

AN ANALYSIS OF RODOLFO ANAYA'S NOVELS AS EPICS

A Thesis

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by

Michael Anthony Cervantes

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents for all the love and support they have given me during the time I have worked on this thesis.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Since time known to man, people have used their imaginations to create the dynamic personalities known today as heroes. Emerging from an energetic and vibrant culture during times of discord, the hero rises to the challenges of his times and represents the traits most valued in his culture, such as courage, nobility, and fortitude. What makes a hero so fascinating is that he has become master of his own destiny, defining his own identity and challenging his people to redefine themselves and to see the world in a new vision.

There is a question whether contemporary society has a place for heroes, admirable as they may be. Anti-heroes such as Heller's Yossarian of Catch-22, Camus' Merssault of The Stranger, and Nietzsche's Zarathustra, are examples of societies' rejection of the traditional hero. But there are contemporary writers who continue to search for the essence of the hero, understanding that the hero must reflect today's world as well as maintain his historical character. Among contemporary writers who have renewed the hero motif is Rodolfo Anaya.

Rodolfo Anaya has published three novels: Bless Me,

Ultima (1972), Heart of Aztlán (1976), and Tortuga (1979).¹ He has also published a novella, The Legend of La Llorona (1984), and a poem entitled the Adventures of Juan Chicaspatas (1985).

Anaya through his novels interprets the hero and his quest to the contemporary reader. The novels examine how the Anglo culture is hastening the death of New Mexico's rural Mexican culture through assimilation and technology. Anaya's novels are commentaries on the effect of our contemporary urban society on the Chicano and other ethnic groups. In Tortuga, the hero witnesses the injuries suffered by anyone who fails to conform to the values of the larger society. In Heart of Aztlán, the powers within society are portrayed as amoral and materialistic. Like a Franz Kafka character, Clemente Chávez must deal with faceless enemies, never directly confronting his adversaries, but struggling against their bureaucratic representatives: Fr. Cayo and Mannie. Unlike the Kafka character, Joseph K. Chávez searches and discovers the answers to overcome his anonymous enemies. As in epics of the past, Anaya's heroes rise above the discord within their society.

Antonio, Chávez, and Tortuga are confronted with two interrelated conflicts: identity and technology's dominance

over society. One of the impacts of technology is that it causes people to question their identities, which are based upon past traditions. Antonio's search for identity helps him to understand the importance of his history as a critical link which enables him to survive in a changing world. He hears his family speak about the impact the railroad has on the people of New Mexico. The introduction of the railroad foreshadows the coming of a technological world that has its origins with the industrial age. Michel Serres writes about this new age in his essay, "Turner Translates Carnot." The before and aftermath of the industrial age is viewed from two paintings depicting two distinct worlds. Gerrard's painting, Recapitulation, painted in 1784, shows the old world with energy sources based on nature and primitive technology. Turner's The Burning of the House of Parliament, completed in 1835, represents the new world in which "the furnace appears as the new model of the world," and man has achieved complete control over his energy sources. The furnace is used to symbolize creation beginning anew. Serres writes: "The furnace is the engine for going back to chaos. The foundry is where creation starts over at zero."² It is the first sign of an industrialized world that eventually makes its presence known in New Mexico.

In Bless Me, Ultima, the world at war makes its impact on New Mexico and by the end of Heart of Aztlán many New Mexicans, in less than a generation, have made an uneven transition from rural to urban life. The industrial society places pressure on all individuals to conform, particularly the New Mexican people. Comprehending that they cannot return to their former lives, the New Mexicans nevertheless refuse to accept in their culture contemporary values that prefer objects to life. The world of the present is so hostile toward those who fail to assimilate that the New Mexicans become nostalgic about the past. In Heart of Aztlán, the people recall earlier days in New Mexico when they worked together like a family. Manuel mentions that "the communal life of the pueblo or the ranchito supported each person. And the life of the village was reflected in the spirit of la familia" (p. 103). But that spirit no longer exists in the oppressive urban world encountered by Chávez. In Barelás, the railroad owners impose unjust working conditions upon the workers and Chávez concludes that the owners and their allies are masters of a technology that is destroying his community.

