

CONTEMPORARY 'ABULIA'
IN THE WORKS OF
JESÚS FERNÁNDEZ SANTOS

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate Division of
the University of Texas at El Paso in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of
MASTERS OF ARTS

by
Elizabeth Ann Mahfood
August 1972

UMI Number: EP00838

UMI[®]

UMI Microform EP00838

Copyright 2003 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.

All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

CONTEMPORARY 'ABULIA'
IN THE WORKS OF
JESÚS FERNÁNDEZ SANTOS

Approved:

William M. Russell

Edgar T. Roff

Wright Loomis

George W. Ayer

John M. Sharp

Approved:

Renald G. Dean
Dean of the Graduate Division

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	iv
INTRODUCTION	
The Place of Jesús Fernández Santos in Spanish Literature	1
Biography	5
Works	6
CHAPTER I	
CONTEMPORARY 'ABULIA' IN THE WORKS OF JESÚS FERNÁNDEZ SANTOS	17
CONCLUSIONS	44
BIBLIOGRAPHY	45
VITA	47
SUPPLEMENT	48

PREFACE

The purpose of this thesis is to prove that the primary concern of the contemporary Spanish author Jesús Fernández Santos is to present indecisive characters who lack the will to act, and who instead of fashioning an acceptable atmosphere for themselves, lead a life of frustrated resignation. A limited number of decisive characters provide contrast.

This theme is treated extensively in the author's four novels and one book of short stories. This thesis studies the author's five prose works in chronological order.

The writer wishes to express her sincerest gratitude to the entire Department of Modern Languages at the University of Texas at El Paso, but especially to her Director, Dr. William Russell, a gentlemanly scholar who showed great patience in the direction of this work. Warmest thanks are also extended to Dr. John Sharp and Dr. Edgar Ruff for their valuable suggestions.

This thesis is lovingly dedicated to Mr. and Mrs. Edward Mahfood, my parents who taught me self-discipline in all that I endeavor, my brother John, and my sister Marian.

INTRODUCTION

The Place of Jesús Fernández Santos in Spanish Literature

Jesús Fernández Santos is well established among the outstanding writers on the contemporary Spanish scene. This has been proved by the critical acclaim his works have received, from the number of translations made, and from the many literary awards bestowed upon him. A writer and film director, he is the author of four novels, one book of short stories, and various narratives published in different national and foreign magazines such as Indice, Clavileño, and Juventud. He has also received literary prizes: the Premio Gabriel Miró, the Premio de la Crítica, and was runner-up for the Premio Nadal and the Premio de la Ciudad de Barcelona.

One reviewer writes that his descriptions, though short, are panoramic and that his characters develop through their own words, actions, and thoughts:

Dominado por una esencial sobriedad, lo primero que se advierte en el lenguaje de Fernández Santos es su carácter funcional. Las descripciones no se extienden ni una línea más de las necesarias para hacer ver lo que se quiere hacer ver, y los personajes generalmente se definen por sus propias palabras, actitudes y hechos, y aun por sus pensamientos ...

Pero el funcionalismo del lenguaje,
en la precisa descripción del pueblo ...
de Los bravos no excluye un cierto ex-
presionismo escenográfico ...¹

María Alfaro states that his novels are written with
pure and perfect Spanish:

La novela de Jesús Fernández Santos
está escrita en un castellano puro,
con un estilo perfecto y carente de
vocablos inventados y utilizados
fuera de lugar.²

Another Spanish critic believes that his use of ap-
propriate vocabulary creates more believable characters:

La realidad de los personajes se
refuerza mediante el uso de expresiones
populares adecuadas a éstos y, a veces,
emplea también un vocabulario propio del
campo.³

As for the dialogue Fernández Santos employs, it is
vivid, but concise:

El diálogo es, en sus mejores mo-
mentos, expositivo, vivo, fluyendo con
rapidez a causa de su concisión. Se
emplea para hacer que el lector "vea"
la realidad de los personajes.⁴

In spite of the fact that the dialogue does not
always identify the speaker, it progresses smoothly and

¹Manuel García-Viño, Novela española actual (Ma-
drid: Ediciones Guadarrama, 1967), p. 146.

²María Alfaro, "Jesús Fernández Santos: En la
hoguera," Insula, julio-agosto, 1957, p. 13.

³Pablo Gil Casado, La novela social española (Bar-
celona: Editorial Seix Barral, 1968), p. 77.

⁴Ibid., p. 71.

arouses the reader's interest by causing him to be intrigued by the plot development:

El diálogo tiende a desarrollarse sin identificar a los interlocutores, reduciendo a un mínimo los repetidos y monótonos "dijo."

Se va contando por capas, trabando un suceso con otro, fina y cuidadosamente escalonados, empezando por breves menciones de un suceso que páginas después se desarrollará. Además, esta técnica del "anticipo" contribuye a dar a la novela continuidad y trabazón ...¹

One critic, Alberto Gil Novales, says of En la hoguera that rarely has a novel provided us with such a realistic account of the lives of the characters:

Pocas veces la literatura española ha sabido presentarnos un tema semejante con tanta veracidad. La novela nos arrastra, nos introduce, nos hace intimar--el estilo es capital para este logro--con la vida amenazada, provisional, de estos personajes.²

Gil Casado points out that the characters expose their personalities through conversation:

Por lo general, se muestran por medio de lo que dicen, con un mínimo de explicación por parte del autor ...³

María Alfaro states that Jesús Fernández Santos paints

¹Pablo Gil Casado, La novela social española, p. 77.

