



¡Bienvenidos!

Welcome to the summer 2021 edition of the Bulletin – best enjoyed with your grades assessed, vaccinations complete and a sangría to hand.



This edition carries the link to a survey being undertaken by UCL, with the backing of the Instituto Cervantes and the Bulletin, to chart teacher and student satisfaction with the Modern Languages A-level qualification. If

you are studying or teaching a language at school or university level, please take part (and share the link with others). The results will be carried in our next edition.

On which theme, we find little to celebrate in the latest government proposals for GCSE languages. Time to re-brand language learning as a cross-curricular skill?

Becoming a translator is perhaps the ultimate extension of a linguist's skill: we examine the demands of the job.

How will Spain emerge from the pandemic? The author of a major new study (downloadable from this edition) highlights the challenges and opportunities.

Multiple forces were at work in the recent migrant crisis in Ceuta : we call in expert analysis to reveal the full story (in Spanish).

We've hitherto avoided [Brexit](#), but with the realities becoming clearer we weigh up the quirks and ironies it has brought thus far for Spaniards, Brits and Gibraltarians (in Spanish).

Chile's experiment with devising a [new, fairer Constitution](#) is one of the most intriguing political processes anywhere in the world. We look at the underlying issues (in Spanish).



Longing for a trip to the Spanish-speaking world? We hear from the ecotourist paradise of [Costa Rica](#) about how it has coped with the pandemic, and its longer-term prospects.

[Crónica de una muerte anunciada](#) [Chronicle of a death foretold] turns 40 this year. We revisit the text to identify ten top takeaways from the work – not least, the identity of Ángela's lover.

Argentine poet [Alejandra Pizarnik](#) had a life-long struggle with mental illness: we look at how she channelled her anguish through her classic poem *La jaula*.

And finally... our spring 2021 edition was read in 65 countries by around 50% more readers than any previous edition since we launched in 2017. We owe our thanks for that to readers like you who have shared your enthusiasm for all things Spanish by



passing on the Bulletin link to others. We hope the process will continue and send a special welcome to those now reading the Bulletin for the first time.

You can sign up for future editions either through our newly installed 'Click Me' subscriber button below, or through the Contact Us tab above. You can find out more about the Bulletin (and how to submit articles) through the Guidelines tab.

The deadline for the next edition is 30 September.

Feliz verano – o invierno, dependiendo de dónde te ubicas...

The BAS team



Why Languages Need a Re-brand

by Helen Laurenson, University College School

The start of the third decade of the twenty-first century has been eventful for many reasons. The twin spectres of Brexit and Covid have dealt many blows, both personal and collective, encouraging a swelling sense of insularity and autonomy, from trade deals to vaccine nationalism.

Para colmo de males, the recent final recommendations of the DfE GCSE Subject Content Review Consultation document make for curious and frankly depressing reading in the context of foreign language study in the UK. This consultation has



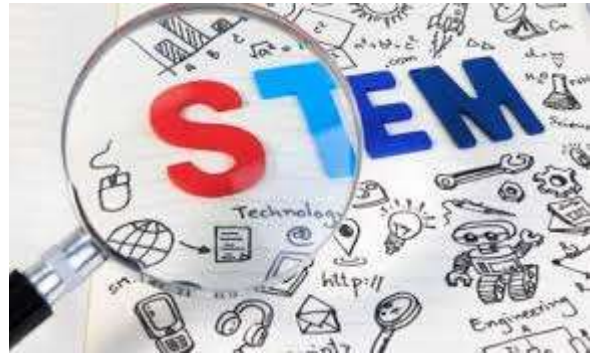
been untimely in its presentation of ideas which are in conflict with both the attraction of language study and the implicit skills it entails. For example, the proposal eschews the key skills of inference and deductive reasoning across languages in favour of a prescriptive vocabulary list. In addition, the introduction of reading aloud in the target

language harks back to days of yore. Worse still, no cultural material is to be used in the examination.

Unsurprisingly, key stakeholders in the Modern Languages community are aghast, including ISMLA (the Independent Schools' Modern Languages Association) and the University Council for Modern Languages.

In the language teaching and learning context, this relapse is depressingly familiar, a *volte-face* to the bad old days of the linguistic dominance of English, a suspicion of our European neighbours and of languages as a niche, idiosyncratic choice – a quirky underling to the masters of STEM, Economics, Medicine and Law.

The irony is that languages are never more needed, but not for the reasons with which they have been traditionally associated in the United Kingdom. The rather unstable trajectory of language teaching, with its vacillation between traditional (translation, dictation and grammar), and progressive



As Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics marshalled themselves into a powerhouse, languages were being gradually consigned to the starting blocks of the school curriculum, mired in uncertainty as to their broader purpose and functionality.

A changed academic and global panorama has not helped. In an unstable world, parents and pupils are valuing vocational subjects where job prospects are clear and languages are a luxury.

The take-up of languages at A level is now contingent on their essential connectivity and complementarity with other disciplines. Look at how Mathematics has smartly aligned itself with Engineering, thus acquiring the protective mantle of a practical and vocational application. So too languages need to be re-packaged as an additional skill which will give candidates the edge in job applications: after all, it is the culturally competent, tolerant and bilingual doctors, engineers and scientists who are most likely to be masters of their fields.



The pedagogical box-ticker *cross-curricular links* now needs to do more than adorn the minutes of Academic Board meetings and Departmental Development Plans. Ideally, it should jump into life in the Lower School through dynamic and exciting collaborative projects with Art, History, PE and English. What better than looking at the Cuban Missile Crisis through original propaganda in Spanish, or exploring war through an analysis in Spanish of Goya's *Los Desastres de la Guerra* and Picasso's *Guernica*? It is in the Lower School that interest in languages is sown; the start of a continuum of skills, cultural competences and practical application.

It is here too that we might take inspiration from both the Pre-U syllabus and undergraduate modules, which offer a multi-media approach under a thematic heading. This would address the often questioned 'usefulness' of a language, and could cover various disciplines across different year groups. Whilst the initial logistical challenges across departments might take time, a cross-curricular programme – once established – would reap benefits as regards the reinvigoration and re-positioning of languages within the curriculum. It would also serve to promote traditionally less popular languages such as German under the umbrella of themed study – eg the art of Otto Dix in 'War' or the 'Immigrant Experience in Film' through *Almanya – Willkommen in Deutschland*.

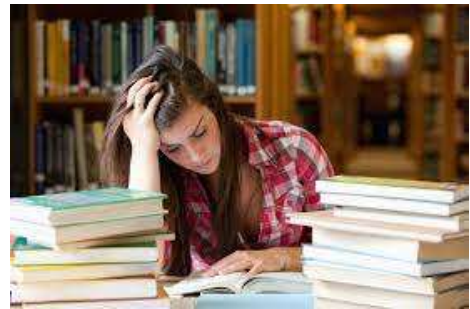


The study of films on Immigration in a variety of languages would also broaden pupil experience, opening a space for debate on tolerance, cultural competences and empathy. Languages are natural allies of movements such as BLM (the Conquest of Latin America, Post-Colonial literature, the Immigration crisis) and the more recent and controversial 'Everyone's Invited' (Gender Politics and the Individual v Society in the works of García Lorca). Immersion in languages via a series of themes would adjust perceptions away from the idea

that certain languages, eg Spanish or French, are more worthy of attention than, say, German or Italian.

Cross-curricular themes would also encourage the acquisition of skills (graded for complexity through the different year groups) about, for example, how to 'read' a film, visual literacy in Art and the analysis of historical sources (in the target language). For variety, football training might be undertaken through the medium of German in order to drag languages literally kicking and screaming out of the classroom and into a (more) natural, transactional theatre. What better tool than a plethora of Latin American films to support an understanding of dictatorship and democracy in Politics than a screening and debate of *La historia oficial* or *No*?

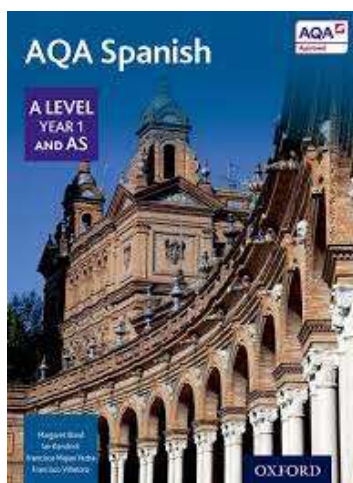
The range of cross-curricular possibilities afforded through languages makes the DfE GCSE MFL Subject Content Consultation [document](#) even more perplexing. The *reductio ad absurdum* of the syllabus content to 90% of words taken from the 2,000 most frequently occurring words in the target language, the removal of overarching themes and specific topics, all rubric and questions in English and the return to a dictation exercise leave little room for fulfilling language study. The announcement that 'cultural content will not be specified or tested in the revised subject content' does not bring joy. A new GCSE that has all the attraction of a glorified vocabulary test will benefit neither the UK nor its linguists.





Survey for Modern Languages Teachers, Sixth Formers, Undergraduates and Lecturers

Links to your survey questions at foot of article.



