

# “THUNDERING OUT OF THE SHADOW”: MODERNISM AND IDENTITY IN THE NOVELS OF FELIPE ALFAU

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## ABSTRACT

Felipe Alfau (1902-1999), a Spanish novelist who lived in the United States, was forgotten for many years. Critics writing on Alfau in the late 1980s and early 1990s argued for the literary value of his novels by comparing Alfau with postmodernist authors like Calvino and Nabokov. However, this work considers Alfau as an author of his time by tracing his similarities with such modernists as Luigi Pirandello and Ernest Hemingway and his differences from elements of postmodernism as described by theorists like Judith Butler and Homi K. Bhabha.

Alfau's novels offer a conception of individual and national identity which, despite its constructedness, is typically modernist. In Chapter 1, I argue that Alfau's characters construct a fluid individual identity which challenges imperial notions of hegemony, but which also institutes a meritocracy. In Chapter 2, I argue that Alfau's ironic manipulation of ethnic stereotypes simultaneously constructs and questions a Spanish national identity.