



¡Bienvenidos!

Welcome to our summer 2022 edition, completing the Bulletin's first five years of publication – technically our 'wooden' jubilee, though 'quinquennial' sounds fancier.

How the House of Borbón in Madrid would relish the kind of Jubilee seen in the UK at the start of June. A consolation for King Felipe at least that, on the day the Queen made her balcony appearance, he was court-side to see 'King Rafa' set another record in Paris.

Felipe also had a role in BAS editor William Chislett's bid to [become Spanish](#). Discover how, why, and whether he was successful.

This edition coincides with the fortieth anniversary of Argentina's defeat in the Falklands War. We ask whether that War ended the culture of [military dictatorships in Latin America](#) – and keep an eye open for parallels with Russia/Ukraine.



Russia has been a crucial ally of the Venezuelan regime in its suppression of dissent. The [Venezuelan opposition's](#) former representative in London sees new female leadership as key to her country's salvation (in Spanish).

Colombia's populist, pro-Venezuela presidential candidate [Gustavo Petro](#) was once a guerrilla, calling himself Aureliano in honour of the García Márquez character. His life-story could come from the pages of the same author: we take a closer look at his trajectory (in Spanish).

Stephen Hart's [Critical Guide to *Crónica de una muerte anunciada*](#) is almost as much a classic as the García Márquez novel itself. *Crónica* remains on the A-level syllabus, but the Critical Guide is out of print. Bulletin readers can download a photocopy here free of charge.

One irony of Chile's 2020-21 *estallido* was the despoiling of the [Violeta Parra](#) museum in Santiago, near the epicentre of the street demonstrations. Ironic, because she would have been a keen advocate of the reforms being demanded. We look at her unique legacy of words and music (in Spanish).



[Joaquín Sabina's lyrics](#) have long been studied in Spanish universities. This summer they found their way into the Cambridge Pre-U (A-level equivalent) literature exam. We examine how Sabina's writing has won over the literary establishment.

In the ground-breaking documentary *El silencio de otros*, Chato, a former victim of Franco's torturers, wonders whether Spain will ever get a museum detailing the atrocities of its dictatorship like the one he visits in Argentina. We report on the project now underway to build just such a [Museo Nacional de la Guerra Civil](#) in Teruel.



Javier Cercas' [Soldados de Salamina](#) deals with the human legacy of the Civil War. We look at how the novel treats the key issue of remembrance, both through historical records and personal experience.

For the past year UCL, the Bulletin of Advanced Spanish and the Instituto

Cervantes have been working together on [how to upgrade Spanish A-level](#). We publish their key recommendations.

Both Spain and Latin America have re-opened for travel post-Covid. Glasgow University student Ola Calicka tells us what it was like to spend her [Third Year Abroad](#) in Gran Canaria.

Finally, our [Essay Competition](#) for Sixth Formers deadline is 15 August.

Since 2017 the Bulletin of Advanced Spanish has been a free resource, read on every continent, written by and for enthusiasts at all stages of their exploration of the language and culture of the Spanish-speaking world. Please see the Guidelines tab if you would like to write for us. The deadline for the next edition is the end of September.

Feliz verano a todos,

The BAS editorial team



Upgrading A-level Spanish: five answers

BAS editor Stephen M. Hart

With the help of Bulletin readers and others, we have just completed the project designed to upgrade the options on offer in the Spanish A-level syllabus. (The project's official title is 'Developing a Partnership Between Universities and Schools in Order to Enhance the Student Experience of the Spanish A-Level' (15 March 2021—14 March 2022), and it was funded by UCL's HEIF Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund, itself funded by UKRI.)

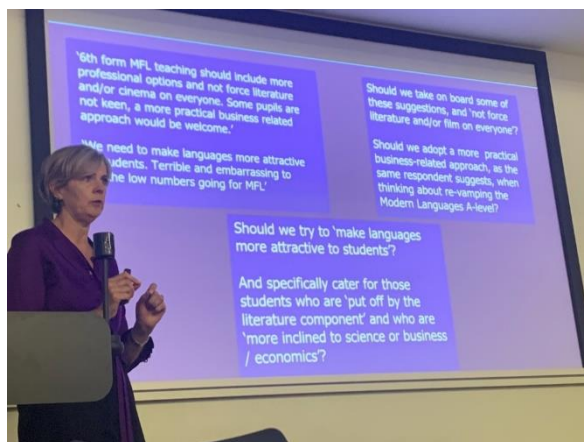


Researchers have put forward five recommendations that, we believe, will simultaneously enhance the student experience of the Spanish A-level curriculum as well as lead to increased uptake of Spanish A-level in secondary schools.

One of the tasks we set ourselves when undertaking this project was to discover why it is that Modern Languages Departments persuade only 5% of their GCSE students to take an A-level in their subject while Geography and the STEM subjects typically convert 10-15% of the students taking their subjects at GCSE level into A-level students.[\[1\]](#)

In some cases this may be as a result of the desire to study something new – which is clearly at work with those students who choose to do A-levels in subjects such as Psychology, Philosophy and Economics – but there is mounting (though not incontrovertible) evidence – including from OFSTED – that students find the Modern Languages curriculum at GCSE and A-level to be ‘underwhelming’.^[2]

The question of how we should address this failing was made by a number of presenters at the Modern Languages Open Day held at University College School on 3 November 2021: we need to provide a more coherent narrative about the varied careers that Modern Languages graduates achieve, as well as a better articulation of the specific skills set gained as a result of a Modern Languages BA which is valued highly by employers. As one commentator suggested: “We need to take a leaf out of the STEM textbook and tell a better story about how Modern Languages can get you a great job.” As another of the presenters quipped: “If we can’t beat them, let’s join them”.



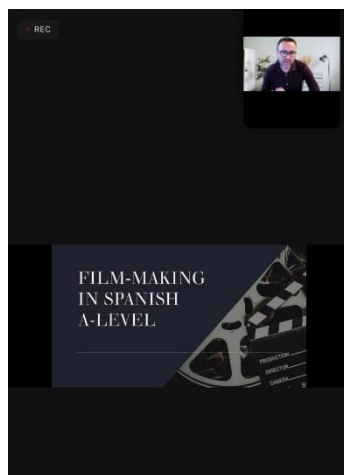
In our project we tried to dig deeper into the problem with the Modern Languages A-level curriculum. We focussed in particular on that group of students who appear to have enjoyed their GCSE in Modern Languages and who would have been interested in taking an A-level in Modern Languages but claimed that they were put off by some aspects of the A-level curriculum. We received a great deal of feedback in our first Opinion (sic) survey carried out in June-July 2021 that suggested that, for those students who are taking STEM subjects or Economics, the component that they find most off-putting is the literature/film paper.^[3] If we adopt the strategy of “If we can’t beat them, join them”, where would this lead us? Our conclusion was that this group of students could be incentivised to take a Modern Language at A-level if their preferences were taken into account and other options made available to them. One of the key recommendations of this project, therefore, is that the Spanish A-level should provide three new options as follows:

- ‘Science and Technology in Spanish’
- ‘Business and Economics in Spanish’, and
- ‘Film-making in Spanish’.

We suggest that these options will be attractive to STEM, Economics and Creative Arts students who like languages but are put off by the current structure of the A-level syllabus.^[4] Students taking one of these tracks would take the same language courses as all other students (i.e. oral as well as written language) but – instead of the literature/film options – they would take one of the three options listed above for their A-level.