Are you interested in finding out more about how students are doing in their Spanish (and other Modern/Foreign Languages) A-Level/IB/ Pre-U/Scottish Highers? Would you also like to know more about how M/FL students are coping with the transition from A-level/IB/Pre-U/Scottish Highers to University? Finally, would you like to find out more about whether – and, if so, how – Brexit and the Coronavirus are impacting students taking foreign languages in the UK?

If so, you've come to the right place! These are precisely the questions that this one-year project, 'Developing a Partnership between

Universities and Schools in Order to Enhance the Student Experience of the Spanish A-level', has set out to answer.

This project is funded by UCL's HEIF Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund. Working with other universities in the UK, secondary schools, Sixth Form Colleges and the Instituto Cervantes in London, it seeks to develop new insights on how to enhance the linguistic, cultural, literary and filmic components of the A-level syllabus. This project grew from the partnerships formed in the creation of the *Bulletin of Advanced Spanish*, which was founded in 2017 to act as a bridge between University Spanish Studies and Sixth Form Spanish Studies.

The project is focusing on Spanish as the most popular language at A-level in the UK (7,932 entrants in the summer of 2019). However, for the purposes of the survey, the intention is to gather data on the student and teacher perspective on all Modern/Foreign Languages with a view to identifying future trends. It will do so by developing four core activities as follows:

1. It will design, deliver and conduct Opinio surveys of students currently taking M/FL A-level, Scottish Higher, Cervantes Institute and University courses in Spanish, as well as Opinio surveys of the instructors teaching these subjects;
2. It will design and deliver workshops designed to exchange best practice on how to train the younger generation and give them the skills and tools they need to succeed in the modern world, including skills in communication (both written and oral); translation; and the ability to articulate knowledge and understanding of target language culture, literature and film;
3. It will create a national online platform that will act as a hub combining an archive of useful teaching materials (i.e. texts) as well as an online repository of podcasts on relevant topics; and



4. It will produce a concise report summarising the results of the knowledge exchange and highlight the examples of good practice which will enhance the student experience.

Led by Professor Stephen M. Hart, of University College London, this project draws on the expertise of members of the *Bulletin of Advanced Spanish* editorial team (see link in menu bar) as well as Ignacio Peyró (Director, Cervantes Institute, London) and Dr Owen Williams (Postdoctoral Researcher). The project launched in March 2021 and will run until 14 March 2022.

We want to see if there are ways in which we can make the transition from A-level Spanish/M/FL to first-year Spanish/M/FL at University smoother and more productive. So, if you are (a) currently taking a modern/foreign language at A-level; (b) currently teaching a modern/foreign language at A-level or equivalent; (c) currently studying a modern/foreign language at university; or (d) currently teaching a modern/foreign language at university, please click on the links below to fill in your anonymous survey **and submit it by 1 July 2021**. The survey is short: just 17 multiple choice questions (with optional comments).



To recap: this survey is open to all A-level and equivalent students and university students taking Modern/Foreign Languages, in order to provide context on the transition from A-level and equivalent to university study for students taking Modern/Foreign

Languages, including Spanish. Our intention is to report back the results to the community of Modern/Foreign Languages students and teachers, as well as other key stakeholders. Thank you for your support!

The Links for the Short Anonymous Opinion Survey of Modern/Foreign Languages

If you are **currently studying a modern/foreign language at A-level or equivalent**, please fill in the short anonymous survey here

<https://opinio.ucl.ac.uk/s?s=73536>

and submit by 1 July 2021

If you are **currently teaching a modern/foreign language at A-level** or equivalent, please fill in the short anonymous survey here

<https://opinio.ucl.ac.uk/s?s=73555>

and submit by 1 July 2021

If you are **currently studying a modern/foreign language at university**, please fill in the short anonymous survey here

<https://opinio.ucl.ac.uk/s?s=73556>

and submit by 1 July 2021

If you **currently teaching a modern/foreign language at university**, please fill in the short anonymous survey here

<https://opinio.ucl.ac.uk/s?s=73557>

and submit by 1 July 2021

THANK YOU!

...from the team behind the 'Developing a Partnership between Universities and Schools in Order to Enhance the Student Experience of the Spanish A-level: HEIF Pilot Project Run Between Universities and Secondary Schools in the UK and the Cervantes Institute, London (2021-2022)'.



So you're thinking of becoming a translator?

by Nathaniel Gardner

Like most who have studied a foreign language, early on I seriously considered the idea of becoming a translator.

I didn't know any translators personally, but I imagined the work would be fascinating: reading loads of interesting books and sharing their inspiration and knowledge by translating them.

I was lucky enough to have been an undergraduate at Brigham Young University, a US university with a strong Modern Languages department. So much so that it was (and continues to be) one of the few in the English-speaking world that offers Spanish Translation as an undergraduate degree programme. The earliest you can enroll for a degree in translation at most universities is in graduate school.

It's perhaps not surprising that, at my university, undergraduates at the end of their second year had to pass a rigorous exam to measure their Spanish and English grammar knowledge and writing abilities. Only a small percentage passed. Those who did not would complete their degree in Spanish without the translation focus. Those who did made up the select group that went on to learn the principles of translation and hone their skills as young translators.

I took the test and passed it. However, after some serious consideration, I decided to continue on a different Modern Languages pathway as I felt that was more suitable for me.



Despite this decision, translation has sought me out repeatedly, teaching me lessons on every single occasion. I have taught translation by invitation at undergraduate and graduate level in England, Scotland, New Zealand, Spain, and Mexico. I have been a visiting academic in la Facultad de Traducción, Interpretación, y Documentación at the Universidad de Salamanca. I have translated some books and many documents. Most of my published work has been translating Spanish into English; though I have, on occasion, translated the other way around as well. Several of my friends are professional translators, one of whom has won prizes for her translations. When I decided one summer evening as an undergraduate student that I was not going to study translation, I never imagined that I would nonetheless engage with it as much as I have thus far.

Part of this is due to the changing way we study languages. During my undergraduate days those who studied translation were seen as specialists. Now my alma mater requires all those enrolled for a degree in Spanish to study at least one introductory course on the principles of translation.

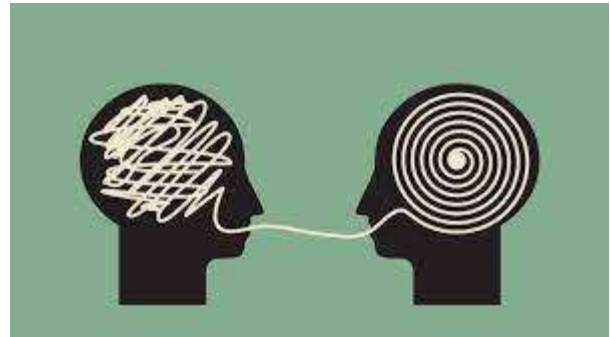
As universities continue to create graduate programmes in translation, more undergraduate programmes introduce courses on translation as part of their degree plans, partly because students seem more interested in translation, and partly to allow them a taste of the field before they commit to a graduate programme.

I also think that translation has sought out linguists like myself because our globalised world requires more translation to keep it connected. Automated translation is improving every year, but humans seek a human voice and understanding in their conversations (which is why the study of history and culture are so key to being good translators).

As someone whose livelihood and personal interests are so closely connected to languages, I have learned that translation is not all about translating great

literature. Translation occurs in the media, marketing, technology, politics and entertainment, to name but a few. Each field has its own nuances, specific vocabulary, and exact ways of expressing ideas. This is why translators always specialise in certain areas.

Translation is not always about translating like for like. Sometimes you work across mediums, for example when you turn spoken into written language. Subtitling television and film, translating information for important pamphlets, reading and digesting reports in one



language to create effective summaries for those who need to make quick and informed decisions are just some of the many calls upon translators. All of these require different skills and have different levels of demand and remuneration.

While some translators, especially in more technical fields, tend to have a steady flow of work, others are less constant. This means that some may need a second or third job to maintain a steady income.

I always imagined translation to be a solitary task, with the translator working away in their favourite location for inspiration. This is broadly true. You mostly work on your own until your project hits a bump in the road. That is where friends and colleagues become invaluable sounding boards and sources of inspiration. Some of my friends have moved out of translation because they wanted to work more closely with colleagues and because they found the ebb and flow of translation work too unstable for their liking.

Translation is often low-profile work. We tend to notice only the translator's mistakes or absence. The best translators are practically invisible. Poor translation is more conspicuous through its clunkiness: something about it doesn't seem quite right. Excellent translations flow as if they were first written in the new language by a skilled writer.



Studying translation requires the student to think deeply about language and possess a strong command of it (which is why strong translation programmes want the highest quality students). It demands the ability to read closely, understand nuances, comprehend complex ideas, navigate cultural clues, identify cloaked intentions, and reproduce all of these effectively and with crystal clarity. These are not easy tasks. Happily, every one of those skills is needed in the professional world. This means, of course, that if you study translation earnestly and then decide not to pursue it, you will have developed many qualities needed by employers.

So, what is my number one tip if you are thinking of becoming a translator? Never stop improving your language skills. Immerse yourself deeply into the areas that interest you most and learn and practice all that you can. Languages are living elements, you have to keep stretching yourself to keep up with them.



