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PREVIEW

APPARENT DISILLUSIONMENT  
WITH THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION AS SEEN  
IN THE NOVELS OF JOSE RUBEN ROMERO

THESIS

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
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By  
Constance Burrus/Hulbert  
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WITH THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION AS SEEN  
IN THE NOVELS OF JOSE RUBEN ROMERO

Approved:

Edgar Schuff  
A. Puckett  
William F. Webb

Approved:

J. L. Waller  
Chairman of the Graduate Council

## PREFACE

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the underlying element of apparent disillusionment in the works of the Mexican writer, José Rubén Romero and to prove that his revolutionary ideal survives. This is contrary to some current critical opinion.<sup>1</sup>

The primary sources for this study are the novels themselves. In addition to these sources, an attempt is made to examine the historic events preceding the Mexican Revolution. An effort, also, has been made to understand the unrest following this social uprising. Secondary sources have been standard historical works, literary criticisms, and magazine articles.

For the sake of clarity, it may be well at the outset to define the key words as used in the title of this thesis.

An idealist is here considered as one who holds to high and noble standards of conduct and personal

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<sup>1</sup>Eason, Sarah Martin, José Rubén Romero: His Ideology and Some Observations on His Style, Thesis, Ohio State University, 1942. Also see: Sanchez, Luis Alberto, Nueva Historia de la Literatura Americana, p324.

education as applicable to every sphere of activity, be it education, art, religion, economy, government, and all else that affects mankind.

Disillusionment results from a change in attitude towards any one of these high and noble standards. One becomes disillusioned when an ideal is no longer regarded as such, when it loses its value and importance in the eyes of the idealist.

The work is arbitrarily divided into three main parts: Chapter I, the formation of the Revolutionist; Chapter II, Romero's active participation in the Revolution; and Chapter III, points out the merely apparent quality of the author's disillusionment and illustrates the real persistence of the Ideal Revolutionary.

The writer wishes to express her appreciation to Dr. Edgar T. Ruff for his untiring assistance and guidance in the preparation of this thesis, as well as to the members of the Modern Language Dept. for their constructive criticism and suggestions. Mr. Baxter Polk and the staff of Texas Western College Library has been most helpful in the matter of bibliography.

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## INTRODUCTION

José Rubén Romero, contemporary writer of Mexico, is known to the world as both author and diplomat.

He was born in Cotija de la Paz, Michoacán, September 25, 1890. In 1911 he was appointed Tax Collector in his own district. During the Madero Revolution he served as Chief of Staff under General Salvador Escalante. This position was followed by his serving as private secretary to the Governor of Michoacán, Miguel Silva, and his successor Pascual Ortiz. In 1920 he was appointed Inspector General of Communications, and in 1921 he was named chief of the publicity department of the Ministry of Foreign Relations. From 1924 to 1930 he was chief of the Administrative Department in Mexico City. From 1930 to 1933, Romero was Consul General to Spain. He returned to Mexico and served as director general in the Registro Civil of Mexico, D.F. from 1933 to 1935. In 1935 he returned as Consul General to Spain and remained in that capacity until 1937. That same year he was sent as ambassador to Brazil, and remained there until 1939. From 1939 to 1943 he was the Mexican

ambassador to Cuba. In 1944, he served for a short period as President of the University of Michoacán at Morelia. At present he resides in Mexico City and is a contributor to many newspapers and magazines, including Tiempo Ilustrado, Mundo Ilustrado, and Hoy. He is one of Mexico's most renowned poets and prose writers. A number of his books have been translated into English, French, Portuguese, Hungarian and Russian. He has published four volumes of poetry in addition to the nine novels which are studied in the present thesis.

In considering Romero's style, it is necessary to recall the main theme of all his works which is the Mexican Revolution with all that it implies - the poverty of the masses, the glaring injustice and unhappy inequality, and above all, the hope of rising in the social scale.

Romero is intensely Mexican, intensely patriotic. This spirit leads him not only to lyrical praise of his own nationality, but also to belittlement and even contempt of all that is foreign.

He protests repeatedly that he is just one of many, just one of the countless masses. He strives to express himself as the ordinary Mexican, in a familiar, colloquial, everyday style. This is somewhat of a pose, however, as his wide reading and broad

culture betray themselves on every page.

Among more material aspects of his style may be noted his love of variety - variety in the length of sentences and in the form of expression. Most striking among stylistic devices that lend interest to his writings is the employment of the first person. Indeed, the self admitted autobiographical nature of his writings cannot be too highly emphasized.

Though the bulk of his work is prose, it is of such a lyrical and emotional quality, that it may be characterized quite accurately as prose-poetry. Hence, he does not hesitate to employ a vast number of images, comparisons, and words that are usually associated with poetry.

