When Fiction is Stranger than Truth: Metaliterary Preoccupation and Philosophical Burlesque in *Locos: A Comedy of Gestures* (1936)

*Abstract:* Aligned with the Spanish avant-garde novel, especially its essential, according to Ortega y Gasset, irony and playfulness towards aesthetic creation as something of no transcendent consequence, Felipe Alfau’s *Locos* (1936) is a challenge to readers to take fiction seriously. Beneath the façade of “empty situations” and “meaningless gestures” are metaliterary preoccupations with the nature of literature, the condition of writing itself, and the tasks confronting the reader, alongside a ‘philosophical burlesque’ that interrogates what can happen to an “I” such that it fails to be a person and what it means for a self to be driven by recognition by others.