Spain post-COVID: challenges and opportunities

by William Chislett, Senior Research Fellow, Elcano Royal Institute

This summary of my much longer document focuses on those aspects related to the EU's pandemic recovery fund. The full document also covers the current political situation, the independence conflict in Catalonia, the debate on monarchy or republic and foreign policy, and can be downloaded at:

http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_en/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_in/zonas_in/wp01-2021-chislett-challenges-and-opportunities-for-spain-in-times-of-covid-19



Spain is one of the eurozone countries worst affected by COVID-19. More than 3.6 million people have been infected and over 80,000 have died. The economy has also been hard hit. Economic output (GDP) shrank 10.8% in 2020, the deepest recession in 80 years and the harshest in Europe, mainly because of the weight of the tourism and hospitality sectors (26% of GDP – five points more than the EU average), which have been decimated.

The number of international tourists plummeted from 83.7 million in 2019 to below 20 million last

year, the lowest figure since the late 1960s and generating just 4% of GDP compared with the usual 12%. Spain has the most bars and restaurants per capita in the world (one for every 175 people, according to a 2019 report by the National Statistics Institute). The tourism prospects this year depend on the success of the vaccination campaign and the restrictions on travel imposed by countries, particularly the UK, around 19 million of whose citizens holiday in Spain in a normal year.

At the end of April the government submitted its recovery plan to the European Commission (EC) in Brussels, detailing how it intends to spend almost €70 billion of grants from Next Generation EU (NGEU) in order to make the economy greener, more digitalised and inclusive. The EC is expected to approve the plan in July.

Spain's total of €155 billion from NGEU, the second-largest amount after Italy, entails the 2021-23 grants, €71.6 billion in loans (2024-26) and other funds. The total amount is more than the \$12 billion Marshall Plan (equivalent to €112 billion today) launched in 1948 by the US after World War II to help re-build 16 non-communist countries in Europe, and from which Spain was excluded because of the pariah status of the Franco dictatorship.

The tsunami of funds is a golden opportunity to modernise the Spanish economy and make it more sustainable. The government will have to accompany this with long-overdue structural reforms, particularly in the ailing pensions system and the labour market, and improve the education system. The funds will test Spain's administrative capacity to execute them at a time when politics is absurdly polarised, particularly in Catalonia, whose government continues to push for independence.

The unemployment rate, which stood at 14% when the pandemic started, close to double the EU average, is now around 16% (three times higher than the UK), but less than predicted by some forecasters because of the success of the job retention scheme known as ERTes, which has been extended until September. The jobless increase is a far cry from what happened during Spain's last recession when unemployment soared from 8.2% in 2007 to 26% in 2013, as a result of the bursting of a massive property bubble and the impact of the global financial crisis. More than 700,000 workers are still furloughed.



High unemployment, before the pandemic, was not the only weak macroeconomic fundamental. The fiscal deficit was 2.8% of GDP in 2019 (it took a decade to get below 3%, the EU's threshold discarded in 2020 because of the pandemic) and public debt stood at

95.5% of GDP, a worse starting position than most other EU countries. While unemployment has not risen significantly during the pandemic, albeit from an already very high level, the fiscal deficit ballooned to 11% in 2020 and public debt to 120%.

The largest slice of the grants will go towards modernising and digitalising industry, including the key tourism sector (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Components of the Spanish plan

Policy area	Amount (€ bn)	% distribution	Contribution to the green transition	Contribution to the digital transition
1. Urban and rural agenda, fight against depopulation and development of agriculture	14.41	21	Over 40%	Under 10%
2. Infrastructure and resilient ecosystems	10.4	15	Over 40%	Under 10%
3. Just and inclusive energy transition	6.39	9	Over 40%	Under 10%
4. A public administration for the 21 st century	4.32	6	10%-40%	Over 40%

5. Modernising and digitalising industrial and SME tissue, help the recovery of the tourism industry and boost entrepreneurship	16.08	23	Under 10%	10%-40%
6. Science and innovation, strengthening the national health system	4.95	7	Under 10%	Under 10%
7. Education and knowledge, continuous learning and capacity development	7.32	11	Under 10%	10%-40%
8. New urban economy, employment policies	4.86	7	10%-40%	10%-40%
9. Boosting culture and sport	0.83	1	10%-40%	10%-40%
10. Fiscal reform, for sustainable and inclusive growth	0	0	Under 10%	Under 10%
Total	69.53	100		

Source: Bruegel

Note: the plan presents the contribution to green and digital transitions for the sub-components of these main headings, but not for the main headings themselves. The categorisation is not always the same for all sub-components of a particular main heading. The categorisation of the main headings reflects our evaluation based on the amounts and the categorisation of sub-components.



The idea that the unprecedented influx of funds is going to change Spain's economic model significantly is magical thinking, but some things can be done. Notably, the government hopes to create a public-private consortium with automaker SEAT (part of the Volkswagen Group) and power-company

Iberdrola to build Spain's first electric-car factory. This will require a factory for batteries. As Europe's second-largest car manufacturer, Spain could become an electric-car hub. Spain's automotive sector (including components) generates 8.5% of GDP in a normal year and almost 20% of merchandise exports, and employs around two million people.

In the 1990s and early 2000s Spain was very successful in using EU funds for large infrastructure projects, such as the 3,086km high-speed rail network (AVE), the world's second-largest after China. Now is the time to invest in human capital.

Education: a political football still kicked around

The education system is not providing the skills that Spain needs, and this in a country where skill demands are more polarised than in many other developed (OECD) countries, with a big share of jobs requiring either very low levels of education or very high levels. The share of all jobs requiring only a primary education is higher in Spain (25%) than in any other OECD country; however, the supply of low-educated workers exceeds demand. At the other end, Spain faces high over-qualification and field-of-study mismatch among university graduates.

The country's eighth education law in 40 years was approved at the end of 2020, yet again without a political consensus. The focus of attention, as far as newspaper headlines were concerned, was the elimination in a previous law of the reference to Spanish as the language of instruction (*lengua vehicular*) in classrooms, a reform greeted jubilantly by Catalan secessionists who want the region, with its own language, to break away from Spain. Castilian Spanish, however, ceased to be the language of instruction years ago under the Catalan government's policy of linguistic immersion, in violation of Article 3 of the 1978 Constitution. The change just legalised what was already happening. Little attention was paid to the much more pressing and shockingly high rates of grade repetition and early-school leavers, although the government introduced measures to try to alleviate these serious problems.

In 2017-18 (latest figures) more than 30% of 15-year-olds repeated a year compared with virtually no one in the UK (around 2%). The high repeat levels demotivate students and is one of the causes of the equally high early school-leaving rate (16% in 2020, down from a whacking 32% in 2007). In 2019, 30.2% of Spaniards between the ages of 25 and 34 had dropped out of school after completing their basic education and were not pursuing any other form of education, double the EU level. These early school-leavers were qualified for only the most basic jobs. Language skills also leave a lot to be desired, particularly English. Spain was ranked 34th out of 100 countries in the latest EF English Proficiency Index.



Labour market: living with high unemployment

Spain's governments in the last 40 years have passed more than 50 labour market reforms of one sort or another, apparently a world record, and yet unemployment has never been lower than 7% during that period (a crisis level for most other developed countries, particularly the US and UK). High unemployment has become the norm.

The labour market is exhausted with so many reforms, which cannot be said to have had much success in lowering unemployment, particularly among workers under the age of 25 whose jobless rate today is more than 40%. That rate was still double the EU average before the pandemic at 30%.

Some of the unemployment reflects the failures of the education system, as we have seen above. It is an axiom that higher educational attainment increases employment prospects: 23.4% of Spaniards aged between 25 and 34 in 2019, whose education ended at 16, were unemployed compared with 11.8% of the same age group with a university degree or advanced vocational training. The latter level, however, is still high by the standards of most EU countries and again can be attributed, to some extent, to Spain's economic model. Surveys repeatedly show the dissatisfaction of many university graduates with the jobs they attain, for which they are overqualified.



Some of the unemployment is overstated because workers have off-the-book jobs in the informal economy, which cushions the impact of the high unemployment. More importantly the wide use (and abuse) of temporary contracts, introduced in 1984 before Spain joined the EU, created a two-tier system of 'insiders' (on permanent contracts)

and 'outsiders'. The degree to which temporary employment can be reduced is a moot point, particularly in a seasonal sector like tourism. There is no doubt, however, that many employers are abusing the system, if not breaking the rules, by not converting endless temporary contracts into permanent ones when they should do, particularly in public administrations. One way to create a level playing field between temporary and permanent workers would be to introduce a single employment contract.

Pension reform

The government must also get to grips with an ailing pensions system. Spain's population is ageing fast and will give rise to one of the highest old-age to working-age ratios among OECD countries, exerting strong pressure on financial sustainability. A Spaniard's average life expectancy has risen 10 years since 1978 to more than 83 years, one of the highest in the world. The United Nations forecasts that in 2050 there will be 78 people in Spain over the age of 65 per 100 people aged 20-64 (the current figure is 33). People are going to have to retire later and contribute more to the pay-as-you-go pensions system.