Martin Heidegger writes in an essay entitled "Questions Concerning Technology" that "technology" means

". . . a way of revealing."³ As individuals develop new tools, these instruments shape the future. But technology has a greater meaning than developing new tools. Technology means a revealing truth. The revelations that Heidegger sees are that society places too much emphasis on machinery, failing to see that the arts, too, reveal the future and show truth.

Modern technology devalues the importance of God, nature and sacred mysteries.⁴ This motif is explored in detail in Anaya's novels, Heart of Aztlán and Tortuga. Clemente Chávez and Tortuga are confronted by a society that places greater value on material wealth and power than the individual. Chávez and Tortuga question what alternatives can be created so that they cannot only survive, but live in hope. By challenging the world, the main characters become heroes to their communities and rebels to society at large. They become mythopoetic heroes, that is, heroes who combine the best of mythic and literary qualities. Slochower defines this particular hero as one who "chooses his tradition, rejects the stultified in favor of the creative roots in the past. . . . By aligning himself with the high levels of the past, man gains the dignity of belonging without becoming depersonalized."⁵ Anaya's heroes fight people's indifference and bitterness

searching the past to see what they can discover about their ancestors' lives and what their ancient culture has to offer to the present generation. The heroes find the origins of traditions and maintain those historic truths. Society must preserve these truths but continue advancing itself into the future.

Heidegger's book Being and Time discusses the same fundamental idea. He sees that traditions blind people to their past. To practice tradition without understanding the history behind it is to live superficially.⁶ The mythopoetic hero uses judgment to see beyond appearances to know truth. Antonio discovers truth through his father and Ultima. He sees that one can wed the past with the future. Gabriel Márez explains to Antonio, "It seems I am so much part of the past--I said. Ay, every generation, every man is part of his past. He cannot escape it, but he may reform the old materials, make something new--" (Heart of Aztlán, p. 236).

The heroes' search becomes more than a personal goal. As Chávez's and Tortuga's search grows in importance their community identifies with them because they offer hope. For example, when Tortuga regains his ability to walk, patients call him a "free man." They express their unity with Tortuga by listening to his song about their

experiences in the desert hospital and having a celebration in his honor. The patients perceive, as Lukács explains, that their destiny lies with its hero.⁷ The community learns to identify with these dynamic personalities because they represent the future. Anaya's heroes are not in search of personal glory nor are they like the legendary aristocratic heroes. Antonio, but in particular Clemente and Tortuga, can be called democratic heroes because they pass on to their people what they have learned. Anaya's heroes rise above the masses because they dare to question and challenge authority, while the rest remain caught in the quagmire of a changing world. Antonio, for example, is criticized by his mother for asking so many questions. Chávez is hunted by the authorities because he calls for justice in Barelás. When the hero returns home he discovers that his "heroic quest is not eliminated, but assimilated" by the community.⁸ As Chávez returns home, he explains to his community his hopes for the future.

He wanted to tell them that the people he had met in his journey were the same everywhere, that they cried and laughed the same, that they share in the same life stream which was their destiny to carry to a completion. But the roar of the people drowned out his words. They understood what he was saying. . . .
(p. 208)

Anaya's protagonists are epic heroes because they follow a particular structural pattern that has its

beginnings with the original hero, Gilgamesh.⁹ Like the ancient hero, Anaya's protagonists overcome their personal or historic limitations to bring back to their society a gift that will free the people from their intransigency and allow them to be renewed. Therefore their actions are perceived as dramatic.

This heroic drama is set in three acts. Act One is paradise lost. It is a time when the people find themselves yearning for a past they have idealized in order to escape current miseries. Tortuga, for example, recalls his early childhood in order to escape his present physical and emotional pains. In this oppressive world creative human initiative and potential are devalued in favor of conformity. The people are disillusioned and exist from day to day. This state continues until someone questions modern society's values and rejects the idea that one must accept one's current life, such as it is.

