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PREVIEW

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Lucille**

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THE FEMALE CHARACTERS IN THE NOVELS
OF RAFAEL DELGADO

Approved:

Edgar L. Huff

John M. Sharp

C. A. Buckett

Approved:

J. L. Waller
Chairman of the Graduate Council

THE FEMALE CHARACTERS IN THE NOVELS
OF RAFAEL DELGADO

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the Faculty of the Department of Modern Languages
of
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In Partial Fulfillment
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Master of Arts

By

Marguerite Lucille Dunnell

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PREFACE

The purpose of this thesis is to prove that the main concern of the Mexican novelist, Rafael Delgado, is the creation of life-like female characters.

As primary sources in the preparation of this thesis the author's four novels have been examined. A dissertation on the life and works of the author by James G. Bickley has been used as a secondary source.

An effort has been made to indicate the place of Rafael Delgado in the development of the novel in Mexico. This is followed by a biographical sketch of the author and by précis of his works.

The thesis proper is developed from the standpoint of the way in which the author attempts by means of speech, action, and emotion, to create life-like female characters.

Later editions of Delgado's works have been substituted for first editions, as indicated in the bibliography.

The texts of Delgado's works are full of suspension points, and in this thesis it is impossible to tell the difference between these and the same symbol used to indicate omissions.

The writer wishes to express her sincere appreciation to Dr. Edgar T. Ruff and to Dr. John Sharp of Texas Western College for their invaluable guidance and assistance in the writing of this thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

Although Mexico began to develop a literature of her own as early as the latter part of the sixteenth century, the novel did not make its appearance there until the second decade of the nineteenth century.¹ Its evolution, like that of the novel in France and Spain in the nineteenth century, can be traced from romanticism through costumbrismo and realism to naturalism. This literary heritage is apparent in the works of Rafael Delgado, who occupies an outstanding position among Mexican novelists. He has been imitated extensively. His importance, therefore, as a culminating figure, makes appropriate a brief summary of the history of the Mexican novel up to his time.

Periquillo Sarniento, by José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, marks the beginning of the development of the novel in Mexico, and is considered by some critics the best national novel. It blazed a costumbrista trail along which Delgado followed.

Juan Díaz Covarrubias is noteworthy as a predecessor

¹ Unless otherwise specified, background material is from The Life and Works of Rafael Delgado, Bickley, J. G., University of California, Berkeley, California, 1935, an unprinted doctoral dissertation.

of Delgado because of his tendency to combine costumbrismo and romanticism, a tendency characteristic of Delgado's novels, also.

Florencio M. del Castillo, who cultivated the short story and the novelette, outdid Delgado in the field of sentimental romanticism, and his is the fame of being the most sentimental of all the romanticists.

Vicente Riva Palacio, a general in the Republican army, evinced more interest in events than in style, psychology, or observation, and is considered the originator of the real historical Mexican novel (Calvario y Tabor, 1868).

When peace was established after the Maximilian episode, men of letters were able to devote themselves to literary pursuits. There was much interest in the literature of France, Italy, and England, with that of France dominating in Mexico, as it did in other parts of Spanish America. The novels of Ignacio M. Altamirano show the influence of French and Spanish novels in the care and thought given to form and structure, though the subject matter is strictly Mexican. Altamirano is interesting as a forerunner of Delgado because he introduced paisajismo into the Mexican novel and because he wrote clear, correct, and elegant prose, as his predecessors frequently did not.

In the middle of the nineteenth century there were occasional outcroppings of costumbrismo among the great number of romantic novels at that time in vogue. But there is a steady progression toward the costumbrista novel culminating in the works of José Tomás Cuellar (known as Facundo), and continuing in the works of Ángel del Campo. The extravagance and exaggeration characteristic of the romantic novel are allayed somewhat in the costumbrista novel, the precursor of the realistic novel.

In 1880 the realistic novel of manners, in a form approaching artistic structure, made its appearance. The effect of the realistic novels of France and Spain began to appear in the works of Emilio Reboso, a precursor of the artistic type soon to be introduced by Rafael Delgado. Delgado, himself, is the outstanding example in Mexican literature of the transformation from costumbrismo to realism, a course taken by the novel in Spain and followed in Mexico.

In 1800, Delgado published various cuadros de costumbres, and, in 1890, La Calandria, which is the first modern realistic novel in Mexican literature, in spite of its sentimentality, its glorification of love, and its lingering vestiges of romanticism. Delgado's importance lies in his introduction into his country's literature of a reaction against the inartistic, episodic

tales of romantic adventure, which, nevertheless, continued to exist beside the costumbrista novel until the early '90's. Then Delgado gave a finished example of an artistic realistic novel, simple in plot and constructed along the lines of the works produced by the great French and Spanish novelists of that day.

Although Delgado's works partake of many of the characteristics of those of his predecessors--costumbrismo, portrayal of Mexican types, paisajismo--his difference lies in having excelled in the artistry with which he combined the study of customs, the development of character and the description of paisaje into a realistic and harmonious whole.