Rural development: the fight against depopulation

The government's agenda includes measures to try to readjust the balance between densely populated urban areas and what has become known as *la España vacía* ('empty Spain').

Spain's population density of 93 inhabitants per square kilometre is far lower than the UK's 279, Germany's 240, Italy's 206 and France's 119. The least populated provinces, excluding regional capitals and towns of more than 50,000 inhabitants, have a population density of less than 12.5 inhabitants per



square kilometre. They are: Soria, Teruel, Cuenca, Palencia, Zamora, Huesca and Burgos. Some villages have become virtually abandoned (more than 3,500 in Galicia) and are being marketed for sale.

The deserted rural interior is becoming a political issue. The inhabitants of Teruel felt so abandoned by successive governments that in 1999 they founded a movement, *Teruel Existe* ('Teruel Exists'), which in the November 2019 general election won more seats in the province than any other party, capturing one seat in Congress and two in the Senate.

In conclusion

The EU's recovery fund gives Spain a chance to make its economy more sustainable, innovative, productive and resilient. Whether it does so remains to be seen.



Marruecos/Ceuta: la migración hecha arma

*Por Clara Riveros**



La portada reciente del semanario marroquí *Telquel*, en su edición del 21 al 27 de mayo, resume y enuncia con claridad la situación: «Harragas. Arma de presión marroquí. En nombre de su integridad territorial, el reino ha utilizado la cuestión migratoria para llevarla a un nuevo nivel en su demostración de fuerza con respecto a España. Un cálculo tan cínico como peligroso».

Harragas es una palabra árabe que significa «aquellos que queman». Alude a los inmigrantes (ilegales) procedentes de países del Norte de África que intentan llegar a Europa en pateras y que queman sus documentos antes de salir de África. [Un deshacerse de su identidad magrebí.](#)

La crisis migratoria y humanitaria de Ceuta fue descrita por Santiago Abascal, líder de Vox, como una operación política y militar planificada y organizada por Rabat.

Por ello, Abascal pidió no solo militarizar la frontera de forma permanente sino «construir un muro infranqueable en la frontera con Marruecos».



Podría responderse, siguiendo a Loris Zanatta, académico de la Universidad de Bolonia, que la gran migración que está llegando a Europa representa un proceso de transformación histórica extraordinario y muy complejo: «no estamos frente a una “emergencia”, sino ante un cambio destinado a durar décadas y a dejar un mundo diferente del que conocimos. Y no durante un tiempo, sino para siempre.

Al final, la sociedad de la vieja Europa será mucho más multicultural de lo que ya es, y las sociedades de las que han salido los migrantes se habrán transformado también. Frente a cambios tan grandes, es estúpido, además de inútil e inhumano, edificar murallas. Lo que sirve es más política europea, y buena política: capacidad de pensar el futuro, de esquivar trampas ideológicas para fomentar la instrucción, el empleo, la protección social de los inmigrantes, y, al mismo tiempo, de establecer un criterio certero y eficaz sobre la base del cual seleccionarlos, acogerlos y distribuirlos entre los diferentes países. Los refugiados que huyen de las guerras, por ejemplo, deben tener prioridad. ¿Esto pondría fin a los viajes de la muerte en alta mar? Es improbable, pero crear canales de migración legal y organizada podría limitarlos».

El académico de Bolonia añadió, con razón, que «una política de apertura indiscriminada a los inmigrados, ética y políticamente correcta, no resulta viable. Además de ser insostenible en términos económicos, produciría tensiones sociales tan extendidas y radicales que terminaría por impedir una política más gradual y eficaz».

Zanatta esbozó en su análisis dos cuestiones fundamentales que mantienen su vigencia: por un lado, la del islam que enfrenta un proceso de transformación y está generando cismas en los países de confesionalidad islámica, pero que también plantea dificultades y resistencias para edificar la convivencia entre musulmanes y cristianos en una Europa ampliamente secularizada con todo lo que ello implica (secularización de las costumbres, individualismo, sociedad de consumo, laicidad, etc.). La otra cuestión tiene que ver con la responsabilidad de los países emisores de emigrantes. La corrupción, la precariedad, la pobreza, el autoritarismo, la falta

de democracia, de libertades, de condiciones políticas y económicas que procuren formas de vida dignas empujan a los ciudadanos a emigrar.

Crisis migratoria y humanitaria en Ceuta



Los hechos. Noticieros del mundo difundieron imágenes de cientos de emigrantes marroquíes y subsaharianos, entre cinco mil y ocho mil, de los cuales unos 1.500 eran niños e incluso bebés, familias y mujeres con niños, que arribaron entre el lunes 17 y el martes 18 de mayo de 2021 desde Marruecos a Ceuta. Cientos de personas fueron salvadas de las aguas, rescatadas del mar por guardias civiles de España, pero hubo también otras imágenes que mostraron a algunos agentes españoles empujando a jóvenes marroquíes desde los espigones al mar.

Diferentes vídeos circularon en redes sociales y evidenciaron que autoridades fronterizas marroquíes no impidieron el paso de los emigrantes, sino que los animaron a pasar e incluso abrieron un paso fronterizo para facilitar la salida de decenas de personas. «La mera idea de



que un país trate así a sus hijos es demencial», escribió el columnista [Juan Soto Ivars](#). Para el destacado analista español, aunque estos niños no lleven armas, han sido usados por Marruecos como «niños soldado». «Peones sin valor, sacrificables».

Hacia el final de esa caótica semana, [familias marroquíes](#) denunciaron que la marcha de sus hijos hacia Ceuta ocurrió sin el consentimiento familiar, argumentaron que sus hijos llegaron a Ceuta engañados para asistir a un partido de fútbol o a una excursión y que transcurridos algunos días desconocían su paradero. Para Soto Ivars lo acaecido no fue una «invasión», pero tampoco una crisis humanitaria, sino «un chantaje». Según su lectura, Rabat «está utilizando la desesperación de su propio pueblo, cuyo bienestar es responsabilidad suya», tratando con ello de ejercer presión sobre el Gobierno de España: «esto no es una crisis humanitaria, sino una crisis migratoria provocada».

Muchas devoluciones de inmigrantes tuvieron lugar en caliente, a veces, acompañadas de imágenes violentas y chocantes que evocan el redireccionamiento del ganado que se aparta del camino o del rebaño. Otros fueron acogidos por instituciones españolas, de modo temporal, mientras se seguían los procedimientos y protocolos para su devolución. Transcurrida una semana, con una persona fallecida, casi ocho mil ciudadanos habían sido devueltos a Marruecos, según informaciones de *EFE*.

Las respuestas desde Rabat generaron que la Unión Europea se solidarizara con España y le recordase a Marruecos que Ceuta es parte de Europa. [Bruselas enfatizó, para que Rabat no tenga dudas, que la frontera de Ceuta es también la frontera de una ciudad europea](#). El rey Felipe VI se comunicó con Juan Vivas, presidente de esa ciudad autónoma española, y trasladó su solidaridad con las autoridades y los ciudadanos.

La contundencia de las dolorosas imágenes que circularon permite observar la instrumentalización marroquí de ciudadanos, incluidos menores, para ajustar cuentas políticas y diplomáticas con España. Aquí pasaron a segundo plano la vida y la dignidad humanas cuando de retaliación y represalias se trata. Nacionales marroquíes y también subsaharianos (que tienen en Marruecos un país de tránsito), sufren carencias y precariedades, tienen necesidades y sueños, enfrentan distintas penalidades e incluso el riesgo de perder la vida en el mar

intentando llegar a Europa animados por el deseo de tener una vida con algo más de dignidad que en sus países de origen y acogida provisional.



Incluso analistas y expertos marroquíes admitieron en comunicaciones personales que «Marruecos abrió el grifo de la inmigración irregular» y que ya hubo antecedentes en el pasado, por ejemplo, en 2014 cuando dejó pasar a más de 1.300 personas en un día. Notaron, sin embargo, que tampoco el país está obligado a ser el «gendarme de Europa», mientras que Europa, específicamente España, obstaculiza, perjudica e interfiere en el tema prioritario para Marruecos: su integridad territorial.

La escritora marroquí Mouna Hachim ha referido «la instrumentalización de la angustia humana incluso por las causas más sagradas», en alusión a la causa nacional o integridad territorial marroquí, el Sahara, que ha sido el tema que desencadenó la crisis política y diplomática entre Madrid y Rabat con el resultado de la crisis migratoria que se ha generado. «Ver estas mareas humanas surgiendo sobre Sebta (Ceuta), es ante todo un sentimiento de malestar y tristeza que nos invade».

Hachim aludió a los jóvenes que van hacia lo desconocido, atrapados en los espejismos de ‘El dorado’ y en busca de trabajo, dignidad, libertad y derechos humanos. «Tenemos la tentación de abrumar a nuestro país por el fracaso en las políticas económicas y sociales y señalar las fábricas del desencanto que hunden a sectores sociales en la desesperación». Sin embargo, la escritora no se agotó allí, también reivindicó la geografía, el carácter africano de Ceuta, la historia y el pasado que vinculan a este territorio con Marruecos, así como las actuaciones políticas de España que han propiciado el actual estado de las cosas. Los tuits de Hachim recogen en líneas generales lo que muchos marroquíes han expresado en redes sociales en el marco de las crisis que tienen lugar entre Marruecos y España.

