

Rudolfo A. Anaya. *Heart of Aztlán*. Third Edition (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990) 209 pp., \$7.00 paper.

Heart of Aztlán is a novel which portrays life in Barelas, a barrio of Albuquerque, during the post-Korean War period. While the characters within the novel are fictitious, the situations in which they found themselves were only too real. The mood of the novel was one of hope while the characters continually found themselves in a situation of apparent hopelessness. The author's dedication, perhaps better than any other words, summed up this seeming paradox. "This book is dedicated to the good people of Barelas . . . and to people everywhere who have struggled for freedom, dignity, and the right to self determination."

One of the strengths of the novel was the manner by which the author was able to help the reader to visualize the same situations through the eyes of different characters within the Chavez family, principally Clemente, the father, and Jason, one of his sons. This was an effective device in that the reader was more clearly able to see how the change in culture from rural to urban impacted differently on the different members of the family.

The author was successful in the manner by which he vividly depicted life in the barrio, placing a strong emphasis on the struggles that were daily encountered by the people of Barelas. Some of the struggles treated included those of the working man against the shops of the white man, the *vatos* against the *pachucos*, and most importantly, the struggles within the individuals as they strove to cope and to adapt to the changes that the new environment imposed upon them.

It is this reader's opinion that the novel serves as an effective means of portraying the experiences and feelings that many rural Mexican Americans endured as changing economic conditions forced many Mexican American families to change from a rural life style to a more urban one. The stress that was placed upon the family as they were being pulled and torn in several directions at once, all while trying to cope and hold the family together, was vividly illustrated in a most compelling manner, and yet the simple message of hope in the face of adversity as the novel came to a close was truly inspiring. This novel is another example of the exemplary literature that readers have come to expect from Rudolfo Anaya.

— Glen M. Kraig
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