We would like to emphasise that the aim here is not to disadvantage literary studies or film studies in the Spanish A-level in favour of a whole-scale adoption of STEM + Economics options. This would be not only controversial but counter-productive. Our assumption, indeed, is that those students who study languages and use that knowledge in order to investigate the culture, literature and film underpinned by the language they are studying will continue to choose the literature and film options at A-level, and we also assume that this group of students will continue to constitute the largest group within those students opting to take Modern Languages at A-level. The study of literature and film offers access to a rich cultural capital that would not be available, for example, in the ‘Science and Technology’ and ‘Business and Economics’ options.^[5] Indeed, the study of literature and film can be reinvigorated by a new focus on the ‘cultural competencies’ that are articulated by literary and filmic texts.^[6]

That said, our proposal is that offering options in Science, Business and Film-making will broaden the appeal of the Modern Languages A-level and increase Sixth Form ML enrolments, allowing students in the sciences, economics and the arts the opportunity to add an extra linguistic bow to their portfolio while retaining their focus on science, economics and fine art. Pointing in a similar direction these options are likely to appeal to a new generation of ML teachers in secondary schools who may not have studied film and literature at university level and are therefore more reluctant to take on the teaching of the literature and film options in their overall teaching portfolio.



But questions were raised about whether these new options would work for all teachers, and also – more pertinently – what would these options look like? We decided to provide a mock-up description of what the Science, Business and Film-making options would look like in an article ‘Vote for Modern Languages’, published in the February 2022 edition of the *Bulletin of Advanced Spanish*.^[7] To get some feedback on these options, we also included a survey in the article, which – after asking respondents to identify themselves – asked them the following four questions:

1. Would you like to see a new option in Paper 2 of the A-level Spanish exam on Science & Technology in Spanish?
2. Would you like to see a new option in Paper 2 of the A-level Spanish exam on Business & Economics in Spanish?
3. Would you like to see a new option in Paper 2 of the A-level Spanish exam on Film-making in Spanish?
4. Would you be more in favour of these options if you knew that there would be options at University to study these subjects alongside a language?

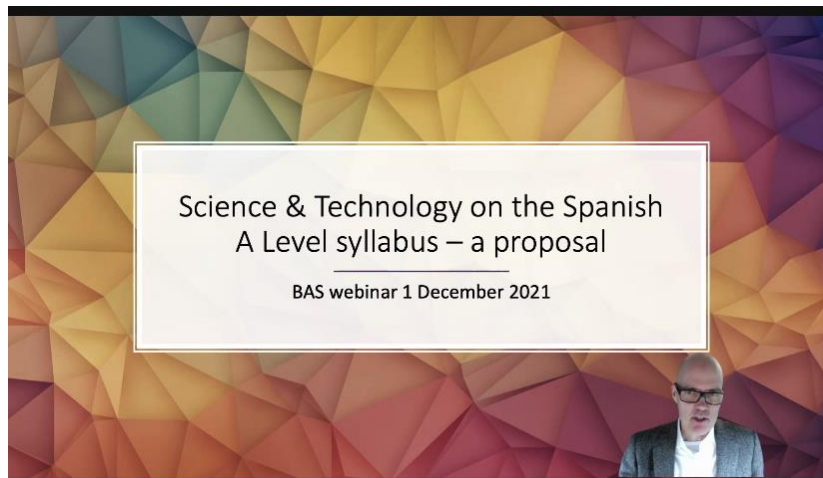
We asked respondents to rate their approval rating for each of these proposals on a scale of 1 (negative) to 10 (positive). The Opinio survey was carried out in March 2022, and it is clear that these proposed options have met with a ringing endorsement across the ML community. All of the options, that is, Science (Q.1), Business (Q.2), and Film-making (Q.3) were looked on favourably by respondents. We received 110 responses, showing that Secondary School teachers (average scores: Q.1=7.1, Q.2=7.4, Q.3=6.7, Q.4=8.3) and university teachers (Q.1=7.39, Q.2=7.71, Q.3=8.32, Q.4=7.97) are fully behind these proposals. Year-11 students also favour these reforms (Q.1=5.93, Q.2= 6.26, Q.3=6.30), and, like Sixth-Formers, they view follow-through at university as essential (Q.4=7.85).^[8] This is precisely the pool of students we must reach out to, including those pupils in State Schools that partner with Independent Schools, in order to widen participation in ML teaching and learning at A-level.

The results of the February-March 2022 survey, in a nutshell, suggest that we should push forward with the proposed reform of the Spanish A-level curriculum.

Distilling the various recommendations from this year-long study is not easy. We decided to focus on concrete and achievable aims and objectives rather than blue-skies thinking. Our five recommendations, thus, are as follows:

- Create sample exam papers and sample curricular materials for each of the three A-level options in Science & Technology in Spanish, Business & Economics in Spanish, and Film-making in Spanish
- Contact A-level boards that offer Spanish to gauge their opinion on these new options and provide assistance to them if they would like to include options of this kind in their current Spanish A-level curriculum
- Encourage and incentivise ML university departments to create new courses that will allow students taking these options to continue these curricular combinations to BA level

- Strengthen the attractiveness of the provision of literature and film options by focussing on the cultural capital and competencies articulated in literary and filmic texts
- Articulate more clearly the narrative on the employability of students who take languages: “We need to take a leaf out of the STEM textbook and tell a better story about how Modern Languages can get you a great job.”



In order to implement these five recommendations, the BAS editorial team have created sample curricular materials for each of the three A-level options in Science & Technology in Spanish, Business & Economics in Spanish, and Film-making in Spanish. We will be contacting A-level boards over the summer and autumn of 2022 to propose changes to the current Spanish A-level curriculum based on these proposals.

This project has led to the creation of a new proposal for targeted investment at UCL in “Language”, submitted on behalf of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities to the UCL’s Strategic Plan 2022-27 on 31 March 2022 (<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/strategic-plan-2022-27>), which includes incentivising ML university departments to create new BA cross-faculty courses combining languages and science. We will be using the BAS student essay competition – as well as a series of specially commissioned articles on A-level texts that focus on cultural capital and competencies, to be published in BAS – as a vehicle to enhance the quality of student essays on literature and film options. Finally we will introduce a new focus in BAS on employability for ML graduates, commissioning opinion-pieces from individuals who have used their ML as a spring-board to success in their lives at work, in order to create a more vibrant narrative about how Modern Languages can open doors into a variety of different careers.

[1] 'Developing a Partnership Between Universities and Schools in Order to Enhance the Student Experience of the Spanish A-level'; <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/european-languages-culture/research/research-projects>

[2] Oliver Hopwood, 'Planning for Growth in Modern Languages: Some Fundamentals', paper given at UCL webinar, 'Modern Languages: Challenges and Solutions', 14 October 2021; for recording see webinar recording in previous note.

[3] Stephen Hart, 'Modern Languages: Challenges and Solutions: The Results of the *Bulletin of Advanced Spanish* Opinion Modern Languages Survey (June-July 2021)', *BAS* (October 2021); <https://bulletinofadvancedspanish.files.wordpress.com/2022/02/bas-5.1-october-2021-archive-2.pdf>

[4] For discussion of the three options see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMDySGLAgUE>.

[5] Helen Laurenson, 'Re-framing language A-level in the Post-Covid Context', plenary lecture given at UCL on 3 May 2022.