Para la investigadora Noor A Lamarty, «un país se define por cómo trata a su infancia y a las mujeres». Estos niños y jóvenes han sido utilizados como «peones de una estrategia política inhumana» que evidencia que el Derecho

Internacional «se quebranta sin piedad». Lamarty sostiene enfáticamente lo denigrante de estas actuaciones que no tienen justificación alguna: «un chantaje no puede ser nunca motivo para tirar al mar a menores aprovechando su desesperación».

El español Soto Ivars traslada la retaliación marroquí al caso de Cataluña para señalar que si España hubiese obrado como Marruecos ello significaría que habría estado dispuesto a «llenar Bélgica de españoles miserables en respuesta al tratamiento que se da allí a Puigdemont. Nuestro adversario incumple las reglas más elementales [...] Marruecos debe ser tratado con más dureza. Lo necesitamos como aliado, no como abusón. Me niego a creer que no haya más opciones que esta adulación blanda y acobardada».

En los días siguientes al alud migratorio continuaron las devoluciones desde España hacia Marruecos de los ciudadanos que entraron a nado en territorio español. El ministro islamista de Derechos Humanos Mustapha Ramid aseguró que su país había sacrificado mucho en aras de la buena vecindad y que, por ello, se encontraba en «pleno derecho» de trasladar a España la «magnitud de su sufrimiento». Ramid concluyó diciendo que el Gobierno español sabía que «el precio de subestimar a Marruecos es muy alto». El canciller marroquí Nasser Bourita observó que la crisis migratoria fue generada por «la total inacción de la policía española», y explicó que la falta de contención de la oleada migratoria, del lado marroquí, se debió a una situación de fatiga o de cansancio de los policías marroquíes tras el final de las festividades del Ramadán.



En esta pugna de poder tampoco hay que perder de vista que Rabat aparcó, durante el reinado de Mohamed VI (desde 1999), las históricas reclamaciones territoriales de Ceuta o Sebta y Melilla. Especialistas marroquíes estiman este fue un acuerdo tácito alcanzado con Madrid a cambio de la neutralidad positiva de España respecto al contencioso del Sahara Occidental. Pero si Madrid rompió ese pacto —con las acciones que han llevado a la crisis política y diplomática entre ambos países— entonces Rabat se siente en plena libertad de retomar sus reclamaciones, dicen.

Claro está, el estatus de los enclaves españoles Ceuta y Melilla en África es diferente al del territorio disputado del Sahara Occidental (uno de los 17 Territorios No Autónomos inscritos en la Organización de Naciones Unidas). Además, en el siglo XXI, las reclamaciones territoriales no pueden omitir la voluntad de sus ciudadanos. Ceuta y Melilla lo han dicho —desde sus ciudadanos hasta la Unión Europea—, son ciudades europeas en África y quieren seguir siéndolo. Es decir, Ceuta y Melilla no son el territorio disputado por un movimiento subversivo y de corte totalitario auspiciado por Argelia como sí ocurre con el Sahara. Habrá que ver si España acepta de una vez por todas y de buen ánimo que Estados Unidos reconoció la marroquinidad del Sahara y que este apoyo decisivo y según parece definitivo tendrá relevancia en el futuro de ese territorio disputado, aunque no sea el final deseado por España. Habrá que ver, también, si Marruecos acepta de una vez por todas y de buen ánimo que la voluntad de ceutíes y melillenses es seguir siendo ciudadanos europeos en esas ciudades europeas situadas en África.

*Clara Riveros es politóloga, analista política y consultora en temas relacionados con América Latina y Marruecos. Es autora de los libros *Diálogo transatlántico entre Marruecos e Iberoamérica* y *Diálogos transatlánticos, Marruecos hoy*. Los dos libros fueron publicados en 2019 en España.

En Twitter: [@CLARARIVEROS](https://twitter.com/CLARARIVEROS)



A vueltas con el Brexit

BAS editor Fran Compán

A pocos días de que se cumpla el quinto aniversario del referendum del Brexit, todavía quedan cosas sin resolver, pero sus efectos negativos están empezando a hacerse visibles.

En gran medida, la pandemia está enmascarando el impacto negativo del Brexit en la economía británica y todavía tardaremos unos cuantos meses en ver qué es lo que realmente ha supuesto la histórica separación para el Reino Unido. De momento, parece obvio que el paso fronterizo de mercancías es sustancialmente más complejo y costoso que antaño cuando la isla era parte del mercado único, pero no podemos olvidarnos de las consecuencias para los ciudadanos británicos que son los que más derechos han perdido de todo el continente.



De una manera más específica, las consecuencias del Brexit en la población que ha emigrado de España a Reino Unido y viceversa son bien distintas por razones bastante obvias. Como es de entender, lo que más preocupa a cualquier emigrado es la pérdida de derechos y acceso a servicios públicos

que implica. La organización Bremain in Spain ha creado un grupo de trabajo llamado BIBA (siglas de “Brexit Impact on Brits Abroad”) con el objetivo de

esclarecer el impacto del Brexit en la población de británicos emigrados a España, y ha concluido que el acceso al servicio sanitario es una de sus principales preocupaciones. Una parte sustancial de los cerca de 360,000 británicos registrados como residentes en España son jubilados que no contribuyen con impuestos directos a financiar el servicio de salud pública español, y hasta ahora, sus facturas médicas habrían sido cubiertas por las arcas del estado británico dentro del marco sanitario de la Unión. La alternativa para aquellos que no contribuyen a la seguridad social española es pagar por un seguro privado que no está necesariamente al alcance de todos, o sumarse a los 50,000 británicos que, de momento, ya han decidido hacer las maletas y regresar a Reino Unido.

En contraste, la mayor parte de los 115,000 españoles residentes en Reino Unido son parte de la población activa, lo que les garantiza, por lo menos de momento, acceso a los servicios médicos estatales. Sin embargo, para la población española residente en Reino Unido, una de las mayores preocupaciones es la tendencia del actual gabinete de gobierno a crear medidas antiinmigración. Las recientes detenciones de ciudadanos comunitarios en situación regular por las fuerzas fronterizas no han contribuido a apaciguar los ánimos de los europeos residentes en Reino Unido. La esperanza, a corto plazo, es que las fuerzas de seguridad de turno se familiaricen con los nuevos criterios de entrada en el país.

Según la BBC, alrededor de 1,3 millones de extranjeros han abandonado el Reino Unido entre el año 2019 y 2020 en lo que sería su mayor caída de población desde la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Aunque este éxodo es atribuido en parte a la pandemia, no cabe duda de que el Brexit ha jugado un papel importante empujando a muchos a regresar a sus países de origen debido a las nuevas normas de inmigración.

Como es habitual, Gibraltar ha sido un caso excepcional en la negociación del Brexit. De una manera sorprendente el enclave se ha unido al área Schengen, dejando a más de uno en estado de estupor. Lo irónico de la decisión es que a partir de ahora los ciudadanos comunitarios no necesitarán su pasaporte para viajar al Peñón, al contrario que los británicos que pierden este privilegio en uno de sus “territorios de



ultramar”. Pese al Acuerdo de Retirada de enero de 2020, todavía quedan cabos sueltos en la negociación y se espera que este acuerdo se convierta en un tratado en los próximos meses. Parece que lo que no consiguió el más fiero nacionalismo español lo ha conseguido el Brexit.

Además, la salida del bloque le ha dado otro empujón al independentismo escocés que acaba de conseguir la mayoría absoluta en Holyrood. Aunque un segundo referéndum de independencia parece relativamente improbable, no cabe duda de que el Brexit se le ha atragantado a una nación que votó abrumadoramente a favor de permanecer en la Unión y que, en principio, no debería tener grandes dificultades para volver a formar parte de la UE, pero nunca se sabe. Por el momento, Miguel Ángel Vecino Quintana, cónsul general de España en Escocia, ha confirmado que el Gobierno español no vetaría su entrada en la Unión, pero es necesario que haya unanimidad ya que todos los países miembros tienen derecho a veto.



Dar con las verdaderas causas que han llevado a esta situación es una tarea compleja y puede desafiar la lógica. Como bien explica Danny Dorling, profesor de geografía de la prestigiosa Universidad de Oxford, en su libro *Rule Britannia* escrito junto a Sally Tomlinson, el Reino Unido es un país con tasas de inmigración muy inferiores a las de otros países europeos,

como España, lo que por si mismo no explicaría el fenómeno del Brexit. Más bien parece que el recuerdo del Imperio Británico ha sido vital en el proceso, con todo lo que conlleva.

En cualquier caso, el Brexit ha generado un dilema para muchos de los cientos de miles de personas que habían decidido disfrutar viviendo a caballo entre los dos países sin ninguna limitación y que ahora, en muchos casos, se ven en la tesitura de tener que elegir. Para otros, pescadores, y pequeñas y medianas empresas, las tasas de importación y demás regulaciones se están convirtiendo en un escollo difícil de sortear. Hay quien mantiene que el Brexit ha merecido la pena y que los beneficios están por llegar. Esperemos que sea pronto.