Among Delgado's followers are such novelists as José López Portillo y Rojas, author of La Parcela. However, the realism of Delgado and his imitators soon gave way to the naturalism of Federico Gamboa, which reflects the influence of Zola and Goncourts.

As the Mexican novel entered the twentieth century it retained the artistic form given it by Rafael Delgado, while it became more and more national in inspiration.

In brief, the development of the novel in Mexico followed the trend in France and Spain in the nineteenth century--an evolution from romanticism through costumbrismo and realism to naturalism. In this evolutionary progress

of the novel the genius of Rafael Delgado leads the way to a finished, harmonious, and artistic realism.

PREVIEW

A. BIOGRAPHY

Rafael Delgado, whose natal centennial will be celebrated in Mexico this year, 1953, was born in Córdoba, August 20, 1853.²

Cultural and literary influences were plentiful in Delgado's family background. His paternal grandfather held many important offices in Córdoba and Vera Cruz. His maternal grandfather, who migrated from Spain to America, became quite wealthy. He had many children, the most outstanding of them being Sr. Dr. D. José María Sainz Herosa, who pursued a brilliant career in the Church. This uncle was one of the first to recognize and encourage the talent and genius of Rafael, who had him to thank, also, for use of a large and carefully selected library. Delgado's father, D. Pedro Pablo Delgado, was for a time jefe político of Córdoba, but the activities of political enemies caused him to move to Orizaba where he received the position of Secretario de la Jefatura Política.

In Orizaba, Rafael received his first formal schooling at the Colegio de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. While

2

Biographical material, unless otherwise specified, has been taken from the doctoral dissertation, The Life and Works of Rafael Delgado, by James G. Bickley, University of California, Berkeley, California, 1953.

he was still a child, he received inspiration and instruction not only from his illustrious uncle but also from his father, who taught him a love for figures and mathematics and trained him to be a bookkeeper. His father, perhaps, influenced his literary bent as well; for, without being given to letters, he was fond of reading and had many good books, and in a modest measure, he furnished his son with new books. The father's favorites were costumbrista authors, and these had a great influence on the works of Delgado.

Added to these influences were those of the city in which Delgado spent most of his life--Orizaba. It had been a center of Aztec culture, and later of Spanish culture, as well. It reached the height of its cultural development during the last twenty years of the nineteenth century and the first ten years of the twentieth--the very period when Delgado reached the zenith of his literary power and achievement.

While Rafael was still quite small, his father retired and moved his family to a plantation near Córdoba.

The extremely fortunate material future that was Delgado's heritage as an only child was disrupted by the father's bankruptcy. The virtual theft of the Delgado property by lawyers deprived the son of the advantages he would otherwise have enjoyed. The memory of this lawsuit

was a source of much bitterness to Rafael.

In 1865 Rafael Delgado was sent to Mexico City, where he attended the Colegio de Infantes de la Colegiata de Guadalupe. He was brought back to Orizaba by his parents, probably to escape the siege of the capital by Republican troops. At this time he became acquainted with the financial straits of his family.

In 1868 Rafael became a student in the Colegio Nacional de Orizaba, where he mastered Latin and French, and studied Greek and Italian.

While Rafael grew into manhood, his interest in literature was further cultivated. The library of D. Silvestre Moreno, Rector of the Colegio Nacional de Orizaba, was at his disposal. Through the family custom of reading aloud after dinner, he became extremely well acquainted with those authors who tended to portray manners and customs.

Next to a love of literature came the love of plants derived partly from a study of botany and partly from a close familiarity with nature.

Between 1873 and 1889 Rafael finished his scholastic work in the Colegio Nacional de Orizaba, and in that same school, at the age of twenty-two, he started a teaching career that lasted for eighteen years. He was an inspiring teacher, loved by his students for the friendliness, the inspiration, and the intellectual stimulation that he gave them.

An illustration of his intellectual independence is provided by his upholding of the Spanish language and all things Spanish, during a period when everything French was held in higher regard.

At this time of his life Rafael was a handsome young man. He was of medium build with a graceful, erect carriage. His hair was dark, and he had thickset brows above a pair of dark, dancing eyes, and kindly, smiling, heavily-mustachioed lips.

He was always neat and elegant as to habits of dress, except when he went walking about the streets at night, gathering human documents for his stories or novels. His most serious defect was a shrill, high-pitched voice.

As to temperament, Delgado was sentimental, melancholy, and artistic. Although he was modest, retiring, and rather shy, he was persevering and enthusiastic. One of the salient characteristics of his personality was his generosity, especially in giving help and encouragement to his students. Though his nature was a happy combination of simplicity and wisdom, though he was kind, just, tolerant, friendly, and democratic, he could on occasion be resentful toward those who had brought hardship to his life. He could be critical and harsh at times in spite of his gentleness. He was a good conversationalist with a marked dislike for off-color stories.

Although his life contained romance, Delgado never married. For a long period of time he paid court to Laura Orozco, a music teacher in Orizaba; but his real love was Doña Isabel Bringas, a distant relative, married to another man.