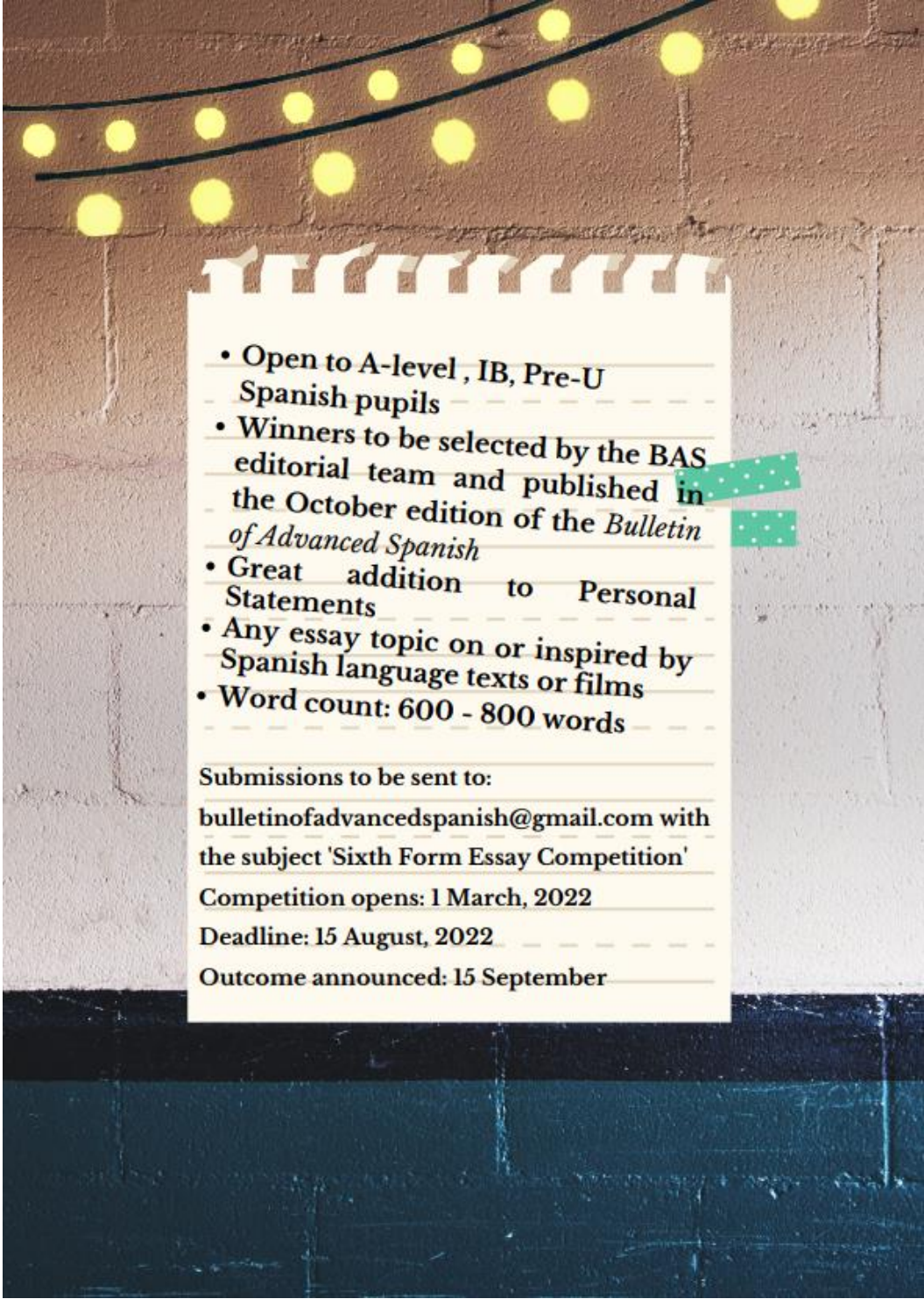
[6] Helen Laurenson, 'Putting life skills at the core of the Spanish A level', *BAS* (October 2021); <https://bulletinofadvancedspanish.files.wordpress.com/2022/02/bas-5.1-october-2021-archive-2.pdf>

[7] <https://bulletinofadvancedspanish.com/vote-for-modern-languages/>

[8] For the survey results, see the Results Survey (March 2022).

Essay competition



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- Open to A-level , IB, Pre-U Spanish pupils
 - Winners to be selected by the BAS editorial team and published in the October edition of the *Bulletin of Advanced Spanish*
 - Great addition to Personal Statements
 - Any essay topic on or inspired by Spanish language texts or films
 - Word count: 600 - 800 words

Submissions to be sent to:

bulletinofadvancedspanish@gmail.com with the subject 'Sixth Form Essay Competition'

Competition opens: 1 March, 2022

Deadline: 15 August, 2022

Outcome announced: 15 September



Year Abroad in the Canary Islands

By University of Glasgow student Aleksandra Calicka



Living in Gran Canaria was so much more than a good time on the beach or long walks through the dunes. Of course, I sunbathed on the beach, I did some hiking, and went to the dunes. Yet, for me, as a language learner, it was a life-changing experience on my language-learning journey and beyond.

Once in Spain, I made a conscious decision to avoid talking to Canarians in English. There were times where I didn't understand them, and there were times when they didn't understand me. However, none of that mattered because their welcoming nature meant that they were very patient and always took time to repeat and clarify.

They were also eager to explain their local words, so after a while *guagua* (bus) and *fleje* (a lot) became a part of my everyday vocabulary bank. Learning in context, from the natives, also proved to be extremely effective. Sure, we can all learn from films, books and dictionaries, but we all know that the more we care, the more we remember. While I could technically learn how to say



“gasket”, it is that much easier to remember it once I had to discuss a broken sink with my landlord. Learning in real-life situations makes me remember more relevant words faster and in the right context so that they can be used effectively in communication, which is the ultimate goal of language learning.

I chose to study at a Spanish university instead of working as a British Council teacher or doing an internship because I wanted to make sure that I keep developing academically – even on my year abroad. To do that, I decided to study subjects such as linguistics and Spanish for native speakers. This way, during linguistics classes, I developed a more academic Spanish, and, on top of that, learnt about the theories which are useful for every linguist. By contrast, Spanish for native speakers was an interesting opportunity to look at the language I’m trying to master from a different angle. Not only did I learn about grammar, but also about the history, dialects, and other characteristics of Spanish.



It was also a deeply enriching experience on a cultural and personal level. Culturally, I was able to see a way of living which is more relaxed than the one I am used to. I enjoyed my *leche leche* (coffee with regular milk and addition of condensed milk) in a local café, going to the beach even in February, and hearing stories from people I met along the way, whether local or from all over the world. I know that friends that I met in Gran Canaria will continue to be present in my life for years to come, and for that I am incredibly grateful.

Lastly, any change is a challenge that makes us transform as a person. Moving to yet another country, making new friends, finding yourself in a completely new reality and even completing the paperwork to obtain all the documents you need can be overwhelming. However, I can reassure you that the growth and lessons that result from all those experiences make it absolutely worthwhile.



How and why I became Spanish

BAS editor William Chislett

TRIBUNA ABIERTA

SI REINO UNIDO SALE DE LA UE, ME CONVERTIRÉ EN ESPAÑOL

POR WILLIAM CHISLETT

«La consecuencia de una salida de Reino Unido de la UE es que podríamos encontrarnos con que nuestro derecho a trabajar, a residir y a acceder a servicios públicos ya no estaría garantizado»

Si Gran Bretaña votara el 23 de junio a favor de abandonar la Unión Europea (UE), ya, y aproximadamente otros 1.3 millones de los llamados expatriados que viven en países de la UE, podríamos convertirnos en inmigrantes ilegales, a no ser que el Gobierno británico mantenga algún tipo de acuerdo de libre circulación de personas con el bloque que ha dejado. Vivo en Madrid desde 1986, lo que –para echar sal en la posible herida– me impide votar en el referéndum, ya que solo pueden hacerlo los que llevan viviendo menos de quince años en el extranjero.

Un grupo de británicos que lleva más tiempo viviendo en la UE en el extranjero interpuso recientemente una demanda contra el Gobierno británico ante el Tribunal Supremo en Londres aduciendo que se les ha privado injustamente de su derecho al voto. Estas personas afirman que son «británicos en Europa» que ejercen su derecho a la libertad de movimientos en la UE para vivir y trabajar en Europa y que eso son «expatriados». Yo también me considero un británico en Europa.

El principal destino en la UE para los británicos que viven fuera de su país es España (más de 300.000), muchos de los cuales son jubilados. La consecuencia de una salida de Reino Unido de la UE es que podríamos encontrarnos con que nuestro derecho continuado a trabajar, a residir, a poseer propiedades en España y a acceder a servicios públicos, como los tratamientos médicos, ya se estaría automáticamente garantizado. He cotizado tanto en el sistema español de Seguridad Social como en el británico, a diferencia de los jubilados que solo cotizaron en el sistema británico, por lo que, al menos, no deberían negarme la atención sanitaria.