²Alberto Gil Novales, "En la hoguera," Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos, 1959, p. 74.

³Casado, op. cit., p. 70.

an atmosphere that for him is familiar and for the reader is also real and authentic:

El novelista, al describir con escrupulosa minucia ciertos aspectos del reducido mundo en que se mueven unos seres desafortunados, retrata un ambiente que le es familiar, y, sobre todo, muestra el afán de dar al ámbito en que se juegan los destinos de sus personajes un extraordinario poder de autenticidad.¹

Fernández Santos' great powers of observation cannot be denied. The use of a "personal camera" enables him to focus better on the happenings:

Fernández Santos conoce la realidad que maneja ... y que el cariz que de ella nos presenta se corresponde con unas preocupaciones personales y con el ángulo de enfoque de una cámara personal. Por lo demás, él está dotado de esa facultad de observación para los detalles, privativa del verdadero novelista, y la visión de la realidad que nos ofrece es una visión estética, seleccionada, montada, potenciada, impregnada de su personalidad.²

Also carefully plotted are the narrative technique and structure of his novels. His technique is not usual: he moves from one plot to another, keeping us in suspense, only later to bring together the divergent structural elements:

La técnica narrativa y la estructura de la novela están cuidadosamente elaboradas ... Esta técnica, junto a la de

¹María Alfaro, "Jesús Fernández Santos: En la hoguera," Insula, p. 13.

²Manuel García-Viño, Novela española actual, p. 149.

narrar por partes dejando un incidente en el aire para iniciar otro, volviendo luego al primero, son las que dan esa impresión de un todo finamente unido, donde los sucesos se van escalonando, alternando unos con otros. Pero, además, hay una interrelación entre los diferentes sucesos y entre los diversos personajes, por medio de la cual una acción desemboca en otra, sin interrupción, en una concatenación que lleva al lector de página en página, de hecho en hecho, de personaje en personaje.¹

María Alfaro predicts even greater fame for Fernández Santos if he continues along the same path:

Si Jesús Fernández Santos continúa por el camino emprendido podrá, al madurar, darnos obras que dejen huella permanente en el terreno del conocimiento de un mundo que, no por balbuciente y desesperanzado, deja de ser profundamente real.²

Biography

Jesús Fernández Santos was born in Madrid in 1926. As a student he attended the Facultad de Letras de la Universidad de Madrid, and he also studied at the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras at Madrid, directing the university Teatro de Ensayo.

Working simultaneously at various tasks, he is a writer and film director. As for novels, he believes they should be personal interpretations that stem from intimate

¹Pablo Gil Casado, La novela social española, pp. 71-72.

²María Alfaro, "Jesús Fernández Santos: En la hoguera," Insula, p. 13.

knowledge of the country in which one lives.¹ He has also written and directed a documentary film on the works of Goya entitled "España 1800," and recently a full length film on Spanish youth entitled "Llegar a más." As an actor he has collaborated in the Teatro Nacional de Cámara and likewise in the theatrical broadcasts of Radio Madrid.

His work is increasing in popularity and has been translated into French and is currently being translated into other languages.

Works

Los bravos² tells the story of a boring small town where nothing ever seems to happen, and herein lies the tragedy. The book's theme is stated in a quotation, by J. Wasserman, on the inside cover: "El destino de un pueblo es como el destino de un hombre. Su carácter es su destino." Los bravos exposes the misery, the ruin, and the decadence that exist in small Spanish villages.

We are introduced to various inhabitants of a nameless, miserable town of sixty or seventy people, none of whom is of great importance to the plot. Don Prudencio, the village cacique, is the richest man in the town, but

¹"Entrevistas: Jesús Fernández Santos," Insula, 15 de marzo de 1959, p. 4.

²Jesús Fernández Santos, Los bravos (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1954).

the townspeople do not like or trust him. When he dies, they are free to escape from his tyranny, but they instead fall into the hands of the town's newly arrived young doctor who not only replaces Don Prudencio but also buys the latter's house and takes his young mistress Socorro.

The book includes several minor plots. Throughout the story, young Pepe, in charge of mail delivery and of transporting passengers to the train station, complains about how dull the town is, and he threatens to leave when he earns enough money. Alfredo fishes illegally in restricted waters and is shot one night by patrolling guards. With the help of his two daughters he recuperates, but he cautions the few people who know about the incident not to reveal it to anyone for fear that he will be fined and imprisoned. A stranger, pretending to be a bank representative, arrives in town, promises the inhabitants good interest on their savings, and later makes off with most of their money. The son of Amador, another inhabitant, is ill, and throughout the novel the doctor takes care of him. The boy almost hates his father because the latter has tried to make him believe he will get better, but he never does.

At the end of the novel Don Prudencio dies, and the only ones to follow his casket to the cemetery are his brother, the priest, and Amador. The doctor steps out onto his balcony overlooking the miserable little town and