The Second Act is the quest. The searcher is ostracized because by his questioning, he challenges the current power structure. He goes outside traditional institutions to find answers about his identity and discovers his historical roots. Antonio, for example, finds his true education not in the classroom, but with his father and Ultima. Through the assistance of his two aides he learns

about his family history and with it is able to create a new identity.

The heroes' journeys are fraught with trials and tribulations, Antonio, Chávez and Tortuga metaphorically traveling to lands of awe and wonder and encountering strange and unusual individuals. The heroes' "travels" provide them with the opportunity to grow and mature. Maturity is something they can never fully achieve in their own land. As they continue with their journeys, their aides provide the searchers with guidance and insights that help them continue their quest. But there comes a time when a hero must make the critical decision to continue on the final leg of his journey alone. It is a decision that Tortuga makes when he enters alone into the polio wards.

In the third and final act, the hero ends his journey and returns home with the knowledge necessary to renew his community. He makes a decision to deny his former self and be reborn with a new identity and vision of the future. This action is performed in a symbolic act: the hero traveling to the underworld, where he discovers his future. It is a courageous act because the searcher is never certain that he will be able to return to the world of the living. This action, among others, helps define Anaya's main characters as heroes. Antonio's journey into the

underworld occurs through a nightmare, Chávez's in a surrealistic journey into the center of a mountain. By renewing his community, the mythopoetic hero frees his community to continue on to fulfill its destiny. Learning from their history, the heroes renew their commitment to the future and help their communities to redefine themselves in a world of conflict.

Notes

¹ Rodolfo Anaya, Bless Me, Ultima (Berkeley: Quinto Sol Publications, 1972); Heart of Aztlán (Berkeley: Editorial Justa Publications, 1976); Tortuga (Berkeley: Editorial Justa Publications, 1979). All references to these novels are based upon these editions.

² Michel Serres, "Turner Translates Carnot," in Hermes: Literature, Science, Philosophy, ed. Josué V. Harari and David F. Bell (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. 61.

³ Martin Heidegger, Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings, trans. David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), pp. 294-96.

⁴ Heidegger, Basic Writings, p. 307.

⁵ Harry Slochower, Mythopoesis: Mythic Patterns in the Literary Classics (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1970), p. 15.

⁶ Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, 7th ed. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), pp. 41-45, 447-49.

⁷ Georg Lukács, The Theory of the Novel, trans. Anna Bostock (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1978), pp. 66-69.

⁸ Slochower, p. 25.

⁹ Shirley Park Lowry, Familiar Mysteries (Oxford, England: Oxford Press, 1982), p. 81.

CHAPTER 2

Act I: Paradise Lost

The ancestors of Antonio Márez Luna, Clemente Chávez, and Tortuga once shared a time they considered paradise. Their ancestors described it as a time when people lived in harmony, when the native people of New Mexico had direct communication with God. By knowing their creator, they received truth, beauty, and benevolence and were able to transmit them to their present and future generations. In short, their ancestors knew absolute reality.¹ This "paradise" was based in part on a common religion and culture, but also on their common goal of building a new community.

Antonio's ancestors came to the New World in hopes of creating a better life. As a new community, they left their problems behind them, deemphasizing differences and stressing their common goals. Samuel, a character from Bless Me, Ultima, mentions that once life was peaceful and the gods blessed their people with a fertile homeland: "A long time ago, when the earth was young and only wandering tribes touched the virgin grasslands and drank from the pure streams, a strange people came to this land. . . .

This fertile valley was to be their home" (p. 73).

In Heart of Aztlán, Old Manuel speaks of a time when there existed a unified community. He comments to Clemente Chávez and others that this is an ideal they should strive for in the present. While Bless Me, Ultima and Heart of Aztlán have several references to an Arcadian past, Anaya's third novel, Tortuga, presents only brief memories about a distant Garden of Eden. The main character, Tortuga, after whom the book is named, has only a few fragmented memories about his childhood. Tortuga's paradise was a world filled with nature's beauty. "The rainbows of my childhood, beautifully sculptured arches reaching north and south, shafts of light so pure that their harmony seemed to wed the sky and the earth" (p. 2). Tortuga's memories lean heavily toward a darker vision of the world. He recounts images of desert wastelands, overcast skies, patients awaiting death, no longer believing that they will be cured.

