

El exodo de Yangana (Spanish Edition)

Angel F Rojas



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El éxodo de Yangana (1949), considered to be the most important novel by Angel F. Rojas (Loja, Ecuador, 1909-2003), is an obvious precursor of the "Latin American Boom" discourse. Rojas builds upon the social messages of Huasipungo (Icaza, 1934) and El mundo es ancho y ajeno (Alegría, 1941), adding the magical language and poetry of Pedro Páramo (Rulfo, 1955), La casa verde (Vargas Llosa, 1966) and Cien años de soledad (García Márquez, 1967). In the words of Enrique Anderson Imbert, Rojas «brought new techniques to the novel...there is a social thesis [in his works], but the narrative prose, which is more polished and elegant than the other novels of explicit political focus, is conserved by its own merits.» In El éxodo de Yangana a town decides to abandon its lands in order to escape punishment for a collective crime. This refers to Lope de Vega's Fuenteovejuna, but the end constitutes a reminder that in Latin America things are not as they should be. Unlike Fuenteovejuna, Yangana knows that the accusation of being murderers - and even worse, Communists - and punishment are inexorably linked. Joaquín Reinoso, peaceful farmer and the first to flee Yangana for the jungle for having executed vengeance upon an abusive government official, is followed in his path by the inhabitants of whole town, who have also decided to begin a new life. Resentment of social injustice has exploded during a communal festival, catalyzed inadvertently - or imprudently - by a slightly ridiculous cultural act by Vicente Muñoz, the freethinker, reflecting Rojas' thesis that literature is never an abstract or gratuitous game, but rather always capable of exercising social influence, although not always in an expected sense. With this unified town action, Rojas constructs a collective person that at first seems idyllic but that comes to reveal a complex and poetic universe: in the exodus «viene, en fin,un muestrario acaso cabal de humanidad; un mundo comprimido y abreviado en el que están representados los vicios y las virtudes, los temperamentos y las aptitudes buenas o malas; las grandezas y miserias del hombre; la conducta, el pensamiento, la acción, el hambre, el deseo de no morir, el miedo, el odio y el amor.» That is to say, the ancestors of the Buendías, Madre Patrocinio, and so many others. Vertigo when confronted by the Democratic-Authoritarian options is seen in Don Vicente, instigator of the movement, force behind the «Churon» Ocampo as expedition leader, and its main enemy for having wished to return to democracy once it is possible. A familiar dynamic in Latin America. This critical edition, with prologue and notes by Flor María Rodríguez-Arenas, both for its literary quality and for its contribution to studies of the "Latin American Boom" would be a major and significant text for any course on Hispanic literature of the 20th century, and Latin American Studies in general.

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