El desafío chileno

by Jean Paul Brandt

Chile no es un lugar cualquiera. Yuxtaponiendo la cordillera de los Andes y el océano Pacífico, Chile ofrece una de las geografías, floras y faunas más diversas del mundo. Es el país más austral, largo y estrecho del mundo: su ubicación al final de la costa suroeste de Sudamérica le ha ganado su apelativo de “el fin del mundo”.

Sin embargo, tan compleja como su geografía, la política económica de Chile ha tenido cambios agresivos que han cambiado la configuración económica y social del país de forma radical.



A partir de principios de los 1970s, cuando Chile instauraba un modelo socialista de nacionalización de bienes naturales y productivos bajo la presidencia de Salvador Allende, los Estados Unidos comenzaba a gestar paralelamente un plan global del gobierno, impulsado por la Guerra Fría, para formalizar el desarrollo tecnócrata de América Latina. Dichos movimientos internacionales provocaron en Chile un impacto de magnitudes

trágicas, promoviendo una de las más famosas y sanguinarias dictaduras en Latinoamérica, la dictadura militar de ultra-derecha de Augusto Pinochet en 1973-1990, donde también se consolidó el modelo económico neoliberal.

Crecer en el Chile de la pos-dictadura significaba, en aquel entonces, vivir en un país que poco a poco se recuperaba de la brutalidad del gobierno militar y la crisis económica. La educación se comenzó a transformar en un recurso cada vez más accesible y aspiracional, y la clase más pobre comenzaba a ingresar en una anhelada clase media. Chile, en este sentido, comenzó a gestar uno de los procesos económicos y sociales más explosivos alguna vez registrados.

En el 2010 Chile fue parte del histórico hito de ser el único país de Latinoamérica en ser reconocido como un país desarrollado, ingresando oficialmente a la OECD por sus altos estándares de calidad de vida. Sin embargo, desarrollarse en este nuevo Chile distaba mucho del glamour de los índices internacionales. El desarrollo impulsado por el modelo neoliberal y la externalización del mercado nacional ha mermado en gran medida el rol del Estado como agente regulatorio, generando una brecha social desde el mundo privado.

Hoy en día, si bien Chile cuenta con bajos índices de pobreza y desempleo, y altos índices de educación, la diferencia entre quienes pueden optar a mejores servicios, tanto como de salud, educación, vivienda, etc., es abismante, incluso entre la misma clase media. A diferencia de muchos



países europeos e incluso algunos latinoamericanos, el sistema público en Chile está considerado por la población local en el estándar más bajo. Y dado el reducido poder del Estado de derecho, el aumento descontrolado del capital y su mala distribución, aumentó drásticamente el costo de vida en el país. Así, por ejemplo, hoy en día la canasta de alimentos básicos en Chile podría llegar a costar 3 veces más que en Londres, mientras que el salario mínimo es 1/5 del mismo.



De esta forma, las diferencias sociales se acentuaban rápidamente y la distinción de clase polarizó a los chilenos en extremos: “gente de esfuerzo” y “acomodados”. Entre tanto, los “super ricos” mantenían su jerarquía: sólo 4 familias en Chile han controlado casi el 50% por ciento de los activos económicos del país durante las últimas décadas.

En octubre del 2019, producto de la persistente inequidad e inestabilidad social, se genera el “Estallido Social” en Chile, detonado por una serie de alzas en el transporte público pero que recae finalmente en (i) el descontento con el modelo socioeconómico neoliberal, (ii) desigualdad social y económica y el elevado costo de vida, (iii) excesivos abusos de poder y casos de corrupción, y (iv) pocos derechos sociales garantizados.

Luego de numerosos enfrentamientos, que dejaron miles de heridos y decenas de fallecidos, la presión social hizo que el gobierno de Sebastián Piñera finalmente aprobase un plebiscito para octubre del 2020 para redactar una nueva constitución. Éste sería el primer plebiscito nacional desde 1989 (cuando se realizó un referéndum para derrocar la dictadura de Pinochet), otorgándole un valor simbólico en donde casi el 80% de la población votante aprobó cambiar la constitución de la dictadura por una nueva, que buscaba ser generada a través de una Asamblea Constituyente – proceso que aún sigue en vigencia.

Con todo, Chile es un país que se encuentra reestructurándose a sí mismo en estos momentos, buscando cambiar las estructuras sociales hegemónicas de poder. Sin duda Chile ya no es la región emergente de los 80s, ni el modelo económico de los 00s. Sin embargo, sigue siendo el país con una de las economías más fuertes de Latinoamérica, y sus revoluciones sociales buscan rápidamente generar políticas públicas de garantías sociales inclusivas.



Jean Paul Brandt is a PhD candidate in Text and Image Studies at the University of Glasgow.



Costa Rica: tourism or extinction?

by Mac Williams, Coker University, South Carolina, USA

Costa Rica, with its national parks, beaches, waterfalls, whitewater rivers, rain forests, and other unique natural areas, is a premiere destination for adventure-seeking tourists.

Such visitors make an important contribution to the Costa Rican economy – or used to, before COVID-19 decimated the tourism sector, and thereby the economy as a whole. For example, in March 2019, 335,558 foreign visitors landed at Costa Rica's two major international airports. In March 2020, that dropped to 162,994, and in March 2021 it declined even further to 89,263: a 45.2% decline between 2019 and 2020, and 73.4% from 2019 to 2021. In addition, the approximately 10,000 annual cruise ship visitors fell to around 250 people (total) for the remainder of the year after 1 April 2020.



With each tourist spending around \$1,500 per visit, and tourism accounting for more than 8% of GDP, the crisis has been devastating for the estimated 210,000 people employed directly in the sector and the estimated additional 600,000 indirectly dependent on it.

While many of the large nature preserves are owned by either the national government or, in some cases, the local community (e.g. The Santa Elena Cloud Forest Preserve in Monteverde), some places have been developed almost exclusively for international tourists using private funds (e.g. La Paz Waterfall Gardens & Peace Lodge). The former, absent profit motives and supported by state and local governments, do not have the same financial pressures. The private sector, however, is reeling.

The crisis has become so bad that on 29 April 2021 Costa Rica's most influential newspaper, *La Nación*, published an editorial entitled "Tourism: On a Path to Extinction". The article called on the country's leaders to come up with a plan to save companies involved in tourism. Earlier that same month, in an attempt to attract new kinds of sustainable tourism, the national Congress passed a law that allows foreign-flagged luxury boats (and their foreign crews) to work in Costa Rica, thereby hoping to attract wealthy visitors to rent yachts in the country's marinas.

Costa Rica's medical care system is universal. In order safely to reopen to tourists, and not have foreign visitors overtaking the system during the COVID crisis, in October 2020 the government began requiring every international visitor to demonstrate a negative COVID test conducted within 48 hours of their departure flight. They were also obliged to hold an insurance policy that would pay for \$50,000 in COVID-related medical expenses, including any required hotel quarantine during their stay.

Every two weeks the Costa Rican government publishes a list of countries whose nationals are allowed entry, or will be after a certain date. Foreign visitors are not required to quarantine. If you have the required insurance, proof of a negative COVID-19 test, and a passport from a country that does not require a visa to enter, you can buy a ticket to Costa Rica today. (Though Brits beware: on 3 June 2021 Costa Rica was moved on to the UK 'red' list.)



Costa Rica has authorized the Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines, but at the time of writing they are currently only available to citizens and residents of certain age categories, and not to tourists.

For some people, heading to Costa Rica is not a vacation, but a hope for a better, safer life. Many Americans and Canadians have moved there after retirement, with a large influx starting in the town of Escazú in the late 1980s due to low health-care, housing, food, and labour costs. Costa Ricans are hoping that medical tourism will soon resume: prescription medication, dental work, plastic surgery and other procedures that can cost 60-70% less than in the United States used to draw around 70,000 patients to the country each year.



Those from developing countries are not the only arrivals. Costa Rica has a reputation for welcoming refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants, and over 9% of the entire population is foreign-born. Political and economic upheavals have

prompted the Costa Rican government to create a special class of visas for citizens of Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua who applied for asylum in Costa Rica and were hitherto denied. The political and economic situations in these countries have prompted a national outpouring of fraternity. The new visa gives them the right to live and work in Costa Rica for two years.

Costa Rica used to be an almost exclusively agricultural export economy. As the economy diversifies into other sectors like electronic manufacturing, telecommunications, tourism, and a more service-oriented economy, older Costa Ricans who own land that they used to farm are having to accept that that land is not likely to be worked by their children. Young Costa Ricans are educated and moving to the larger cities in the Central Valley for better-paying jobs, with rural areas facing depopulation. As a result of this social trend, some older Costa Ricans are placing their land into ecological conservation easements with the government or non-governmental organizations (NGO) that are not-for-profit entities. This allows them to still own the land, to leave it to their heirs, and even develop it in line with ecotourism laws and guidelines. Thus, the land is protected perpetually,

but the land-owners can still retain its value while protecting it permanently from destructive kinds of development.