Tortuga witnesses and experiences an indifferent world, a world nearly always a place of fear and hopelessness and, therefore, difficult to improve. Contemporary events have driven the characters away from God. The young patients are divided, bitter, and spiteful toward one another. They would like to leave the hospital, but since

they have no way to achieve that goal, they live in despair. Having lost communication with their creator, they become confused and begin to question their identity.

Anaya's characters once saw themselves like the ancient Hebrews: one people with one God, their unity based upon a common history and a belief in one supreme being. But now the New Mexicans' lands have lost their harmony. In a sense, they have regressed to pre-Christian times because there now exist many "gods." These gods may be pagan, as in the case of the Golden Carp, or expressions of technology, such as the atomic bomb, the railroads, and medical machinery.

In each novel there are characters to reestablish that lost link with God so that they can recreate their ancestors' Arcadian community. For some the need to reestablish a link with God can take extreme actions. Danny, a patient living in the same hospital as Tortuga, has a strange and fruitless relationship with God. He believes that he, like prophets of old, has direct communication with God. But Danny's God is one of vengeance, and in the end he fails to find peace. Tortuga comes to understand that one cannot retreat to the past because to do so one must become regimented and inflexible, unable to change to meet future needs. Tortuga must sacrifice his old identity and accept

responsibility if he wishes to renew his world.

The fear of losing their link with God is causing tensions within the Márez and Luna families. Their harmony is challenged by a culture distinct from their rural New Mexican life style. The coming of the Anglo culture to New Mexico causes lasting changes within the two families. Gabriel Márez remembers the origins of the culture clash, recalling that when the Anglos came to New Mexico they also brought the railroad. Eventually the Anglos took control of New Mexico, causing the corridos to become sad and conflicts to occur; and one day: "The people were uprooted. They looked around one day and found themselves closed in. The freedom of land and sky were gone" (p. 119).

Although between the two cultures there is never direct confrontation between the Anglos and New Mexicans. The Anglos are portrayed through the imagery of industrialization, such as the railroad and barbed wire. Anglo power extends over New Mexican lives, reaching its zenith when Antonio Márez's three brothers, along with a family friend, Lupito are taken to war. Anglo domination through the use of technology leaves its mark on everyone in New Mexico, particularly on Lupito. It is through the young soldier that Antonio begins to realize that the placid world of his ancestors has now turned into a chaotic one.

Lupito is the first known victim of the Anglos' domination of New Mexico. The Anglos demand that he fight their battles for them. When he returns to Guadalupe from the South Pacific, he is profoundly changed for the worse. The character Lupito reminds one of Virginia Woolf's character Septimus from her novel Mrs. Dalloway in that his experiences with the outside world have left him disoriented and alienated from his family and friends. Reality and imagination, once separate, are now fused. Like Septimus, he is visited by spectres of war.

Antonio witnesses Lupito's death on the bridge. For Antonio it marks the violence which, once exclusively part of the outside world, has now become part of himself. Lupito's death is one of several violent deaths that occur within a two-year period. The violence, among other factors, leads Antonio to question the world about him.

Hostilities between the two cultures divide the community. Many people feel helpless in the face of events occurring around them and withdraw from their social responsibility, becoming indifferent toward others. The community does not want to confront its problems and it ostracizes those individuals who expose them. Lupito is one such example. His conflict symbolizes the community's plight. Outwardly, the people barely tolerate each other.