Existe una considerable incertidumbre sobre lo que nos pasará. ¿Significará el hecho de que vivamos en España (o en otros países de la UE) cuando se produzca la salida de Reino Unido de la UE que hemos obtenido unos «derechos adquiridos» de acuerdo con el derecho internacional? En otras palabras, ¿los que ya han ejercido su derecho a vivir en Estados de la UE antes de la salida de Reino Unido mantendrán ese derecho después de la salida? Según la biblioteca del Parlamento británico, que proporciona información imparcial, «la retirada de un tratado exime a las partes de cualquier obligación futura entre ellas, pero no afecta a los derechos u obligaciones adquiridos de acuerdo con el antes de la retirada». Pero los países de la UE, enfurecidos por la marcha de Reino Unido, podrían decidir vengarse y presionarnos, por ejemplo, obligando

a los propietarios extranjeros de casas a pagar más impuestos. Mi decisión de marcharme de Reino Unido a los 35 años fue una decisión muy consciente. Aborrecía vivir en una isla y la actitud patriótica y antieuropea. El país me fascinó (en la tradición de los «curiosos imperimentales») desde que informé sobre la transición a la democracia en España como corresponsal de «The Times» (1975-78). En 1976, mi mujer y yo compramos una casa en ruinas en un pueblo de la provincia de Cuenca, que se convirtió en un microcosmos de los profundos cambios que se estaban produciendo y que seguimos teniendo. Mientras trabajaba para el «Financial Times» (1978-84), me mudé a México desde España y después a Londres (1984-86); me sentía como un extranjero en mi propio país. Por entonces mi mujer y yo habíamos adoptado a dos niños mexicanos. Nuestro deseo de que fuesen bilingües (mucho más que sus padres adoptivos) fue una de las muchas razones por las que volvimos de forma permanente a Madrid en 1986, lo que pudimos hacer gracias a que tanto España como Reino Unido eran miembros de la UE, un maravilloso concepto, cualesquiera que sean sus defectos. Como dice la expresión inglesa, el hogar está donde esté el corazón. La UE me permitió lograr esto.

PIEDRA

Ahora la situación podría cambiar, e, incluso si no lo hace, he decidido que si Reino Unido abandona la UE solicitaré la nacionalidad española para darle totalmente la espalda a mi país de nacimiento y en reconocimiento a todo lo que ha hecho España por mi profesional, personal y emocionalmente.

Por razones muy, muy diferentes, seguiría el ejemplo del escritor Arturo Barea, uno de mis héroes, cuya lápida conmemorativa en el cementerio de la localidad de Farnington, en la campiña de Oxford, ayúdame a restaurar. Barea huyó de la Guerra Civil española y pasó los últimos 18 años de su vida en Inglaterra. Ambos el país al que se exilió, como yo amo el mío, aunque yo no me considero un exiliado, y se convirtió en ciudadano británico en 1948. Quizá no sea el único que pretenda cambiar su nacionalidad.

WILLIAM CHISLETT ES ANALISTA ASOCIADO DEL REAL INSTITUTO ELcano

In April 2016 I vowed in the Spanish newspaper *ABC* that if the UK left the EU, as a result of the referendum in June of that year, I would seek the nationality of the country where I have lived and worked for more than half of my life – Spain.

I am not given to breaking promises, particularly those made publicly, but I did not immediately apply for citizenship. I was put off by having to take the language and culture exams (what if I failed?), the cost of the process, having to get various documents translated and then waiting up to two years or more. Furthermore, the post-Brexit agreement between the UK and the EU did not change my legal status in Spain, and it was not even compulsory to turn my annoying EU residency permit (a piece of green paper with no photo and which is only valid when used with a

passport) into the special post-Brexit residency card for Brits (with a photo and so the equivalent of an ID). So why bother?

In late 2020, three friends – the lawyer José Manuel Romero Moreno, the novelist Antonio Muñoz Molina and the sociology professor, Emilio Lamo de Espinosa, offered to be my *padrinos* and back my nationality via a faster and easier route known as *Carta de Naturaleza*. This route is based on a person's particular circumstances: granting nationality this way is the prerogative of the Cabinet via a Royal Decree, signed by King Felipe VI.

I started the process in February 2021 at the Justice Ministry in Madrid, where I filled in the *Carta de Naturaleza* form and was told the requirements. My birth and marriage certificates had to be translated into Spanish by a *traductor jurado* and each one also needed an apostille which also had to be translated. The apostille is a seal regulated by the 1961 Hague Convention which facilitates and shortens the necessary procedure for the authentication of public documents. This overcomes the need for diplomatic legalisation of these documents issued in a country that is a signatory of the Convention in order for them to have legal effect in another signatory country.



the Rock when the ferry left Algeciras.

I mailed the original of my birth certificate to the UK, by recorded delivery, and was able to apply for the apostille in Gibraltar electronically. The Registry Office there replied that, before this could be done, my marriage certificate needed to be renewed as the format of the certificate had changed. When everything was done it would be mailed back to me. The Covid pandemic was in full swing and mail between Spain and Gibraltar is unreliable even in normal times. Fearing the new certificate with its apostille would never arrive or take weeks, I contacted a person



I was born in Oxford in 1951 and married in Gibraltar in 1974, when the frontier with Spain was closed (by Franco in 1969 and not re-opened until 1982, seven years after the dictator's death). My fiancé and I travelled from Madrid to Gibraltar by overnight train to Algeciras and a ferry to Tangiers, and back the same way. Frustratingly, we could almost touch

in Madrid who is the Rock's eyes and ears in Spain. He let me use his system: the new marriage certificate with its apostille was taken across the border by an employee of the Gibraltar government and couriered to Madrid.

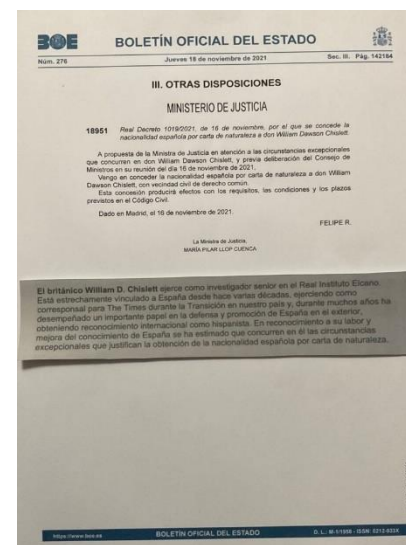
I also needed to provide to the Justice Ministry a copy of my *certificado de empadronamiento*, which is an official register of where I live, and a *certificado de antecedentes penales* showing I had committed no crimes in Spain. Both were easy to obtain online.

I gradually delivered these documents to the Justice Ministry, along with testimonials from my three sponsors. By March 2021, I thought I had fulfilled all the documentary requirements – but this was not the case. I still needed proof that I had committed no crimes in the UK, a requirement I had not been told about. I was also told my application would move along much more quickly if I obtained the written support of a Spanish Minister or Secretary of State (no one below that rank).

The UK police certificate duly arrived, though I had to send it back to another department in the UK to get the apostille. Juan González-Barba, the Secretary of State for the European Union at the time, provided a letter of support.

April 2021 came and I thought I was home and dry, but the months went by and I heard nothing. I thought this was supposed to be the fast route, but, as the Spanish saying reminded me: *Las cosas del palacio van despacio*. One day I mentioned this to Joaquín Almunia, a former Socialist politician and prominent member of the European Commission. Joaquín made a few calls and my file was located on someone's desk. More time went by. Joaquín cornered Pilar Llop, the Justice Minister, at the Socialist Party Congress in Valencia in October and asked what was happening. She took note and not long afterwards I was told my file would soon arrive at La Moncloa, the seat of government, for approval or not by the Cabinet.

