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PREVIEW

University of Texas at El Paso
Thesis no. 90

Author: Stamps, Marie Hatchell

Title: *The fate of certain ideals
of the Mexican revolution in the
novels of Jorge Ferretis*

OCLC# 2205520

THE FATE OF CERTAIN IDEALS OF
THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION
IN THE NOVELS OF JORGE FERRETTIS

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THE FATE OF CERTAIN IDEALS OF
THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION
IN THE NOVELS OF JORGE FERRETIS

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Graduate School of
Texas Western College
of
The University of Texas

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Marie Hatchell Stamps
August, 1951

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PREVIEW

8-23-51
Graduate Council
Camp 1500

PREFACE

The purpose of this thesis is to prove that one of the main objects of Jorge Ferretis in all of his works is to teach and preach the continuation of the principal ideals of the Mexican Revolution. It will be further demonstrated which ideals of the Mexican Revolution are considered by Ferretis as unachieved and what methods he advocates for their achievement.

The primary sources of this thesis are the two full-length novels, two volumes containing three short novels each and one volume consisting of thirteen short stories. The secondary sources are literary criticisms of hispanic authors, histories of Modern Mexico and a variety of books of different classifications pertaining to Modern Mexico.

No effort has been made to make a complete survey of the author's newspaper and magazine articles.

For the sake of orderly presentation, direct statements by the author himself have been treated apart from the highly similar opinions and attitudes expressed by his created characters.

All books of the author were modern editions, as the original editions were not available.

The writer wishes to express her sincere, warm gratitude to Dr. Edgar T. Ruff, Chairman of the Department of Modern Languages of Texas Western College for his unfailing help and guidance as well as words of encouragement during the preparation of this thesis. Appreciation also goes to the staff members of Texas Western College Library as well as to those of the El Paso Public Library.

PREVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Biography

Jorge Ferretis was born April 20, 1902 at Rio Verde in the state of San Luis Potosí.¹ His career has been that of author, publisher and politician. He has directed several newspapers, among them El Potosí, of his native state. For several years he rendered outstanding service in the Cámara de Diputados of Mexico. For a time he was a senior official.

Ideologically, Ferretis has chosen some principles of socialism as the only hope for the future of Mexico, socially and politically.

At the present time he resides in Mexico City and, while not actively engaged in politics, he continues in his endeavors to express in newspaper and magazine articles his beliefs and convictions about his country's needs.

Works

Although Jorge Ferretis has not written a great number of books, he has a rather important place as a novelist of the Mexican Revolution. Morton states that he should be included in the group of twenty-five Mexican authors whose novels have literary as well as historic value. His first novel, Tierra Caliente (1935)

¹ Los Novelistas de la Revolución Mexicana F. Rand Morton, Editorial Cultura T.G.S.A. Mexico, 1949.

is considered to be the one in which more of his outstanding characteristics appear. While his other novels may not be of such unusual artistic structure, they are not lacking in interest. Ferretis is consistent throughout his works in his portrayal of Mexico, her leaders, her people, and the general conditions in the country from the early part of the present century to the year 1940.

Tierra Caliente, Los Que Sólo Saben Pensar, published in 1935, is Jorge Ferretis' first novel. The action of Tierra Caliente is centered in its major part in a little town in northern Mexico. The story begins with the arrival there of some six thousand Villistas. All the principal characters are brought together in the home of Don Martín, a middle-aged, robust, hearty man. He plays host to a colonel, Pedro Ibáñez, and his helper, Alberto.

The first night on which Don Martin entertains his "guests", five or six of the revolutionists enter his home and in spite of the colonel's protests, attempt to harm Don Martín's attractive daughter Julia. The colonel is severely wounded in his attempt to protect the girl and the other members of the household. He is unable to go on with his men when the revolutionists leave for the south the following morning.

Because Don Martín asks him many searching questions, the colonel admits that he is Pedro Ibáñez, a former professor at the University of Mexico and that his companion was a former pupil. In the beginning there had been three of his students who had followed him into the revolution, but the other two had died some time before.

From this point Ferretis begins to develop his plot. The entire book centers around the character, thoughts and actions of the unforgettable "coronel".

Pedro Ibanez remains in Don Martín's house as a guest. His wound requires an unusually long time to heal and he is weakened even more by frequent attacks of malaria. Because of his lengthy stay in Don Martín's home, he becomes a member of the family.

The significance of the subtitle, Los Que Sólo Saben Pensar, appears as Ibáñez reveals himself as a philosopher, thinker and dreamer in scene after scene during his stay in the household of Don Martín.

Throughout the entire novel Ferretis fulfills his promise in the preface that the book is to be but a story inspired "en un pedazo de México sobre unas tierras de pesadilla". He does not depict the life of the upper classes, but devotes much space to descriptions of the "comfortable" middle class and of the lower classes in a small Mexican town.