Inwardly they are in turmoil, unable to decide where their future lies. While the community keeps its agitation hidden, Lupito, unable to suppress the inner turmoil that torments his soul, kills Clemente Chávez's brother and calls attention to his misery. In Old Testament justice, Lupito is in turn killed. Except for Narciso, no one else questions why the soldier was killed or what made him relive the war. "'You all know Lupito. You know that the war made him sick--' But the men would not listen to Narciso" (p. 18). They do not listen because they know what caused Lupito's terminal "illness." Lupito's death keeps the people from confronting and resolving their overburdening problems. Anglo society had turned him into a soldier whose main function was to kill. When he returned home to New Mexico, he was unable to return to his former self. His inner being was in chaos caused by the war. Narciso is another example. While before the war he was a respected community member, now he is on the fringe of the community, jobless and a drunk. In Guadalupe he is ostracized. No one cares about his future. Like the dead soldier, the community would like to ignore its problems and relive the past. Gabriel Márez dwells on his youth and dreams about moving to California. María Márez Luna talks about her ancestor who founded Guadalupe.

Nor is Antonio Márez's community concerned with the problems of others. No one cares for Florence's family when his mother dies. Without income or help from the community, Florence's sisters are forced into prostitution. When these events lead Florence to question God's existence, he is met with hostility from most of his friends. The community, also aware of their conflicts among the Luna, Márez and Trementina families, reacts to those problems with indifference. This is aptly mirrored in the people's attitude toward Narciso's death. When the Márez's friend is killed, the citizenry is too involved with its own problems to seriously consider the evidence before them. The jury's attitude about Narciso's death is explained thus: "The coroner's jury that gathered under the juniper tree found the cause of death to be accidental or self-inflicted, they hurried home. Because Narciso was the town drunk, nobody cared much" (p. 169).

The indifference of the people stems from the conflict between rural Mexican and urban societies. The rural New Mexicans do not understand Anglo cultures and feel helpless to solve the problems it has created from them. The New Mexican community's alienation and helplessness are reinforced with the explosion of the first atomic bomb. It reemphasizes their problem. Who are they? The New

Mexicans are now part of a culture that can claim to be god-like because the Anglos have captured the sun's power in the form of the atomic bomb. The community questions the Anglo culture's wisdom to play God, but they are impotent to do more than talk among themselves, "'The atomic bomb,' they whispered, 'a ball of white heat beyond the imagination, beyond hell--' . . . 'Man was not made to know so much,' . . . 'they compete with God, they disturb the seasons, they seek to know more than God himself. In the end, that knowledge they seek will destroy us all--'" (p. 183).

Disoriented by the new atomic force, people of the community fear their future under an urban society that can claim to have God-like powers. Native New Mexicans, seeing the future as opaque and uncertain, begin to view the past as Arcadian in contrast to their present situation. Community members lose their perspective on personal relations and societal needs because, caught up reliving the past, they have no time to live the present. The atomic bomb marks a new age that is noted more for destruction and death than for life and harmony. Eric Fromm mentions that modern Western man fails to place the highest values on his fellow human and Nature. He is unable to use his full creative powers. This has been described by Fromm as

"malaise, ennui mal du siècle, the deading of life, the automatization of man, his alienation from himself, from his fellowman and from nature."²

Gabriel Márez feels that alienation while living in Guadalupe. Antonio mentions that "he was never close to the men of the town" (p. 3) and that he "did not like the town or its way" (p. 21). With the Anglo domination of New Mexico, the effect of the war on families and urbanization, Gabriel and María Márez decide to retreat from Guadalupe to a home built on the edge of the llano. These changes prompt Gabriel Márez to constantly recall the old days on the llano when he was a vaquero and to talk about moving to California.

All these events affect Antonio. His mother frequently recalls that her ancestors were the first colonizers of the valley of El Puerto. His parents want to decide Antonio's future for him on the basis of their nostalgic views. His father wants him to be a vaquero and his mother wishes him to be a priest. Antonio is confused. Where does his future lie? It is at this point that Ultima, a curandera, comes to the Márez's home to become Antonio's personal guide and teacher. It is through Ultima that Antonio comes to understand his past. And once this is accomplished, Antonio is ready to face the future.

Bless Me, Ultima concludes with a mixture of sadness and hope. The sadness comes from Ultima's death and from seeing a rural Mexican culture come to an end. The hope comes with Antonio. The boy comes to realize that his identity need not be that of a prisoner of the past. Antonio can take from the past and synthesize it with the present so that he can meet the future with hope.