Sure enough, on 16 November 2021 I was one of seven people to be given Spanish nationality. Among the others were Nélida Piñón, the Brazilian writer and winner of the 2005 Prince of Asturias for Literature; the Georgian chess professional Ana Matnadze; Fraidelyn Padua from the Dominican Republic, whose mother was killed in Spain by her partner; and the Mexican writer and human rights activist Lydia Cacho, who fled to Spain after suffering death threats. I was in distinguished company.



The final step, without which I would not be granted a Spanish ID card or passport, was to swear allegiance before a magistrate to the Constitution and to King Felipe VI and renounce my British nationality. The latter is the object of much confusion and misunderstanding. The only people that are legally allowed to hold Spanish nationality and at the same time that of their country of origin are those from Latin America and citizens of Andorra, the Philippines, Equatorial Guinea, Portugal and Sefardic Jews. However, I did not have to surrender my passport, and I intend to use it if and when I travel to the UK. Alfonso Dastis, the Foreign Minister during the previous Popular Party government, had assured me there was no known case of someone with Spanish nationality having their other passport confiscated for continuing to use it. Whether I will be able to renew my British passport in 2028 when it expires, if I declare that I also have Spanish nationality, is not clear, but actually I don't care.



The author with the magistrate to whom he swore allegiance to the 1978 Constitution

The document that the magistrate gave me enabled me to go to a police station and request the ID card and passport. They were given to me on the spot at a cost for both of €42, far quicker and less expensive than in the UK. It was rather surreal to hand over my British passport for the title page to be photocopied at the police station and to be handed it back, with nothing said about whether it could still be used or not. UK citizens living in Europe have to obtain or renew their passports via Belfast, a process that takes up to 10 weeks and costs £106.

How do I feel about being Spanish? Was the process worth it? What advantages do I now have? As for the specific advantages, the only ones that I can see are being able to vote in Spanish general elections (when the UK was a EU member I could only vote

in municipal, European and regional elections) and not having to stand in the non-EU queue when arriving at EU airports. My British wife has many more merits than I do, but she is not included in my Spanish nationality and so we will have to stand in separate queues. She can now apply for Spanish nationality as the wife of a Spaniard but is not going to do so.

More than anything else, my decision to become Spanish is an emotional one. I lived through and reported on Spain's 1975-78 transition to democracy for *The Times*, an unforgettable and seminal experience witnessing the country move from darkness to light. Spain got under my skin. After six years as the *Financial Times* correspondent in Mexico and two dull years in the FT's head office in London, my wife and I, with two small sons, decided to return to Madrid for good in 1986. Neither of us liked living on an island, cut off, and not just geographically, from mainland Europe, nor the Little Englander mentality. We had kept our *casa de campo* in the province of Cuenca, bought in 1976, and so always had a base in Spain.

The madness of Brexit infuriated me. The antics of the government of Boris Johnson since the UK's exit from the EU were the final straw and made me decide to become Spanish. One can grieve the loss of a country (and the values it used to represent, including pragmatism and tolerance) and not just that of a person, even though one still holds the passport of that country.

This loss has been more than compensated by becoming Spanish.



Spain's Civil War Museum: grappling with a national tragedy

BAS editor William Chislett

Coming to terms with a tragic and bloody past makes great demands on any country, particularly one like Spain, which experienced a three-year Civil War in the 1930s followed by a dictatorship imposed by the victors until 1975, when General Franco died and the country transitioned to democracy.

Whereas there is little argument over who is the common enemy when a country goes to war against another nation, this is not the case in a civil war that pits neighbours and sometimes families against one another, and where the narrative of why and what happened is monopolised by the winning side. A civil war is the worst kind of conflict as it leaves the deepest and longest scars, which, for decades, pass from one generation to the next. Peace is not born after a civil war ends: Franco's opponents called his decades of 'peace' the 'peace of the cemeteries'.

More than 80 years after the end of Spain's Civil War, politicians of all colours are still arguing about what caused the conflict that left over 200,000 dead on the battle fronts, a similar number murdered extrajudicially or executed after flimsy legal process on both sides and forced 250,000 on the losing Republican side into permanent exile.



By almost common consent among historians, the War was triggered in July 1936 by Franco's military coup against the democratically elected and hence legitimate Republican government. Spain's Second Republic was declared in April 1931 after Alfonso XIII voluntarily went into exile, following the results of municipal elections that, in Alfonso's

words, 'have shown me that I no longer enjoy the love of my people'.

Last year Pablo Casado, the leader of the conservative Popular Party (PP), provoked the wrath of the Socialist-led minority coalition government when he told Congress the Civil War 'was a confrontation between those who wanted democracy without law and those who wanted law without democracy'.

The PP opposes the government's Democratic Memory Law (DML), which builds upon the 2007 Historic Memory Law of the previous Socialist government and is painfully going through parliament in the face of 500 amendments. Among other things, it would turn the site of Franco's former mausoleum into a civil cemetery, ban organisations that glorify the dictator and promote more actively the search and exhumations of victims buried in mass graves. Between 2000 and 2019, before the DML came into force, 800 common graves were discovered and dug up and the remains of close to 10,000 victims recovered.



Franco was also exhumed and removed from the grandiose Valley of the Fallen in 2018, a monument to his victory, partly built by prisoners, that inspires fear and not reconciliation. Many believe that it should be turned into a museum that explains the Valley's history. 'A dictator can't have a state tomb in a consolidated democracy like Spain's', Carmen Calvo, the former Socialist Deputy Prime Minister, said at the time.

Casado has vowed to repeal the DML if the PP wins the next election, not due until the end of 2023. For the right, the historical memory movement stirs up division and recrimination, while for the hard-left Unidas Podemos, the government's junior partner, and the Catalan and Basque parties it does not go far enough. Their demands include a repeal of the 1977 Amnesty Law, which shielded former Franco officials and members of the Basque terrorist organisation ETA from criminal prosecution.

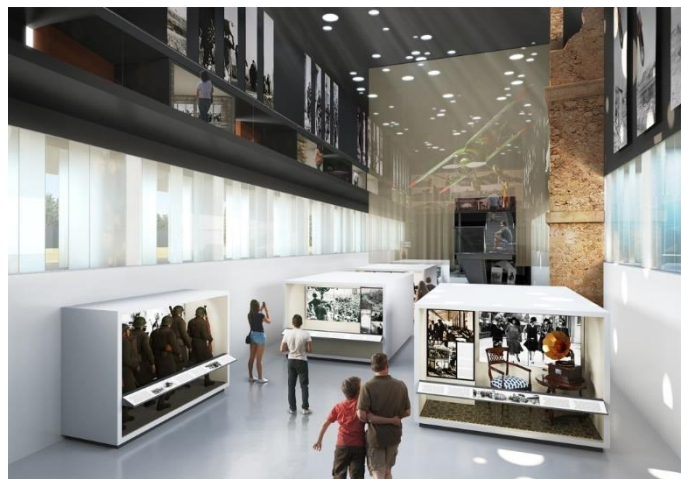
Santiago Abascal, the leader of the hard-right Vox, went further than Casado: he said in a parliamentary debate last year that the present government was 'the worst for the past 80 years', implying Franco's dictatorship was better.

This is the vitriolic background against which work has started this year on creating in the city of Teruel (population 35,000), way off the tourist trail, the first national museum on the conflict, at a cost of €6 million.

The Civil War was Spain's main military conflict since the Carlist (civil) Wars in the 19th century and the Spanish-American War of 1898.

The country was neutral throughout World War One and non-belligerent in World War Two, though Franco supported the Axis powers and sent the Blue Division to fight on the Eastern Front.

The museum initiative comes from the Socialist regional government of Aragón and not the national government. There are small museums dotted around Spain, including one in the Aragonese village of Robres, close to where George Orwell fought on the Republican side, dedicated to individual battles or exiles. The Army Museum at the Alcázar fortress in Toledo includes a section on the siege to which it was subjected by Franco's forces, but nothing on a national scale that covers both sides of the war. The Basque government opened last year in Vitoria a memorial centre to the victims of all terrorisms, and not just those killed by the terrorist group ETA between 1968 and 2010.