With certain irony and grim humor Ferretis tells of the noisy entrance of a band of crude, ignorant revolucionarios into Don Martín's village. Before the coming of the soldiers the town was a typical, sleepy, slow-moving community.

Ferretis writes vividly of the cruelty displayed by the invaders. Most of the victims of their cruelty were the least offensive members of the community. An humble washerwoman is shot down as she hurries along a street, carrying a bundle of clothes on her head. The only comment made by the men who shot her is "ya le tocaría" (it was her turn). An old blind beggar is required or perhaps "firmly requested" to play on his guitar. As he begins the first part of a corrido he falls forward over his instrument. He has been killed by stray bullets. The men who have gathered around are concerned only with the fact that the bullets have ruined the guitar--that it is no longer capable of being used.

With the thoughts of Pedro Ibáñez in conversations and soliloquies, Ferretis forms "ensayos" (essays). Pedro Ibáñez at certain times of inspiration, writes various allegories and fables in which he seeks some satisfactory outlet for his constant desire "to teach and to uplift".

The author apparently repeats his own ideas many times in the fables and essays written by Pedro.

In the course of his prolonged stay in the village, Pedro attempts to become what he conceives of as "todo un hombre" (a complete man). In this period of his life, the coarse, rude, tempestuous, vulgar side of his nature is revealed. His attempts to become a virile person are supplemented by frequent drinking bouts, in which he is accompanied by his host, Don Martín. All his efforts to achieve his goal lead to complete frustration and near disaster.

However, after this most devastating series of experiences, Pedro at last realizes that his life so far has been a failure. Since he has been thwarted in his efforts to prove his virility, he becomes the philosopher once more. He is haunted by the thought that his life is influenced constantly by his philosophical thoughts and his inability to do more than think. He decides that only by imitating the life of Christ can he counter his inability to fit into daily living.

Therefore, one morning he leaves the village with no more than a staff and a blanket. He starts

toward the south, determined to ask for food and shelter wherever he might be at sunset.

On the second day of his journey into this new life, he is bitten by a snake and dies all alone.

El Sur Quema, 1937, is the title of Jorge Ferretis' second book. It is composed of three short novels. Each one of these deals with what Ferretis considers one of the fundamental problems of Mexico and is therefore a "novela de tesis".

The first novel, Lo Que Lllaman Fracaso relates the story of Don Ponciano Cruz, a railway engineer. During the very first days of the Revolution, his beloved "negra", i.e., his "beautiful engine" is dynamited. Instead of securing another engine in order to go on with his work, he turns away from the railroad to engage in various activities of the Revolution. He desires to struggle on so that as soon as the fighting has ceased, he will deserve the tribute that he "Anduvo por el monte con las armas en la mano" and perhaps, as a result, he may be given a position with the government.

Don Ponciano secures several positions because he knows how to read and write. The most important

job he obtains is as Administrador de Aduanas in a little port of the Pacific. He finds a box filled with gold to be exported, but the label declares that the box contains lead. Since the exporting of gold is prohibited by law, Ponciano notifies the authorities of the irregularity. Three men arrive soon after who attempt to bribe him with thirty thousand dollars. The administrador refuses the bribe even after some inspectores especiales affirm that the box does contain lead and can be exported, Don Ponciano maintains his original view of the situation. Naturally, he is dismissed from his post.

Weary and disgusted with the dishonesty and plotting of the outside places, he decides that he must return to his home town. He longs for a wife, children, and above all, peace.

In a comparatively short time he realizes all of these ambitions and the story ends with a very tranquil scene. Don Ponciano has just heard the first cries of his baby son and as he bows his head to murmur a prayer, he smiles more joyfully than ever before.

The theme of Lo Que Lllaman Fracaso is obvious; that the honesty of lesser employees cannot overcome the immorality of those in higher authority.

The second novelita in the book is Quando Bajan Los Cuervos. The author's theme is the lack of medical service for the Indian. Ferretis develops his theme through the story of Jaime Pacheco. Jaime is a young student who wanted to have faith in something--in a society, in an idea, in a man. During his vacation, one year, he goes with a friend to some of the rural districts, and to some small towns, so tiny that they do not appear on the maps.

In one of the villages he is shown some papers written by an old man, Pedro Ibáñez, who had lived there some time before. Pedro apparently was the philosopher in Tierra Caliente. Pedro had expressed his ideas about the needs of the Indian in Mexico. As a result of his experiences and his reading during his vacation, Pacheco is inspired to go to live among the Indians in order to study their problems first hand. He enlists the aid of several companions who are in accord with his purpose.

He endeavors to establish some system of medical aid for the neglected Indians. He has a degree of success but he arouses the anger of the autoridades del gobierno central and is assassinated, another martyr of the regeneration of the indio.