The commitment to protecting the environment for future generations is part of the national ethos, and has been ever since the country began shifting toward conservationist policies in the late 1960s. In spite of the shock that COVID-19 has given the tourist industry, there seems to be little interest in attempting to change the



country's focus on ecotourism. Reading the comments section of almost any newspaper article or social media posts by officials or celebrities will show that Costa Ricans, by and large, are hopeful for the return of tourists, for the preservation of their natural resources, and the resulting economic boost that those things will bring. Costa Rica's President has even said in an official Facebook post that Costa Rica misses the tourists and "they miss us." Costa Rica could emerge from this crisis as an even more attractive destination for tourists who have been cooped up for over a year. If, on the other hand, the reaction is too cautious, a wave of bankruptcies could constrict the options available to tourists, weakening the country's appeal and dimming the prospects for economic recovery.

Nevertheless, Costa Ricans are hopeful for the future. As someone who spends far too much time outdoors, looking at birds and nature, I thoroughly recommend Costa Rica as a place for you to do likewise.

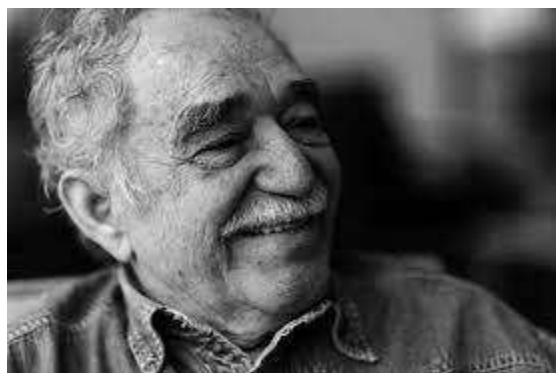
Mac Williams is Professor of Spanish at Coker University in Hartsville, South Carolina, U.S.A. He has lived around three years of his life in Costa Rica and considers it his segunda patria. He is an alumnus of Georgia Tech, BYU, and Tulane universities, has been married for twenty-three years, has three children.



Crónica at 40: ten top takeaways.

BAS Senior Editor Robin Wallis revisits an unforgotten masterpiece.

The trouble with *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* is that it's perfect: exciting, brilliantly structured, with a heady mix of sex and violence driving the plot. And it's short. Put it on an exam syllabus and nothing else will get a look-in. Other masterpieces neglected for decades. Slam dunk for *Crónica*.



Its author, Gabriel García Márquez (GM), vies for consideration as the twentieth century's greatest novelist. He regarded *Crónica* as the work in which he most fully achieved his authorial intentions. Its publication in 1981 nudged the Nobel Committee into awarding him their Prize for Literature the following year.

The unnamed town of *Crónica* is banjaxed by its geography and lack of social cohesion. GM's insights into its shortcomings complement his 1967 masterpiece *Cien Años de Soledad* – a fantastical allegory of the history of Spanish America on a biblical scale. By contrast, *Crónica* is based on a real-life crime which distills GM's vision of Spanish America as eloquently as the 2020 murder of George Floyd illustrated centuries of oppression in the United States.

I read *Crónica* the year it was published, and since then it has provided me with an easy answer to the question ‘what’s your favourite book?’. It made such an impression that I couldn’t resist referring to it when answering the GM question in my Tripos exams in 1984. By that stage there hadn’t been much published on it, so I was expressing my own responses rather than citing those of erudite critics – a precocious strategy at Tripos level. Perhaps I carried that *Crónica*-inspired audacity into the Pre-U syllabuses of recent years, which have invited candidates’ intuitive responses to works too recent to have a *Critical Guide* published on them.

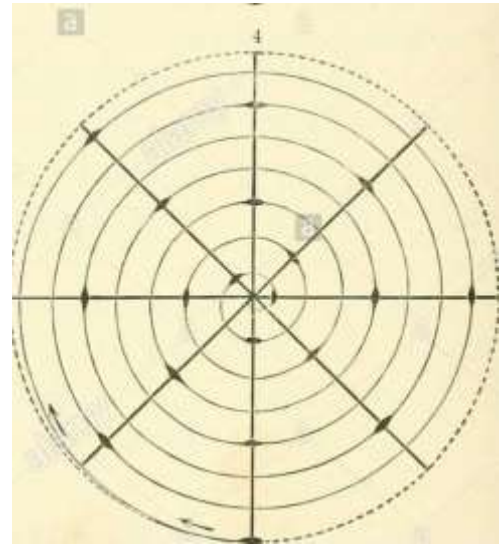


One subtlety of *Crónica* is that, on first reading, it is possible to miss that the novel’s protagonist (in my view, at least) is the unnamed narrator. Although the action is apparently divided between an inexplicable murder and an ill-starred marriage, the story is only being told because something has impelled the narrator, after 27 years, to return to *este pueblo olvidado tratando de recomponer con tantas astillas dispersas el espejo roto de la memoria* [this forgotten town, trying to piece together the broken mirror of memory from so many scattered shards].

On the novel’s fortieth anniversary I have also returned to *Crónica*, piecing together passages that encapsulate why this novel stands out. Below I offer ten examples, with my own square-bracketed translations for non-Spanish speakers. The selection ends with my hypothesis about the core mystery of the narrative: who was Ángela’s lover?

1. Structure of first chapter

The first chapter flows in non-linear fashion from the opening *El día en que lo iban a matar* [the day they were going to kill him] to the closing *Ya lo mataron* [they just killed him]. It is as though the chapter were structured as a spiral, from the centre of which various spokes reach out to the edge. These spokes represent recurring images and phrases, eg the bishop's boat, the cockerels' crowing, Santiago Nasar (SN) grabbing Divina Flor, etc, that give the chapter its haunting atmosphere and sense of inevitability. As the chapter gathers pace our spiral spins in towards the centre, heading to the fatal moment when Luisa Santiago rushes towards the *plaza* only for news of the tragedy to resound back at her through the anonymous voice of doom.



2. Time

This *crónica* is anything but chronological. Some of the characters seem to live outside linear time. Thus Luisa Santiago, who can foretell the ending of any story she hears, refers to SN as *el muerto* [the dead man] even before his death. The narrator finds SN's mother Plácida Linero trapped in time, marooned in the same position in the same hammock as when she last saw SN 27 years earlier. The implication: a society in which time is not linear will continue to commit the errors of the past.

3. Predestination

The narrative is a battleground between predestination and free will. Many of the characters overtly consider themselves predestined, eg *Divina Flor se sabía destinada a la cama furtiva de SN* [Divina Flor knew herself destined for SN's furtive bed], or the brothers contemplating their inescapable duty to murder SN: *Es como si ya nos hubiera sucedido* [It's as though it had already happened to us]. When Ángela names SN, the narrator likens him to a butterfly pinned to the wall, *sin albedrío cuya sentencia estaba escrita desde siempre* [with no free will, whose fate has been written for all time]. A belief in predestination saps the will to take responsibility and shape a better future. Moreover, those who are predestined lose the capacity to choose between right and wrong.

4. Town and authority

GM allows readers to draw their own conclusions about the nature of authority in this society. The mayor's bumbling response to the crisis is one illustration of this, but perhaps the best example is in chapter 1, when the bishop's boat can't be bothered to stop to collect the people's offerings or hold mass. Instead, *el silbato del buque soltó un chorro de vapor a presión al pasar frente al puerto, y dejó ensopados a los que estaban más cerca de la orilla...: el obispo empezó a hacer la señal de la cruz en el aire frente a la muchedumbre del muelle, después siguió haciéndola de memoria, sin malicia ni inspiración, hasta que el buque se perdió de vista y sólo quedó el alboroto de los gallos*. [The boat's horn blew out a pressurised jet of steam as it passed in front of the port, soaking those closest to the shore...: the bishop began making the sign of the cross in the direction of the jetty, continuing to do so automatically, with neither ill will nor inspiration, until the boat disappeared from sight, leaving only the crowing of the cockerels.]. The hierarchy is alienated from and indifferent to the people over whom it holds sway.

5. Communal responsibility

The narrator reflects, 27 years later, that SN's was a death *cuyos culpables podíamos ser todos* [of which we could all be considered guilty]. The townspeople's inability to assume responsibility for averting the tragedy contrasts with their keenness to declare to the judge *su propia importancia en el drama* [their own importance in the drama]. Excuses given range from the admission of a lack of nerve (*se me aflojó la pasta*) to the belief that matters of honour are *estancos sagrados a los cuales sólo tienen acceso los dueños del drama* [sacred pools accesible only to the main players in the drama]. Fate and poor governance play a part, but individual responsibility also comes under scrutiny in the *Crónica* world.

6. Rationality



The visiting judge is the only hope for a rational assessment of events, but he is a whimsical figure with a penchant for popular fiction, philosophical musings and doodling. The archive of the provincial capital is *un estanque de causas perdidas* [a sink of lost causes] which floods regularly and has *más de un siglo de expedientes amontonados en el*

suelo [more than a century of paperwork in heaps all over the floor]. The implication is that the state cannot rise to the challenge of the issues addressed in the novel.