One reason for locating the museum in Teruel is because of its links to one of the key battles, fought during a harsh winter when temperatures plunged to -20°C. It will also help put Teruel on the map: the province of the same name has long felt abandoned by successive central governments, so much so that a movement called *Teruel Existe* (Teruel

Exists), founded in 1999, became a political party and won one seat in Congress in the 2019 general election and two in the Senate.

While Spain has been slow to face up to the recent past, compared with, for example, Germany (the German Historical Museum in Berlin even has a section on the bombing of Guernica by the Luftwaffe during Spain's Civil War), it is not alone in taking time to address past conflicts (see Figure 1). The 1861-65 American Civil War Museum (formed from the merger of the American Civil War Centre and the Museum of the Confederacy) was established during the Obama Administration in 2013. Like Spain, the US is still dealing with a civil war, in an even more distant past.

Figure 1. Main war and conflict museums by country

Name	Country	Year inaugurated
Les Invalides	France	1687
Museum of Military History	Austria	1869
Imperial War Museum	UK	1917
Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and Military History	Belgium	1923
National WWI Museum and Memorial	US	1926
Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum	Japan	1955
Dutch Resistance Museum	Netherlands	1984
Museum of the Great Patriotic War	Russia	1995
Kigali Genocide Memorial	Ruanda	2004
Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe	Germany	2005
Museum of Crimes against Humanity and Genocide, 1992-95	Bosnia	2016

Source: websites of each museum.

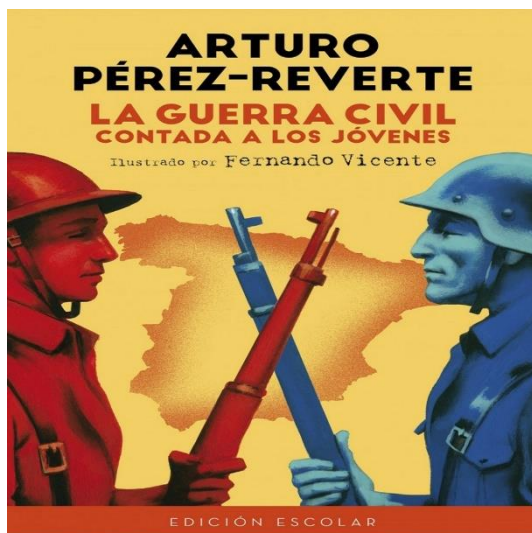
Spain might be a laggard in commemorating its conflict, but there has been no shortage of books about it. More than 40,000 books are estimated to have been published, about half the number on the much broader Second World War, some of them confined to very localised aspects.

Spain's successful but not defect-free transition to democracy was engineered by a pact between the reformist right within the Franco regime and the non-violent left opposition. There was no complete and clean break with Francoism. Consensus, after so polarised a past, was very much the watchword, epitomised by the *Pacto de Olvido* (Pact of Forgetting), an unspoken and unwritten agreement between political elites to look ahead and not rake over the past, and the 1977 Amnesty. In 2025 the 1978 Constitution will be the longest lasting constitution since the one in force between 1876 and 1923.

After Franco's death there was nothing resembling a Truth and Reconciliation Commission along the lines of, for example, the one Chile set up shortly after the end of the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (an ardent admirer of Franco) in 1990. Only now is a new constitution being written in that country.

There is no one-size-fits-all for democratic transitions, nor is there a consensus on what coming to terms with the past entails. Spain took a pragmatic approach, and it worked. The proof is that Spain's democracy today is the first to enjoy a significant degree of stability in the country's turbulent history. This is perhaps the best condemnation of Franco, who believed that Spaniards were incapable of co-existing in a democracy.

Much has changed in the past 47 years. Spain has consolidated its democracy, and those who fought in the Civil War or were children at the time account today for a fraction of the population. It is the grandchildren of the Civil War generation who are driving the memory and museum issues.



The challenge now is to craft a narrative for the museum, written by historians and not politicians, which gives the Republican and Nationalist sides of the story under the same roof and leaves visitors to make up their own minds. The novelist Arturo Pérez-Reverte managed this in his illustrated book, *La Guerra Civil contada a los jóvenes*, published in 2015, which explains for teenagers how the immensely complex conflict was far from a simplistic struggle between good and evil.

Building the museum will be a cinch compared to drawing up a text acceptable to as many people as possible, although there will always be dissenters.

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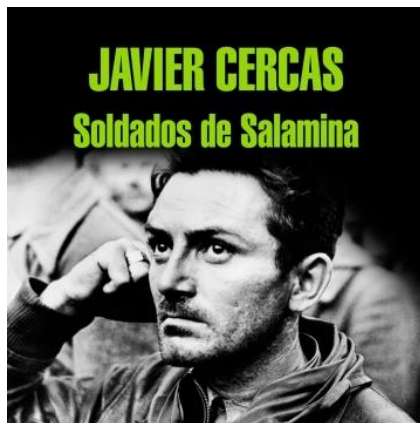
Remembrance in Cercas' *Soldados de Salamina*

By Year 13 Hispanist Oliver Beeby

Soldados de Salamina is, more than anything else, a scathing and unflinching critique of the Spanish '*pacto del olvido*' – i.e. the pact among post-Franco politicians of all shades not to use the past for political reasons at a time when the transition to democracy was beginning.

The novel was published just before the turn of the millennium, against a backdrop of increasing awareness of the problems with the policy of forgetting. Work had begun on exhuming the remains of Republican soldiers, and *La Ley de Memoria Histórica*, which officially recognised victims of the War and Franco's repression, was in gestation (it reached the statute books in 2007).

Cercas' novel plays into this discourse, and in some ways has even shaped it.



At the start of the novel we are introduced to a narrator, who is essentially a stand-in for Cercas himself. This version of Cercas is unfamiliar with the Civil War, going so far as to dismiss it as a setting for unimaginative authors (*carburante para la imaginación de los novelistas sin imaginación*). This unfamiliarity also extends to the title of the novel: upon hearing about the story of the shooting at Collé, he remarks that it felt as distant as the Battle of Salamis in Greek antiquity ("tan remoto como la batalla de Salamina").

The Cercas of these first few pages represents the general Spanish population. Having grown up under the *pacto del olvido*, he – his generation and those younger – has a skewed image of the Civil War and the dictatorship that followed. From the very first pages, memory is a key theme.

The first of the novel's three sections – *Los amigos del bosque* – is a largely journalistic, often witty, narrative of the narrator's research into the firing squad from which Sánchez Mazas escaped. Not only is this an entertaining format that gives us intriguing insight into the art of research, but it also serves to further Cercas' central point about memory



and remembrance. The narrator comes across many people who were directly related to, or even involved, in the events he is researching. For example, on hearing that Jaime Figueras – son of Pere Figueras, who was one of the *amigos del bosque* – is alive, the narrator expresses surprise and amazement, illustrating how the 'forgetting' of the '70s and '80s has set distance between modern-day Spain and the Civil War. Further, the narrator encounters numerous sources, each with different versions of events, showing us that the 'forgetting' is truly working. Without any official accounts or memoirs (thanks to the *pacto*) the narrator's investigation relies on the diminishing and fallible human memory.



The second section is narratively very different but emphasises many of the same points. This section – entitled *Soldados de Salamina* – is a mostly factual narration of the life of Sánchez Mazas, written in the third person, unlike the first and last parts of the book. However, Cercas still repeatedly reminds us of the way the Spanish are losing their grip on history (“no ofrezco hechos probados, sino conjeturas razonables,” he writes). He also occasionally slips into a more descriptive, novelistic voice (for instance the anaphora of “piensa...” leading up to the shooting itself) which serves to highlight the importance of history as a series of human stories,

rather than dates and generals. After all, most Spanish schoolchildren could tell you that the Civil War started in 1936 and ended in 1939, but few understand and empathise with those involved in it.

