

MY NAME IS ROMERO: BOOK REVIEW

**BOLD, BOMBASTIC, BEAUTIFUL AND
WHAT WE NEED RIGHT NOW.**

Callum Clarke

N0965146@my.ntu.ac.uk

Nottingham Trent University, Student

David A. Romero presents us with a contemporary, vibrant, unafraid vision of his experience as a Mexican American living in the United States today. The opening poem ‘My Name Is Romero,’ the namesake for the entire anthology, is a poem that sets the tone and style Romero employs. The issues he talks about are personal, not that which you would regularly see on the news or in the statistics, but ones that you would only know about by experiencing them yourself. Romero isn’t spiteful, however, instead using his experiences and pouring everything about himself which is ‘different’ from what the Eurocentric norms dictate into a powerful expression of self-love and pride for his heritage.

¹ David A. Romero, ‘Make Me More Mexican’, *My Name Is Romero*, Flowersong Press ed. by David A. Romero, 1st edn, (McAllen, Texas: Flowersong Press 2020), 23-27 (p. 24).

Romero excels in weaving the everyday into his work and gifting us with a sense of the intricacies of his world, his life, in a way that’s otherwise unimaginable. He does this, partially by using language that is very much of his generation – engaging a very specific audience by doing so – lines like “keepin’ it realer than real”¹ aren’t out of place here. While this is positive in how well it may engage some, it is also a negative in how it alienates others. Those not familiar with the language may find it difficult to break into the poem and understand what it is trying to say. This crosses over into the other poems within the anthology, as there are other ways the subjectivity of the poetry can space itself from the audience. The second piece in the book ‘Undocumented Football’ centres itself around a game of American football - something that many people will be unfamiliar with. Though it is not the point of the poem specifically to understand the rules and regulations of the game, it does prevent a deeper emotional understanding of what it is being used to convey: that assimilation into culture after leaving a place you once called home.

I much prefer it this way, though, I must say. One look at ‘Open Letter to Donald Trump’ and the emotion, vigour, and anger he puts into it and I wouldn’t want any of it taken away. “‘Heard of Central America?’”² is a simple question but keeping it simple brings with it a weight that would be difficult to achieve otherwise, employing the context of his heritage as a literary tool. It is deeply personal but I can’t help but be swept up in it. Romero places his heart on his sleeve and himself on display to great effect. The rhythm infused between the lines also helps add a punch – a force – that is

² David A. Romero, ‘Open Letter To Donald Trump’, *My Name Is Romero*, Flowersong Press ed. by David A. Romero, 1st edn, (McAllen, Texas: Flowersong Press 2020), 63-67 (p. 63).

easy to appreciate and difficult to replicate.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the second section of the anthology 'Flowers' and how it contrasts with the first. The opening poem is a perfect example of such – continuing the themes of belonging and heritage but through a very different lens and using a very different mindset – it tells the story of Aderfi. A husband and father, Aderfi is taken from his home to be a slave soldier in a Moorish army. The story is beautiful and has an epic, classical feel to it. The shift to this from the poems I have already talked about is stark but one which I think is welcome. Shifting from the aforementioned quotes to lines such as “The wind pulls his limbs into a lazy dance.”³ It reaches out to a completely different type of empathy and together allows a greater overall view. The differing styles of writing may connect to some people in one way and others in a completely opposite way but that's what makes it exciting. You won't know where it will take you without reading it.

A great strength of the anthology, as a whole, is its readability. Romero never strays into the tedious. I never found myself weary of turning its pages; rather I could casually enjoy the poems if I wanted to- making me feel like much more the avid poetry advocate than I actually am, I might mention.

So dip in and out of the various works or read it as one text, all the way through. 'My Name is Romero' is confident in itself – its unique poetic voice – and wants to be heard. Let it capture you and speak to you, wash over you. I think you'll find it difficult to shake once you do.

³ David A. Romero, 'Concierto de al-andalus', *My Name Is Romero*, Flowersong Press ed. by David A.

Romero, 1st edn, (McAllen, Texas: Flowersong Press 2020), 109-121 (p. 110).