Before he became a successful novelist, Delgado served a literary apprenticeship which lasted until about 1889. He tried his hand at poetry, drama, short stories, and criticism. He first became known through his contributions to the publications of the Sociedad Sánchez Oropesa, a culturally influential literary society of Orizaba, which encouraged the literary faculties of the citizenry through literary contests in which Delgado won several prizes. Later, reviews of his writings were included in publications of Mexico City, and he began to be known outside his own state. By 1885, Delgado realized that his literary strength did not lie in poetry and the drama. Though he continued to write poetry until the end of his life, he sought enthusiastically to develop his prose. The Sociedad Sánchez Oropesa served as a source of inspiration and as a testing ground for his efforts. At the beginning, while he was producing short sketches--cuadros de costumbres and conversaciones literarias--he was also collecting material for a longer work. He mingled with the people of the working classes, observing their customs and taking notes on

their speech so that some day he might in his writings epitomize their simple life. The successful reception of Delgado's work outside of the state of Vera Cruz caused Francisco Sosa to request that Delgado arrange and publish the novel developed from these notes. In 1890 La Calandria appeared. Its success was immediate and immense, except financially.

After the publication of Angelina in 1893, Delgado's fame increased, causing him to decide to abandon his teaching career and the handicaps of small-town life to go to Mexico City, the literary capital of the country.

Delgado arrived in Mexico in 1894 and remained there five years. His first concern was making a living. He served as a secretary, and later as a bookkeeper. He wrote for El Tiempo and El Pais, and was an editor for La Revista Moderna. All the while he continued his literary work, writing more poems and cuadros de costumbres.

During his sojourn in the capital he associated with its leading writers, and did not escape recognition himself; for it was at this time that he became a member of the Academia Mexicana de la Lengua. After he had presented some of his studies of prominent literary figures, he was made an Individuo de Número de la Academia Mexicana. However, after a few years, disillusioned by the pettiness and hypocrisy of the literary great, he decided in 1898

to return to Orizaba. In this same year he was appointed Secretario de la Jefatura Política del Canton.

The period between 1898 and 1899 was devoid of literary production although Delgado had many things in preparation, particularly a new novel which was to be the outgrowth of his stay in Mexico City. With the new century, his literary production took an upturn. At the same time, as a result of associations established through his modest political office, he was appointed Professor of Literature at the Colegio Preparatorio de Jalapa, where he taught from 1901 until 1909.

In 1901 Delgado's third novel, Los Parientes Ricos, began to appear in serial form in Semenario Literario Ilustrado, and in 1903 it was published in book form. In 1904 also appeared his short novel, Historia Vulgar. He wrote many short works which later appeared as Cuentos y Notas; but after the appearance of Los Parientes Ricos, the literary output of the fifty-year-old Delgado began to deteriorate into the publication of text books.

In 1909, Delgado again returned to Orizaba, to become Rector of the Colegio Preparatorio, a position he held until 1913.

In 1910, after receiving a prize for his ode, La Raza Latina, his literary career began to show signs of coming to an end. At the age of fifty-six he contemplated

marriage so that he might have someone to take care of him in his old age. He proposed to Srta. Inez Carillo, a middle-aged woman, who being advised by her priest against the marriage, refused him.

His hopes for home and companionship blighted, Delgado turned to alcohol for consolation. Excessive smoking and drinking helped to aggravate a gouty condition which in turn eventually undermined his health.

The Governor of the State of Jalisco persuaded Delgado to accept an appointment as Director General of Education for that state, and in 1913 he took the post. He was sixty years old, and the arduous duties of the office proved not to his liking. In the same year he returned to Orizaba as Rector of the Colegio Preparatorio.

During the last years of his life, Delgado changed greatly, both physically and spiritually. He was extremely lonely, and perhaps the lack of home and family contributed to the intellectual sterility, the melancholy, and ill-humor which characterized this period. His health continued to fail.

In 1914 Delgado contracted a severe cold which developed into pneumonia from which he never recovered. He died on May 20, 1914.

B. NOVELS

Angelina, 1893, is Rafael Delgado's second novel in order of publication. Like his other stories, it gives a realistic picture of Mexican life, customs, and paisaje, and it is thought to be, to some extent, autobiographical.

Angelina is the account of a romantic episode in the life of a very romantic young man, Rodolfo.

When Rodolfo returns home from school, he learns that he must abandon his studies and go to work to help support himself and his aging aunts, who are no longer able to give him the advantages to which the former social status of his family had entitled him.

Rodolfo's hope and morale are shattered. But in the home of his aunts lives a beautiful young orphan, Angelina, who consoles him in his despair. Attracted by her intelligence and gentleness, Rodolfo falls in love with her, and she with him.

Their idyll is disrupted when Rodolfo meets the beautiful, accomplished, and rich Gabriela. Marriage with her would restore him to his rightful place in society and open the doors for a successful future; whereas, marriage with Angelina, because of her illegitimacy, would bring him "dishonor."

Rodolfo's conflict between the desire to be faithful