Although Antonio Márez and Clemente Chávez both deal with similar questions of identity, there are differences. Clemente Chávez lives in an urban setting and he is a family leader. Antonio is a child, but a future leader, who lives in a primarily rural setting. Both characters struggle with an identity crisis, but Clemente Chávez also deals with a larger question that is, whether he can lead the Barelás community against its oppressors.

There are other bases of comparisons between Bless Me, Ultima and Heart of Aztlán besides the question of identity. Both novels deal with war. New Mexicans have been forced to leave their homes to go to war, in some cases never to return. Most who do return hope for a better future in the city. But they do not find it. The railroads, first mentioned in Anaya's earlier novel, are now a powerful economic and political force, dominating the workers' lives and fragmenting the citizenry. Some community leaders have

allied themselves with the railroad and city officials. Many workers accept their plight, others do not. Most people mistrust their official leaders.

The people of Barelas, like Antonio's parents, retreat nostalgically into the past, remembering it as being much happier than the current abysmal reality. Clemente Chávez and his wife, Adelita, look upon the past with fondness. Other characters express the same attitude. Arriving in Barelas, the Chávez's neighbors refer to a way of life that once existed: "In the old days it used to be las colonias, the ranchitos, the pueblos, and whenever we traveled from one to the other we were always welcomed. It was the way of the people. This is the way it should be . . ." (p. 62). Adelita and Clemente Chávez remember the picnics and dances of their youth.

But the people of Barelas forget that their old world fell short of that Arcadian world. Somehow sadder moments of life are glossed over. Before Clemente Chávez married, he nearly was killed because he failed to obtain permission from Adelita's father to speak or dance with his future wife. At that same dance, a man was killed because he failed to apologize over a spilt drink. Clemente Chávez describes that latter action as "a small thing, a thing of honor" (p. 35). As pressure is placed upon the families,

the Arcadian past becomes increasingly distant. Crispín, a blind guitar player, sings corridos recalling the leaders who helped take their forefathers to victories over their oppressors. But the corridos and the discussion just add to the frustrations that the people feel about their future.

Their crisis revolves around the railroad, city and Church. As institutions, they have a stultifying effect on the people they are supposed to serve. The people seek justice and they are given injustice. The workers look to the Church for help and leadership and are rejected because it has allied itself with the rich rather than the poor. The railroad crushes all opposition at the first opportunity. Aware of these things, Clemente Chávez's hopes for a better life for his family are dimmed. He sees, for example, the reaction of the railroad owners to those who question their authority over the workers: "A wildcat strike had been called to protest conditions at the shops and within the union itself. In retaliation the railroad fired the men and the company union rubber-stamped the act" (p. 33).

With no income, the Barelas families suffer as they look for other means of support. Those who do not strike suffer as well because the railroad does not provide an

adequate income. In Clemente Chávez's family, this means that the older children must work. Since they now help provide the family's basic necessities, the older children challenge the parents' authority. The younger children face other problems. One decides to leave school and another faces hostilities from gang members. Clemente Chávez and Adelita feel powerless to help their children. Finally, Clemente Chávez expresses his frustrations.

"'Your supper is ready,' Adelita said softly. Clemente looked at it and scowled, then pushed it away. 'And where is my family?' He cried out. 'Is the man of the house to eat alone! Like a dog! I want my family around me when I eat!'" (p. 73).

Clemente Chávez blames the city for his problems. His frustration in attempting to keep his divided family together creates in him a sense of hopelessness about the family's future. He is perceptive enough to know that any dividing family has little or no future. He realizes too that in this "paradise lost," the railroad stands as a symbol of the foreign culture that has imposed its will upon the native New Mexicans. The workers' union broken by the railroad, the company installs puppet leaders to create the illusion that the workers have leaders to defend their rights, thus leaving the workers powerless, with no

true leader to unify them into an effective force.