Indeed, anthropologist Aleida Assmann splits ‘memory’ into two different types: operational memory and collective memory. Operational memory refers to the literal memories of individuals living in a country, while collective memory – or remembrance – refers to the ‘official’ record of events in books, legal code, or archives. Throughout his novel Cercas stresses the importance of both of these. First, he clearly advocates for greater collective memory by highlighting the scarcity of resources and archives, and by critiquing the general apathy of the Spanish. By highlighting individual stories and adding (invented) human emotions to the protagonists of his historical account, he also emphasises the importance and preservation of operational – or individual – memory.

The first two parts indicate Cercas’ intent in writing this novel. One might counter his points by arguing that Sánchez Mazas is exactly the type of historical figure who deserves to be forgotten: his ideology was odious and he had a fairly unremarkable life. Cercas vehemently rejects this argument, labelling those who would erase fascists from history and refuse to publish their works as “*algunos ingenuos, guardianes de la ortodoxia de la izquierda, y también unos necios.*” Cercas tackles these doubts by adding a fictional character in the third section of the novel: Miralles.

Miralles is an almost-too-perfect former Republican soldier. Not only did he resist the Francoist take-over until the very end, but he joined the French foreign legion and fought fascism all across the world. In all regards, he is a hero who dedicated his life (and almost died) to save the freedom of others. Despite this, Miralles comments that no one ever even thanked him for his service, and we see that he lives out his final days in an old



people’s home in the unglamorous Dijon – which Miralles even jokingly refers to as Stockton, a perjorative reference to a film he has seen. (¿“Cree que alguien me lo ha agradecido? Le respondo yo: nadie. Nunca nadie me ha dado las gracias por dejarme la juventud peleando por su mierda de país.”) Cercas appeals to our emotions and sense of justice here: who can deny the dreadful effect of the *pacto del olvido* on Miralles?

Indeed, in this part of the novel Cercas explicitly mentions memory. He notes that, once Miralles dies, so too will those who fought alongside him, and no one will be left to remember them and what they died for (“cuando Miralles muera, sus amigos también morirán del todo, porque no habrá nadie que se acuerde de ellos.”) This idea of a second death shows how (especially under the *pacto del olvido*) stories, events and people can simply be lost to time, with no one left interested in their lives and experiences. By describing this loss as ‘death’ Cercas is using emotive language to convince us that this should be unacceptable in a civilised society.

To conclude, memory and remembrance are critically important in this novel; indeed, they are the entire purpose of the novel. *Soldados de Salamina* dramatises the pernicious effects of the ‘*pacto del olvido*’ and the critical importance of memory, both in the preservation of individual stories and the need for remembrance. Through the stories of two very different men, Cercas proves that history is not just dates in a textbook: it deserves to be a living and breathing part of culture, surviving through each person’s memories and a civilisation’s cultural output.

See also BAS editor Fran Compán’s article on Soldados de Salamina on p18-19 of our June 2018 edition, accessible via the Past Editions tab above.



Joaquín Sabina: ‘Ni juglar del asfalto, ni el Dylan español’

BAS editor Helen Laurenson celebrates the academic pedigree of Sabina’s lyrics – and their appearance in the 2022 Pre-U exam.

In the lyrics of the song *Lo Niego Todo* of the 2017 album of the same name, the Spanish *cantautor* Joaquín Sabina constructs an ironic self-portrait which attempts to dismantle in a pointedly self-conscious way the iconic status he enjoys in *la cultura del morbo*. His well-documented struggle with drugs, fidelity, love, politics and his own mortality are lyrically expressed and catalogued – ‘*Ni profeta del vicio / ni héroe en las barricadas / ni el Dylan español / ni rojo del salón / si me*



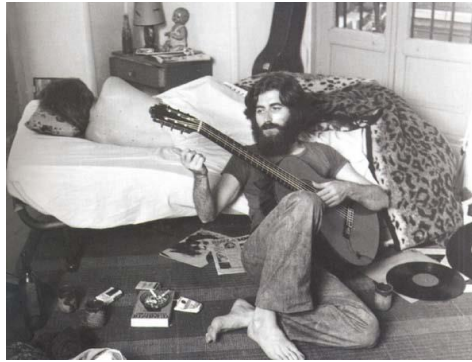
cuentas mi vida, lo niego todo’. As a lyrical *selfie*, these verses allude to *El Flaco*’s trajectory over more than 30 studio albums and fifty years.

Sabina has provided the soundtrack to the lives of many – in Spain, Latin America and beyond – functioning as a social commentator of the historic,

social and political changes since the death of Franco in 1975. Sabina occupies the

interface between poetry and song, and, despite his protestations to the contrary, is a true *juglar*, as Joaquín Barrero observes:

Muy de vez en cuando, de la tierra yerma surge un juglar capaz de heñir los buenos sonos de lo impalpable y regalárnoslos con adobos para que nuestro caminar por el misterio nos resulte más grato. Hablo de Joaquín Sabina.[1]



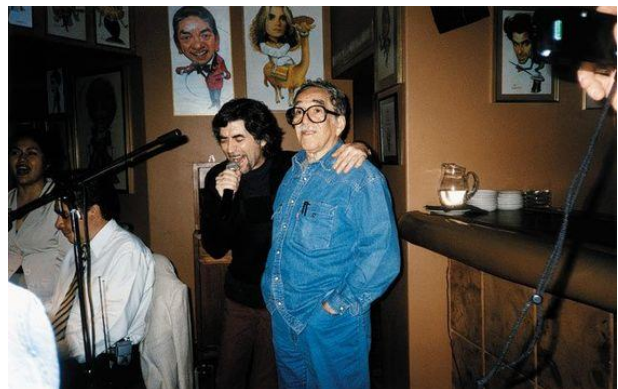
Whilst Sabina belongs to the same generation as the established *cantautores* of the 1960s, such as Joan Manuel Serrat and Luis Eduardo Aute, his political exile in London from 1970 channeled his musical formation more towards Bob Dylan and the Rolling Stones than Georges Brassens and the *canciones de protesta*. Sabina himself admits,

No entendí una palabra de lo que decía [Dylan], pero tuve claro que me estaba hablando a mí. Su manera personal de jugar con la fonética, de escupir las palabras, de frasearlas, consiguió que aquel poeta que yo entonces quería ser decidiese convertirse en músico. Sobra decir que Dylan me cambió la vida; él es un poeta torrencial, un maestro del caos.[2]

In the same article, Sabina states that, as regards lyric composition, ‘yo soy más académico’. As Francisco Domínguez has noted,

Sabina es un compositor muy leído, y por eso son perfectamente rastreables en sus poemas las huellas y las formas de autores muy importantes de la tradición literaria española, como Quevedo o Valle-Inclán. [3]

Sabina’s first studio album, *Inventario* (1978) was released at a time of *desencanto*, when ‘Culture lost its contestatory political function as Spaniards could now have their say via the ballot box’. 4 To a degree, political stability was the catalyst for much of Sabina’s material, much of which is an eternal quest as to how to live and love successfully (or unsuccessfully). Nothing new there as regards the content of the vast majority of popular songs in most Western countries. However, as Emilio Miguel Martínez observes, ‘Sabina ha contribuido a dotar de inhabitual calidad literaria a un buen número de sus canciones que han gozado y gozan de enorme éxito’ [5] This view is shared by Justo Zamora, who wrote his 2020 doctoral thesis on ‘Estética literaria en la obra de



Joaquín Sabina: Simbología de la desesperación en el cancionero'. According to him, '*Sabina es un genio, pero un genio muy trabajado*'. The hispanist Wolfram Aichinger elaborates on this, stating, '*el arte poético de nuestros tiempos está en las letras de los mejores cantautores. Sus imágenes y metáforas tienen tanto ingenio como las de Góngora o Machado*'.



