

RAMÓN DE LA SERNA Y ESPINA: THE PRODIGAL SON RETURNS AFTER CONFINEMENT IN HIS INVISIBLE TOWER

- In the Obra Fundamental Collection, Fundación Banco Santander recovers the life and work of one of the great castaways of 20th century Spanish-American intellectuals.
- La Torre Invisible is an essential selection of the multifaceted work - novels, plays, short stories and articles - of one of the most cultured and penetrating Spanish-language writers of the 20th century on both sides of the Atlantic, an author beyond fashions and trends with a unique style. The eldest son of the writer Concha Espina, he has remained perched in his own isolation, always true to himself, wounded by the disregard of friends and strangers alike; a ghost to those close to him and a stranger to his readers. Now this anthology recovers his play Boves on the independence of Venezuela; the psychological novel Chao, a futuristic short story, and several articles published in El Mercurio chileno, Revista de Occidente and other media where he left ample proof of his relevance. He left an enormous unpublished body of work that delves into concepts that always go beyond the written word.

Book trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SchWERlvLBM&feature=youtu.be>

"La torre invisible. Antología esencial", by Ramón de la Serna y Espina (Valparaíso 1894- Santiago de Chile, 1969) is a new volume in the Obra Fundamental Collection, published by Fundación Banco Santander www.fundacionbancosantander.com. The new volume has been anthologised and prefaced by Daniela Agrillo (Naples, 1984), PhD in Literary, Linguistic and Comparative Studies by the University of Naples "L'Orientale", who wrote her thesis on the figure of Ramón de la Serna y Espina. The presentation was also attended by the legatee of the work of Concha Espina's eldest son, Alfredo Pérez de Armiñán, guardian of Ramón's archive, which contains novels, plays, thousands of articles and letters that have been forgotten until now.

Daniela Agrillo says in the prologue to this edition that the purpose that obsessed this intellectual of vast culture throughout his life was "to unveil what lies behind the appearance of things, to get to the essence, to the truth", and perhaps it was this

spirit of adventure that prompted him to ask his troubled mother to let him go to London with some friends.

He was thirteen years old at the time and would later broaden his education in Germany after leaving Spain because the education was insufficient for him on all fronts. He defended the equal role of women in education and society, which is why he rebuked his Latin teacher Cejedor, when he always put the female students on the spot, "one day Ramón raised his voice and left the classroom in a rage". After the incident, he was expelled and set off for Berlin. There he frequented Klee and Kandinsky and surprised Freud himself, "a terrible temperament, nothing to do", said the father of psychoanalysis, although this helped Ramón to become a scholar of psychoanalysis and of hypnosis. He also became deeply knowledgeable regarding Jung's theory, which led him to translate his Psychological Types, and works by other authors such as Lope de Vega and his time by Vossler. As in everything else, Ramón excelled as a translator, being praised by Ortega himself.

The eldest son of Concha Espina, whom he helped to write the book that catapulted her to fame, *El metal de los muertos*, and the stories in *Copa de horizontes*, published in 1930 under his mother's authorship, which caused Ramón to distance himself from his family as he felt he had not been taken into consideration, which widened the gap between the two and ended in the family's ostracism. "He was a free spirit who managed to escape the protective wing of Concha Espina", says Agrillo.

To recover Ramón de la Serna now, and with this title, *La torre invisible*, is no coincidence, as there is an essential connection with the moment we are living and which fits with the vital impulse of this author, comments Francisco Javier Expósito, literary manager of Fundación Banco Santander,- "Many of us, during these long days of confinement have felt like invisible towers within reality, alienated from the world, in pain and terribly alone in our day to day lives. That was life and that was how the writer felt". In Expósito's opinion, "he was misunderstood, a man isolated in his tower, invisible to the world and for the world, just as many people have felt these days. That is why recovering him now makes a lot of sense, apart from his immense literary value". For the anthologist Daniela Agrillo, one of the main reasons for his oblivion is that "he never managed to finish his work or publish it, or to make himself known, because he carried his desire for perfection to the extreme".

The death of his daughter was a blow from which he never recovered, and which led him to isolate himself even more in his tower, "for a maniac like Ramón, who kept everything, even the most insignificant little notes, the absence of anything that speaks of his daughter is a silence of great eloquence; it speaks of an enormous pain, so deep that it could not be named", Agrillo explains. However, he would remain close to his wife, the Chilean Eva Cargher, until the end of his days. She saved his legacy by placing it in the hands of Alfredo Pérez de Armiñán, who promised him more than forty years ago to do what he could for it. "The rediscovery of Ramón as a writer allows us to discover a literary work that straddles Europe and America, genuinely Spanish-American but marked by the aesthetic currents of inter-war Europe and by the extensive and cosmopolitan philosophical and literary training of its author", says Pérez de Armiñán, to whom Eva ceded this archive.

