calm and unbothered in spite of suffering

Ricardo Sánchez
(1941–1995)
The poet Ricardo Sánchez was born in El Paso, Texas. His family had roots in Spanish, Mexican, North American, and Native American cultures. Most of Sánchez’s work is an exploration and celebration of his rich cultural heritage. His writing often includes both Spanish and English words. In the poem “Old Man,” Sánchez offers a portrait of a grandfather who is remembered with love.

Review and Assess
Think About the Selection
1. Respond: How does Sánchez make you feel about his grandfather?
2. (a) Recall: What groups of ancestors did the grandfather teach the poet about? (b) Analyze: What feelings about their heritage did the grandfather pass on to the poet?
3. (a) Recall: How do you know that the grandfather is no longer living? (b) Interpret: Explain the meaning of the lines “but your reality, old man, lives on in a mindsoul touched by you . . .” (c) Generalize: Explain how those lines could apply to older people of any culture or family.