

The Portrayal of Mexican
Peasant Life Through the
Ambience in Four Short Stories
by Juan Rulfo

 (After the Mexican Revolution)

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Significance of Study

- Literature encompasses themes that can be found outside of the texts.
 - Land problems, Poverty, disillusionment, emigration, suffering, etc.
- History (Mexican Revolution)
 - What was the life of Mexican peasants after the Revolution.

Abstract

- The literary works of Juan Rulfo, one of the most influential authors of 20th century Hispano-American narrative, treats themes that reveal the atrocious reality of the ex-revolutionary Mexican peasantry. Themes such as: land reform problems, poverty, immigration, disillusionment, and death.
- The purpose of this capstone project is to demonstrate how the hostile ambience of four short stories by Juan Rulfo, “Nos han dado la tierra”, “Luvina”, “Es que somos muy pobres”, and “Paso del norte”, reveal the horrendous reality of Mexican peasants after having fought in the revolutionary wars in hopes of improving their social and economic status. The ambience of these four short stories is mainly created by a corrupt government and an unfriendly nature; imagery, symbolisms, and myths also play a big role in revealing the horrendous status of ex-revolutionary peasantry.

Outline

- Juan Rulfo
 - Biography
 - Literary works
 - Characteristics
- Mexican Revolution
- *El Llano en llamas*
 - Ambience
 - Imagery/Symbolism/Myths
- “Nos han dado la tierra” (analysis)
 - “Luvina”
 - “Es que somos muy pobres”
 - “Paso del Norte”

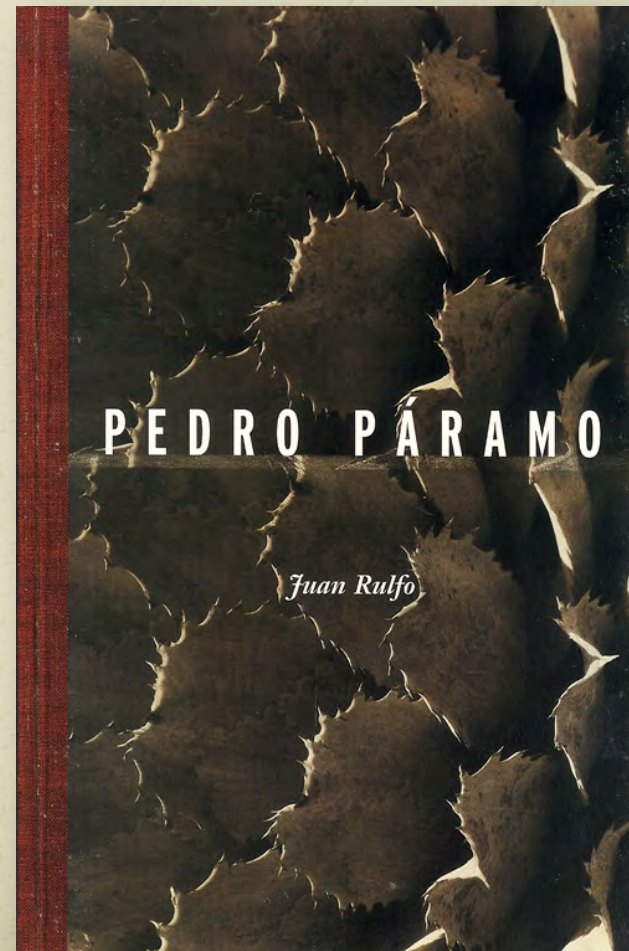
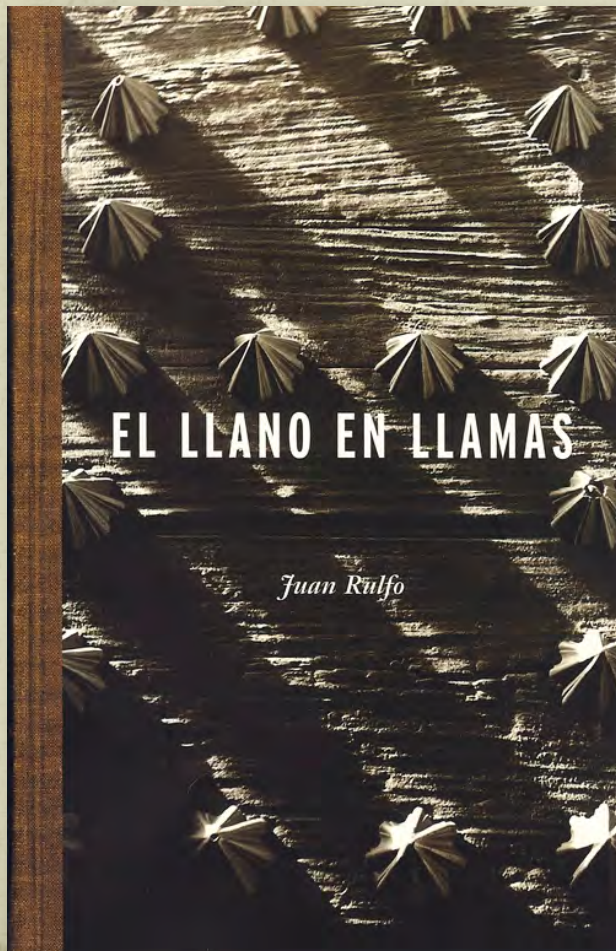
Juan Rulfo

- One of the most important authors of the new Hispano-American narrative.
- Born May 16, 1917 in the town of Sayula, Jalisco, Mexico.
- Came from a wealthy family that lost everything during the Mexican Revolution and Cristero War.
- Grew up in a poor house, family and town.
- Had a harsh life, became an orphan at the short age of 9.
- At age 16 moves to Mexico city and studies accounting as a way to continue studying.
- As an adult Rulfo holds diverse jobs that put him in contact with the poorest zones in Mexico.



