

FEBRUARY 2017

\$19.95 PAPER 978-0-8061-5501-2

208 PAGES, 5.5 X 8.5

MEMOIR

VOLUME 20 IN THE CHICANA AND
CHICANO VISIONS OF THE AMÉRICAS
SERIES

CONTACT:

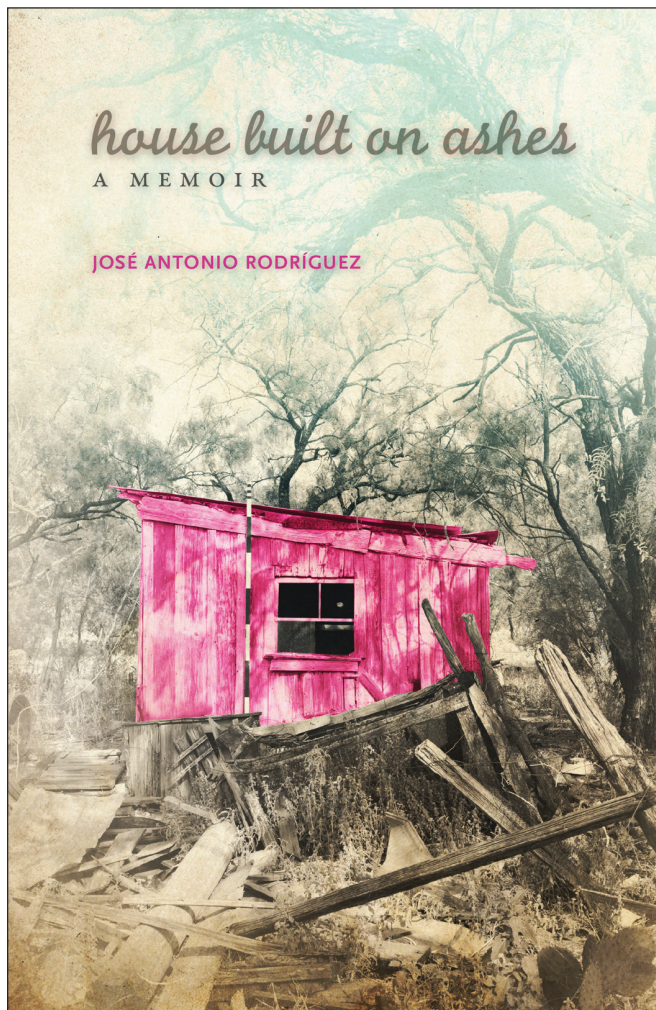
SANDY SEE, PUBLICIST

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA PRESS

TEL: 405 325 3200

FAX: 405 325 4000

SSEE@OU.EDU



HOUSE BUILT ON ASHES

A Memoir

By José Antonio Rodríguez

“A beautiful portrayal of a world seldom seen in American letters. *House Built on Ashes* is needed, especially now.”—Sandra Cisneros, author of *The House on Mango Street*

The year is 2009, and José Antonio Rodríguez, a doctoral student at Binghamton University in upstate New York, is packing his suitcase, getting ready to spend the Thanksgiving holiday with his parents in South Texas. He soon learns from his father that a drug cartel has overtaken the Mexican border village where he was born. Now, because of the violence there, he won't be able to visit his early-childhood home. Instead, his memories will have to take him back.

Thus, Rodríguez begins a meditative journey into the past. Through a series of vignettes, he mines the details of a childhood and adolescence fraught with deprivation but offset by moments of tenderness and beauty. Suddenly he is four years old again, and his mother is feeding him raw sugarcane for the first time. With the sweetness still on his tongue, he runs to a field, where he falls asleep under a glowing pink sky.

The conditions of rural poverty prove too much for his family to bear, and Rodríguez moves with his mother and three of his nine siblings across the border to McAllen, Texas. Now a resident of the “other side,” Rodríguez experiences the luxury of indoor toilets and

gazes at television commercials promising more food than he has ever seen. But there is no easy passage into this brighter future.

Poignant and lyrical, *House Built on Ashes* contemplates the promises, limitations, and contradictions of the American Dream. Even as it tells a deeply personal story, it evokes larger political, cultural, and social realities. It speaks to what America is and what it is not. It speaks to a world of hunger, prejudice, and far too many boundaries. But it speaks, as well, to the redemptive power of beauty and its life-sustaining gift of hope.

José Antonio Rodríguez, Assistant Professor in the Creative Writing Program at the University of Texas–Rio Grande Valley, is the author of *The Shallow End of Sleep* and *Backlit Hour*.

Available from online booksellers, in bookstores, and directly from the University of Oklahoma Press:

1 800 627 7377 or www.oupres.com.

For author interview please contact: Sandy See, Publicist at the University of Oklahoma Press, at 405 325 3200 or ssee@ou.edu.