7. Communication

The townspeople's inability to forewarn SN is the dominant example of the breakdown of communication. In addition, Bayardo San Román's *manera de hablar que más bien le servía para ocultar que para decir* [way of speaking that was better at allowing him to hide things rather than state them clearly] is a telling description of how communication becomes subverted in the society of the novel. Without clear communication rational action is undermined.



8. Loneliness

Crónica abounds in striking and evocative images that, while not essential to the narrative, deeply enrich it. One such is the depiction of the bride's father at the wedding reception: Poncio Vicario, the blind goldsmith, *sentado solo en un taburete en el centro del patio, respondiendo saludos fugaces que nadie le hacía, feliz en su cerco de olvido* [sitting alone on a stool in the middle of the patio, happily forgotten, responding to salutations not addressed to him] - a poignant image of individual solitude that complements the collective isolation of *Cien Años de Soledad*.

9. Ángela fights back



Ángela transforms herself into the *dueña de su destino* [master of her own destiny] after her exile from the town. Her love for Bayardo asserts itself as she *volvió a ser virgen para él* [became once again a virgin for him] – a phrase that redefines the terminology of oppression. Conversely, her esteem for her mother plummets: as her mother wipes her mouth on her sleeve and grins at her through her new glasses, *por primera vez desde su nacimiento Ángela Vicario la vio tal como era: una pobre mujer consagrada al culto de sus defectos* [for the first time

in her life Ángela Vicario saw her for what she really was: an unfortunate woman dedicated to the cult of her defects]. For the reader it is ever so satisfying to see such a withering assessment of Pura Vicario after her abusive treatment of her daughter, and to cheer on Ángela as she outwits the system and champions free will over fatalism.

10. Whodunnit?

The narrator repeatedly asserts the improbability of SN being responsible for Ángela's loss of virginity. At the same time, we know that even 27 years on from the event the narrator remains transfixed by SN's death – hence his narration of the novel. We also glimpse that, 23 years after the murder, the narrator found himself *en una época incierta en que trataba de entender algo de mí mismo* [in a period of uncertainty, trying to understand something about myself], about which no further details are offered.

Against this background we find a telling passage at the mid-point of the text that describes SN's consuming passion for María Alejandrina Cervantes (MAC). In mundane terms, MAC is the madame of the town brothel, but the narrator depicts her as much more than this: *una bestia de amor* whose animal magnetism strips the male townsfolk of their reason and their virginity. The long paragraph setting out her powers concludes with a description of her hold over SN. The closing sentence sets out how, in the small hours after the wedding, MAC sent everyone home while quietly leaving her door unbolted for the return of.... The reader has been primed to expect the returning male to be SN, and is therefore brought up

with a jolt to read that the returning male is in fact... the narrator himself (*para que yo volviera a entrar en secreto* – my underlining).

This thunderbolt is immediately followed by a surreal passage describing SN's 'almost magical talent' for disguising people so that they can no longer even recognise themselves: *su diversión predilecta era trastocar la identidad de las mulatas. Saqueaba los roperos de unas para disfrazar a las otras, de modo que todas terminaban por sentirse distintas de sí mismas e iguales a las que no eran*. [his favourite pursuit was muddling up the identities of the girls [in the brothel]. He would ransack some girls' wardrobes to dress up other girls, so that each one ended up feeling different from the person she truly was and identical to someone she was not.]

This revelation of SN's *artificios de transformista* [transformational skills] sits alongside the recurrent testimony during the novel that (i) SN had neither the opportunity nor inclination to be intimate with Ángela, and (ii) the narrator remains obsessed with SN's death.

The alignment of these passages offers a plausible hypothesis to resolve the core mystery of the novel: to wit, that Ángela may have had sexual relations with the narrator at a moment while he was 'magically' disguised to look like SN, leading Ángela in all sincerity to regard SN as her *autor* and the narrator to suffer life-long remorse that his friend SN died in his place.





Mental Illness in Alejandra Pizarnik's 'La jaula'

by Catherine Wray (Y12 student at Canford School)



Mental illness casts a shadow over the life and works of Alejandra Pizarnik. Born in Argentina, the daughter of Jewish immigrants, she was traumatised by an adolescence afflicted with acne, self-esteem issues, introversion, feelings of isolation and a stutter, whilst her sister glowed as a social success and the golden

child of the family.

After studying literature and painting at the University of Buenos Aires, Pizarnik became a poet. Her biographer César Aira called her 'no sólo una gran poeta, sino... la más grande, y la última'. Nonetheless, she remained gripped by depression. At the age of 36, she took her own life, leaving behind her writing and her poems, some of which have only recently been translated into English.

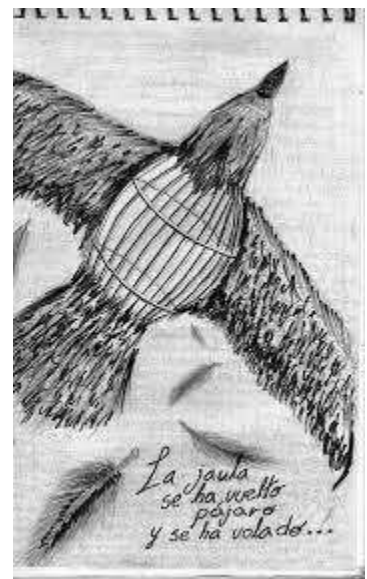
The mental and emotional anguish she experienced is reflected in her poem *La jaula* [The cage]:

Afuera hay sol.

*No es más que un sol
 pero los hombres lo miran
 y después cantan.
 Yo no sé del sol.
 Yo sé la melodía del ángel
 y el sermón caliente
 del último viento.
 Sé gritar hasta el alba
 cuando la muerte se posa desnuda
 en mi sombra.
 Yo lloro debajo de mi nombre.
 Yo agito pañuelos en la noche
 y barcos sedientos de realidad
 bailan conmigo.
 Yo oculto clavos
 para escarnecer a mis sueños enfermos.
 Afuera hay sol.
 Yo me visto de cenizas.*

The poem's famed last couplet [outside there is sun. I am dressed in ashes] has become emblematic of her work. It refers to a great glory and jubilation which she is too weighed down by her depression to appreciate. Like a bird in a cage, she is barred from joy. It also alludes to isolation, a feeling of not belonging to the world if you cannot experience it the way others can.

This impression is also present in the first stanza [it is no more than a sun, but the men look at it, and then they sing]. She is unable to appreciate the light – even a light as huge and power-ful as the sun. Her depression has numbed her senses and put distance between her and the men who find joy and comfort in the light.



This removal from the light is explored further in the next stanza. Pizarnik declares that the sun is unfamiliar to her: 'Yo no sé del sol. Yo sé la melodía del ángel y el sermón caliente del último viento' [I know not of the sun. I know of the angel's melody and the hot sermon of the last wind]. The pairing of 'Yo no sé' and 'Yo sé' shows the contrast she perceives between others' experiences and her own. The staccato precision with which she writes emphasises her certainty and gives the poem a gospel-like resonance.

Pizarnik's desperation is further expressed when she declares, 'Sé gritar hasta el alba' [I know how to scream until dawn]. Once again, Pizarnik takes an aspect of nature which is regarded as positive – dawn is beautiful and vibrant and brings with it a new day with new possibilities – and demonstrates how even nature can be distorted by mental illness. The image of a person screaming until dawn brings to mind the exhaustion they must feel when dawn finally arrives, thereby alluding to the physical and emotional ordeal of those who struggle with depression.



To further emphasise this point, Pizarnik writes 'cuando la muerte se posa desnuda en mi sombra' [when death lies naked in my shadow]. In this way death is exposed and vulnerable, laid bare before her, where she can examine and inspect it as much as she wants. This implies she can see it, feel it, almost reach out and touch it. In this mental state, death is not an abstraction but rather a tangible object. It is close to her. It is tempting. It is embedded in her shadow.

The final two stanzas can be seen as a surrender to the power of la jaula, which can be seen as a cage within her mind and therefore harder to escape. Pizarnik mentions crying 'debajo de mi nombre' [under my name] as if her identity has been weakened and perhaps removed. The image of waving handkerchiefs is a classic symbol of surrender, bringing to mind the waving of a white flag to end a fight. Handkerchiefs are associated with tears and sorrow. The mention of 'barcos' [ships] could also bring to mind a battle, whilst the phrase 'sedientos de realidad' [thirsty for reality] alludes to a need for normality and an escape from the mental illness which has seeped into her mind and taken command. The idea that these

'barcos' are her only source of company demonstrates the full extent of her solitude.

The final stanza reads like an acceptance of her pain and demise. Once again, the staccato effect is present, as if the poet is playing sharp notes on an instrument. The end of the poem echoes the beginning by contrasting what is in the world with the state of her world, but it goes further than that. 'Yo me visto de cenizas' implies that she has prepared herself for death and that she feels it is already so integral to her that she has nothing more to lose. Her life is gone, all the beauty in the world is unknown to her, and all there is for her to do – all she can do – is end her pain.

La jaula was published in 1958. Fourteen years later, she fulfilled the haunting prophecy, overdosing on Secobarbital while on weekend leave from the hospital where she was institutionalised. There can be no doubt that mental illness had a stranglehold on her life and work. In her work, her pain was immortalised, but in her life it shattered her will to live.