Ramón de la Serna and Espina in the Invisible Tower

Daniela Agrillo comments on his novel Chao: "it seems incredible that it was written in the 1930s. Perhaps Ramón's great sensitivity, his enormous capacity for observation, for grasping the problems affecting the society in which he lived, meant that his contemporaries did not understand him, and he was more of a visionary".

Quotes from Boves, a play centred on Bolívar and the Spanish royalist general, Boves, confronting a Venezuelan independence free of vested interests, with paragraphs that are highly contemporary: "so much has happened and is happening that where the Empire is lacking, even in its ultimate version of spiritual power, it is replaced and supplanted by mercantile amphictyony and where the "tyrant" or the "despot" is lacking, a barbarian or a madman, elected by universal free suffrage, takes his place". On Bolivar: "The legend has come close to you, and you rebel against its seductions because something pricks your soul, something indomitable, secret, unnoticed, at times: something stronger than all things."

On his articles

Sagittarius, who describes in a visionary way the situation we have been going through in these months, "because of who knows what lever, one day the brakes are tightened, and the production machine, here and there, stops, because it had to be that way. The "guilt", if there is guilt, is diluted in such a way that to unravel its last

roots it would be necessary to dissect the most improbable targets, to find new ways, exits and virgin paths, shortcuts and unknown detours... We are faced with that tremendous thing that is a historical fact for which we lack perspective". The Invisible Tower. "Material time - the voice of the people does not hesitate to materialise the most ungraspable thing - we always have plenty of it, or more precisely formulated: we never lack it. But how rarely do we feel the marvellous drift, at once lukewarm and fresh and leisured, of the most spiritual time that exists, of the euphoric time, that strange son of enigma!" "The euphoric time is not only what we long for, it is what we truly need: what we need with trophic greed, with hunger. And it is usually what other rob us of." A captive of hope. "To renounce you must first have. Who doesn't have anything, how do you renounce? Hope is an onlooker, it flies to tomorrow. What is blind sinks into the mist of the past, to which it belongs. As it does not see, it palpates, creeps, it needs scales, rings, for the descent. For the climb, for which it requests wings, it doesn't have the faculty." "But it is not the voyage in the hand of Tarsis what matters, rather the traveller. The traveller: not the journey. (...) If the traveller discovers and treasures, one learns from the traveller, he is imitated and imitation sometimes catches on, the lands of the expanse are fertilized."

The practical value of poetry. "That which is practical, economical - these concepts are often identified with - is today the great word, the great catchphrase. If we can say that anything is economical, or practical, it's as if we have sanctified it: we know that it will be abided by without discussion." "(...) the most eminent sages of today resort, not just to the occasional poetic quote, but to the testimony of poetry as proof and to support these theses and theories which, as we have seen, are the great premise of all the technical and practical advances of our time." Regarding suicide, "without the shadow contrast of that part of our existence, which is suffering, joy would be inconceivable: we would not feel it, we would not "see it"; "there are moments when the human being is overwhelmed by misfortunes to which he is defenceless; in the face of ruin, for example, which, although it implies material goods, deep down it is the moral ruin of a legitimate ambition". Praise for the conventional "we will remember the reserve with which the conventional attitude contemplated the flaming of those slogans which, for example, decreed the death of novels at the hands of biographies, of the theatre due to the cinema, just the same as today, other, no safer deaths are decreed!; "the same who are "anti" are going to be those that are "pro". It has always been this way: when the consul, César, when the consul Bonaparte... The most rebellious one finds out are those who are thirsty of academics." to condemn

words we need words. They are the instrument of human intuition and its enigma, through words the will and faith speak, by their virtue mountains are moved and spaces are furrowed". The prophet, "If his land does not tolerate the prophet, it is not because it does not recognise his worth, but because, at a bad moment, he has tried to take over everything: to impose his strength, his knowledge, his genius. And no one imposes himself here". On the angry hand, "The difference is that the demagogue seeks his perspective and maintains it by dint of tension and funambulism. Until he falls or collapses. For the political genius it is innate even post-mortem... all the magic in the world will not succeed in veiling the rusticism, the dilettantism, the quackery of the demagogue. Because the insignificant mastery is denied to him, he needs that disguise". On the fear of the past, "Even in the deepest recesses of the psyche, in that which symptomatically or symbolically comes to the surface of consciousness, the fear of the past persists". And it is the "difficult" men who are often the best. They "understand": they know how to be intelligent in the face of the most mysterious things under the sun".