As an introduction to an analysis of his novels, a brief synopsis of each is presented here.

APUNTES DE UN LUGAREÑO (1932) first novel by J. Rubén Romero, was written during his service as Consul General of Mexico in Barcelona, Spain. The novel, autobiographical in nature, is nostalgic reminiscing wherein the author recalls his youth in his beloved Mexico. He takes us to his native village of Cotija de la Paz, in the state of Michoacán, and through vivid descriptions of the countryside and of

the customs of the small "pueblo", we seem at once familiar with the man and his family. We are shown how, surrounded by affectionate relatives, the youth developed from a sensitive lad into a young man of burning ideals with a boundless desire to help his fellow man. The surging tide of the Revolution indeed soon enabled him to take his place in defense of these ideals. He became a soldier in the Madero forces in which he proved himself a true patriot and defender of the revolutionary ideal. Because of his political connections, however, following the assassination of Madero, the vicious Huerta ordered him executed. Although willing to die in defense of his party, he was miraculously saved through the influence of his father and returned home.

It is in Apuntes de un Lugareño that Pito Pérez is introduced to us, and not in El Pueblo Inocente, Romero's third novel, as claimed by Ruth Stanton in Hispania, December 1941, page 426. Pito later becomes the hero of Romero's most popular novel.

From the very beginning, the reader feels the deep love of the author for his country, and his

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unyielding spirit that refuses to accept the inevitable role of a life of poverty that fate apparently was laying before him. The novel consists of little more than short episodes written in simple, easy flowing colloquial language which depicts customs and landscapes and convince the reader of Romero's actual contact and familiarity with his subject.

DESBANDADA (1934) is a series of short sketches of Romero's own experiences in the village of Tacámbaro upon his return as a soldier from the Madero upheaval. Romero began his life anew in his father's country store. This, described so minutely, has an important part in the life of the community, for it is here that the poor peons of the village not only find their material necessities, such as clothing and food, but also are aided in matters of business and the heart through the advice of the author in person. These simple and impoverished peasants gathered about Romero in small groups to drink in his every word as he read to them. Theirs was an uncultured mind, yet of quick intelligence. With keen anticipation they looked forward to the chapter he would read to

them each afternoon. It was to such an audience that he read aloud Victor Hugo's Les Miserables.

It is in this novel that we are first introduced to "El Compadre Perea" who plays such a prominent part in subsequent novels; always in the role of friend and adviser to the author.

The entire work is light and entertaining with the exception of a very gripping episode which tells of an entire village's barricading itself behind locked doors to escape the onslaught of García Inés Chávez and his horde of bandits. This is the chief scene from Romero's collection of works in which he describes violence. His purpose is very apparent: sharp criticism of the bandit leaders who were plundering the country under the name of Revolutionists.

EL PUEBLO INOCENTE (1934) conforms more closely than the first two works to the generally accepted idea of a novel. Whereas Apuntes de un Lugareño and Desbandada are little more than accounts of the author's personal experiences - as autobiographical as a diary, El Pueblo Inocente adheres closely to a unified, though unimportant, plot.

The reader immediately falls under the spell of Don Vicente, a man of seventy, the real hero of the novel, as a result of his uninhibited flow of philosophical sayings, his humorous quips, and his references to the many daring adventures of his long-past youth. The plot is of secondary importance, for even though it presents the illicit love affair of Daniel and Sara, the actual interest of the book lies in Don Vicente, who personifies the strong, valorous revolutionist, who, despite many hardships and deprivations never admits defeat. The story ends with the very practical advice which Don Vicente gives to Julián to study and to prepare for a life's work so as not to be satisfied with the brutish existence of the vast majority of Mexican peasants. This advice sums up pithily Romero's own philosophy of social advance.

MI CABALLO, MI PERRO Y MI RIFLE (1936) This is the story of a crippled youth, who, after a miserable childhood spent amidst poverty and the cruel taunts of his playmates, was able to find an answer to his seemingly hopeless destiny through the timely intervention of the Revolution.

Julián as a young man of twenty sought escape from his tyrannical wife and from the village that had caused him endless suffering. Thus, when the first cannon is fired announcing the arrival of the army from the North, Julián immediately joined the ranks. It was as a soldier that he acquired his three most precious possessions: a horse, a rifle and a dog.

The young soldier was fighting for social betterment, namely, his own material gain. However, the days following his return from war were spent in bitterness and disillusionment, for, in his mind, the Revolution had not brought about the destruction of its real enemy, the "cacique", i.e., political boss, and usually a wealthy landowner, and the real target toward which the brunt of battle had been directed. The ideals, apparently, were now lost, for Julián could see these landowners still powerful and untouched by the ravages of war. This novel, written from a purely materialistic view, appears in contrast to Romero's own persistent idealism.