Literary Works

- *El Llano en llamas* (1953).
- *Pedro Páramo* (1955).



Characteristics of Rulfo's Narratives

- Style: Simple and to the point.
- Social critique against Mexico's society and government.
- Themes: land reform problems, poverty, emigration, disillusionment, and death.
- Autobiographical (reflects the period and region where the author lived).
- Characters: Devastated men, diminish to almost nothing.
- Language
- Vocabulary: simple and presents regionalisms.
- Repetition of phrases.
- Presents imagery, symbolisms, and myths.

Mexican Revolution

- November 20, 1910
- Main purpose:
 - No reelection. (To put an end to the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz).
 - Right to vote
 - To better the life of Mexican peasantry through the creation of an agrarian reform.
- Results: failure of Revolution
 - Life full of hardships for the peasants.
 - The elites gain power and became wealthier.

Ambience

- a feeling or mood associated with a particular place, person, or thing
- The ambience in “They Given Us the Land” is a hostile one.
- Created by: a neglect post-revolutionary government and natural forces.

“Nos han dado la tierra”
“They Given Us the Land”



“Nos han dado la tierra”

- “They Given Us the Land”
- **Themes:** Land reform problems, suffering, poverty, disillusionment.
- **Main Characters:** Narrator, Meliton, Faustino, Esteban, and the Government.
- **Argument:** Narrates the story of four ex-revolutionary men, they represent all those who fought in the Revolution in hopes of bettering their life and social status, the government has given them a piece of worthless land which will define their future and eventually lead them to immigrate to the U.S.

Ambience: Government's role



“Nos han dado la tierra”

“They gave us the land”

- The neglect post-revolutionary Government
 - Main contributor to create the hostile environment of this short story.
- He plays the traditional role of a father.
- Pretends to assume his responsibility by “giving” the peasants the piece of land promised by the Revolution but then turns around, walks away and pretends like those men do not exist anymore.
- Mexican peasantry faces a life full of struggles: poverty, hunger, injustice, etc.

Nature transforms land into nothing



“Nos han dado la tierra”

- Unfavorable Nature: Second most important contributor to the hostile environment of the story.
 - Water shortage (both of rain and an irrigation system).
 - Sun
 - Wind.
- Turns the land into something that is worthless, nothing can grow in it; seeds are turned into dust.

Neglect government and hostile nature

...they gave us this crust of rocky ground for planting.
They told us, "From the town up to here belongs to you."
We asked, "The plain?"

"Yes the plain. All the Big Plain."

We opened our mouths to say that we didn't want the plain, that we wanted what was by the river. From the river up to where, through the meadows, the trees called casuarinas are, and the pastures and good land. Not this tough cow's hide they call the Plain.

But they didn't let us say these things. The official hadn't come to converse with us. He put the papers in our hands and told us, "Don't be afraid to have so much land just for yourselves" (Rulfo, 114)

Imagery, symbolisms, myths.



Imagery, symbolisms, myths

- Imagery in literature: Descriptive language that arouses to the readers senses and makes him/her feel part of the narrative.
- Symbolism: Use of an object or reference to add deeper meaning to a story.
- Myths: a popular belief or tradition that has grown up around something or someone; especially : one embodying the ideals and institutions of a society or segment of society

Imagery: “They Given Us the Land”

Faustino says, “It may rain.”

We all lift our faces and look at a heavy black cloud passing over our heads. And we think, “Maybe so.”

We don't say what we're thinking. For some time now we haven't felt like talking. Because of the heat... A big fat drop of water falls, making a hole in the earth and leaving a mark like spit. It's the only one that falls. 'we wait for others to fall and we roll our eyes looking for them. But there are no others. It isn't raining. Now if you look at the sky, you'll see the rain cloud moving off real fast in the distance. The wind that comes from the town pushes the cloud against the blue shadows of the hills. And the drop of water which fell here by mistake is gobbled up by the earth (Rulfo, 113).

Symbolism: Wind

- Wind is a symbol of Revolution.
- The Mexican Revolution sought to bring a better life for the peasantry of that country.
- Silencio (protesta en contra del gobierno).

Symbolism: Silence Speaks



Symbolism: Black Vulture
Represents the neglect government



Symbolism: Seed.

Hope but here the seed turns into dust



Conclusion

- Juan Rulfo, one of the most important Hispano-American writers reveals the life of the Mexican peasantry after the Mexico's revolution through the ambience of his short-stories included in *El Llano en llamas*.
- A hostile ambience which is created by a neglect government and an unfriendly nature, and also by the use of imagery, symbolism and myths.

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