

## Professor Blanco of UCSD publishes a best-seller

February 17, 1989

UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS

Contact: Paul Lowers berg, (619) 534-3120

UCSD PROFESSOR'S NOVEL A BEST SELLER IN SPAIN

Carlos Blanco, professor of literature at the University of California, San Diego, has published a novel which has become a best-seller in Spain.

The novel, Blanco's second, is titled "Un Tiempo Tuyo," which, he said, translates roughly into "Your Own Time."

The subject matter is the Spanish Civil War and its effect on those who were forced to flee the country. Blanco was just such a refugee, who left Spain with his family at the age of 11 and fled to Mexico where he grew up.

Blanco's novel has no story line in the traditional sense.

"It's about memory," he said. "It's one voice speaking through the memory of a mother, and childhood scenes, and the beginning of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, and travellings--comings and goings, and having no center, and returns and absences.

That first voice ends on a rather negative note. It's a pretty neurotic voice."

Other voices--a woman, a German who fought in the Spanish Civil War, an American who also fought in the war, and a famed Argentinean tango singer named Gardel--then enter the story, each character describing himself or herself and how he or she relates to the first voice.

"When all of those voices have finished telling their own stories and how those stories relate to the problems of the first voice, then the narrative goes into third person, and the person on the first voice reappears and meditates on all the voices and the meaning of that and reshapes its own stability and its own center," said Blanco. "Then the neuroticism kind of disappears."

Blanco's novel was published by Alfaguera, one of the top publishing houses in Spain, and he returned to his homeland last September for the release of the book.

There, Blanco, a well-known literary critic in Spain, was interviewed by the Spanish press. "I almost always write in Spanish and I do have a strong reputation as a critic in Spain. So, I guess they were kind of surprised that here was this novel," said Blanco.

The book is so popular because it is about historical memory, he added. "After all, the Spanish Civil War was absolutely significant in the history of Spain.

"I was eleven when I left Spain. And I have never been able to quite live here or there. I'm always in between somehow. And that is what the novel is about--all of these other characters who also fought in the Civil War looking for a significant center to their own lives."

Blanco said it is doubtful that the novel will be translated into English.

"I confess that I would love it if I could go to the UCSD bookstore and see my novel on sale there. That would give me great pleasure."

Blanco came to UCSD 23 years ago as one of the founders of the UCSD literature department, where he currently teaches Spanish and Latin American literature.

But each spring he returns to Spain.

"I've got to go," he said. "I feel very at home there, but I also feel slightly outside."

(February 17, 1989 )