The community's problems are not illusions. The conflict that begins between the workers and the railroad extends into the barrio itself as faceless powers get a strangle hold on the city. As the young people are assimilated into Anglo culture, an environment of urban blight, gangs, violence and worker unrest is created. Harmony is nonexistent. The city now produces people who are self-centered, individuals who may at one time have been concerned with their fellow humans but who now think only of themselves. Lalo, a railroad worker, loses his job because of his union organizing. At first, he wants to create unity of all elements within the community. But his frustration leads him from bitterness to hatred toward the railroad, and he then restricts himself to the interests of the workers, concluding that violence is the only means by which to solve their problems.

The workers' plight is not limited to their poor working conditions and ineffective union. Mannie, a businessman and politician known as "El Super," was once a potential community leader. Corrupted by greed, he fails to voice the people's needs and speak out against injustice. Instead, "El Super" shows contempt toward his people. Jason, Clemente Chávez's son, sees injustice in Mannie's

action. His father aptly explains that Mannie's attitude and actions are the price one pays when one adopts the urban Anglo viewpoint. Materialism and injustice have also been chosen by another leader, Fr. Cayo, the parish priest. Clemente Chávez sees the priest as one who fails to identify with his history. Other priests, such as Hidalgo, have "dared to cry out against injustice" (p. 135), thus initiating the liberation of the Mexican people. But Fr. Cayo, like Mannie, chooses materialism and contempt over altruism and respect for the people. His name "Cayo" in Spanish can have two meanings. Spelled "cayó," it means "he fell." Pronounced as "se calló," it means "he was silent." Both terms are appropriate. The priest is a fallen leader, silent to the cries of injustice against his parishioners. As a priest, he is supposed to serve as an intermediary between God and his people. But the Barelas priest serves only himself. He has fallen from leadership of God's flock to service of the rich and powerful. The priest fears man more than God.

The discussion of identity and leadership progresses; it will be shown in greater detail how these three individuals have failed to serve their people. Each fallen leader has given in to the temptations of materialism and power. Each failed to empathize with the community's

conflicts with the city. Mannie, Fr. Cayo and Lalo became leaders without a following.

Without leadership, Barelas' people find themselves in a chaotic state. The community attempts to maintain some sense of harmony by spending Sunday afternoons in the park during the summer. It is the only time in which the different barrios come together. When Monday comes, the nostalgic memories will give way to the bleak present. Those few pleasant moments are too little to balance the turmoil the community faces each day. Their prayers for a leader go unanswered. Chávez, Manuel and other community people sense that God has left Barelas, and they come to question whether God even cares any more. Manuel expresses this allegorically: "Jesús, who lived here before you, he kept a good garden. Since he left I have tried to water it as often as I could, but it needs a lot of work, the weeds are taking it over--" (p. 18). This may be taken to mean that Christ once looked over and protected the garden, that is Barelas, but abandoning His garden He left it open to evil forces, in the form of institutions, to enslave the people of Barelas. In Bless Me, Ultima, the narrator suggests that during society's transitional state, the Christian God is no longer omnipotent nor omniscient as once believed. The priest, God's representative, is

powerless against the evil of the Trementina sisters. Antonio's questions on identity and society's troubles lead him to encounter others, such as Florence, who question not only the current problems, but whether God exists. Others, such as Cico, have rejected the Christian God and in His place have found other "gods." Cico sees the Christian God as being jealous. Florence questions a God who does not care for his creations.

In Heart of Aztlán, Clemente Chávez's God abandons Barelas. The railroad owners and their allies become like new pagan gods that have replaced the Christian one. Throughout the novel the railroad is associated with snakes symbolizing evil.

A distant rumbling filled the dark and erupted in thunder and flashes of fire. Even at night the trains would not rest, they thrashed about like snakes in a pit and demanded service. Humble men, shadows of the night, moved to do their bidding. (p. 18)

They are suffering a crisis similar to pre-Christian times when the gods demanded total worship and attention, and the worshippers receive little in return. The community must fight alone against the faceless persons who manipulate the technology enslaving the community. Like the old gods they take their strength from fear, hate and death. Barelas needs a leader, a savior.

By the end of Tortuga, Salomón and Tortuga no longer