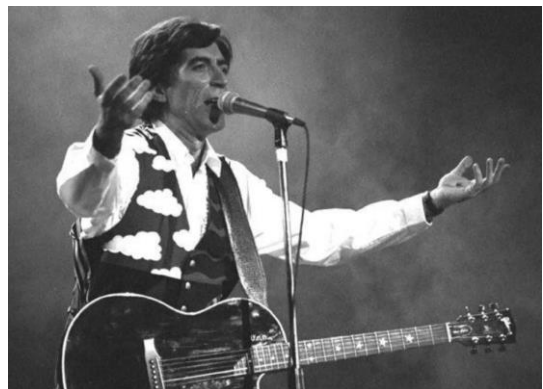
The 1996 song 'Contigo' is an apposite example of the essential *hibridez sabiniana*. Knowledge of neither Quevedo nor César Vallejo is needed to understand or enjoy the lyrics; however, the recognition of literary antecedents only deepens the listener's engagement. The impossibility of love and the

dismanteling of *Amor Cortés* conventions, along with the initial cruel tone, links these lyrics to the *conceptismo* of Quevedo, with its direct tone, wordplay and metaphors:

*Y morirme contigo si te matas
Y matarme contigo si te mueres
Porque el amor cuando no muere mata
Porque amores que matan nunca mueren*

The deconstruction of the text reveals anaphora, *yo no quiero*, metonyms *yo no quiero cargar con tus maletas*, metaphorical antithesis, *ni libre ni ocupado* and the ablative absolute, *corazón cobarde*. Indeed, this ability to lyricise the everyday – *la muerte pasa en ambulancias blancas* from 'Pongamos que hablo de Madrid' (1980) – is a central feature of Sabina's work, affirmed by Zamora who says, '[Sabina mezcla] *ideas abstractas con objetos concretos para construir una imagen poderosa que te trastoca a nivel emocional*'. [6]

The inclusion of the lyrics of Joaquín Sabina in the final cycle of the Cambridge Pre-U Spanish syllabus in 2022 was a bold and visionary move. The cohorts to whom I have taught these ingenious lyrics, whilst initially sceptical, grew to appreciate and love them to such an extent that they became veritable *trotamundos* in search of concert opportunities from Madrid to Buenos Aires. Their generation has now had the



chance to write exam answers on, for example, whether love is primarily a source of conflict and disillusionment in Sabina's lyrics; or whether compassion or comedy is the more significant feature of his work.

The last word should go to a *sabinero* who shouted at Sabina in the street, '*¡Maestro, que no nos muera!*'. Sabina says that the word that touched him the most here was *nos*.

1 Joaquín M Barrero, 'El cantor de los tiempos de espera' in Javier Menéndez Fores, *Sabina. No amanecer jamás* (Barcelona: Blume, 2016), p.60.

2 Joaquín Sabina, 'Poeta torrencial, maestro del caos', *El País*, 14 October, 2016.

3 *Sabina. A Boca Abierta*.

4 Fernán de Val and Stuart Green, 'Transitions of the Cantautor: Aesthetics, Politics and Authenticity in Spanish Popular Music from the Late Franco Dictatorship to the Present Day', in *The Singer-Songwriter in Europe. Paradigms, Politics and Place* (Routledge: London, 2016)

5 Emilio Miguel de Martínez, *Concierto Privado* (Visor: Madrid, 2008), p.11.

6 Javier de Pedro, 'Las letras de Sabina son poesía', *Última Hora*, 29 September, 2020,



Violeta Parra: De lo Humano y lo Divino

Luis Carabantes Leal

Durante el tiempo que pasé enseñando español en Londres me llamó mucho la atención el componente cultural asociado a la enseñanza de esta lengua extranjera, y la fuerte presencia de escritores y artistas españoles y latinoamericanos en el currículo y sus consiguientes representaciones socioculturales del mundo hispanohablante. Sin embargo, y sin intentar ocultar mi gusto personal, siempre me pregunté dónde estaba Violeta Parra, esa que ‘nos dio tanto’. Gracias a Pre-U, ella ya figura como ‘Cantante Icónica’ (al lado de Chavela Vargas y Camarón de la Isla) como Topic 5 de los Topics and Texts (quiere decir, el examen cultural).



Más conocida por su canción ‘Gracias a la Vida’ (comúnmente atribuida a Mercedes Sosa y su sentida interpretación), la chilena Violeta Parra (1917-1967) marcó un antes y un después en la música latinoamericana a mediados del siglo XX debido al complejo contenido de sus letras que ella comúnmente describía como acerca de ‘lo humano y lo divino’. Su trabajo (el cual también contempló las artes plásticas, siendo ella la primera mujer latinoamericana en montar una exposición individualmente en el Louvre de París) fue parte del inicio de un movimiento

musical conocido como ‘La Nueva Canción’ que fue fundamental en la consolidación de las democracias latinoamericanas. A este movimiento se sumaron famosos cantautores como Mercedes Sosa en Argentina y Víctor Jara en Chile, este último ejecutado por la dictadura de Augusto Pinochet justamente debido al contenido socialista de su obra. De no haberse suicidado en 1967, Violeta Parra probablemente hubiera sido otra víctima de la dictadura de Pinochet.

Pero ¿cuánta relevancia tiene hablar de Violeta Parra en las clases de español cuando todas y todos estamos hablando de pandemia y conflicto militar? La respuesta es muy simple: mucha.

En tiempos en que las desigualdades sociales han sido acentuadas por los confinamientos y el conflicto, el contenido de la música de Violeta Parra toma mucho significado. En este artículo quisiera enfocarme en algunos extractos de sus canciones y cómo estos, a pesar de tener más de medio siglo, reflejan problemas sociales latinoamericanos actuales. Al hacer esto, espero promover una mayor representación femenina dentro del currículo del español como lengua extranjera, y destacar el valor del trabajo de Violeta como una plataforma para crear experiencias educativas relacionadas con problemáticas acerca de la democracia, la desigualdad y los derechos humanos.

‘Arauco tiene una pena’

Una problemática persistente en Latinoamérica ha sido la violencia sufrida por los pueblos originarios. Esta violencia surge de la usurpación territorial y la segregación sociocultural ejercida por los conquistadores, consolidada más tarde durante la creación de los estados latinoamericanos. A esta violencia se suma la negligencia con la que los distintos estados modernos han abordado las demandas de sus pueblos originarios. En este sentido, ya a mediados del siglo XX, Violeta denunciaba explícitamente los abusos hacia el pueblo mapuche chileno:



*Arauco¹ tiene una pena
Que no la puedo callar;
Son injusticias de siglos
Que todos ven aplicar.
Nadie le ha puesto remedio
Pudiéndolo remediar.*

¡Levántate Huenchullán!

(Extracto de *Arauco tiene una pena*)

Si bien este extracto de ‘Arauco tiene una pena’ habla del contexto específico chileno y la problemática que afecta al pueblo mapuche, estos problemas son también parte importante del conflicto sociopolítico de diferentes naciones latinoamericanas. Sin ir más lejos, por el lado argentino de la Cordillera de los Andes, la restitución de terrenos ancestrales sigue siendo una demanda importante del pueblo mapuche hacia el estado argentino. Asimismo, estos versos reflejan con preocupante similitud las problemáticas que aquejan a los pueblos originarios en la Amazonía peruana (y brasileña), o el pueblo guaraní en Paraguay, entre otros.

‘¿Qué dirá el Santo Padre!’

Las críticas a las élites políticas, económicas y religiosas forman parte importante del repertorio lírico de Violeta Parra. Aunque su denuncia de los abusos era normalmente desde una mirada socialista dada su pertenencia al partido comunista chileno, ella frecuentemente invocaba su ser cristiano, haciendo frecuentes referencias a la religión católica para situar moralmente su crítica.

*Miren cómo nos hablan de libertad
cuando de ella nos privan en realidad.*

*Miren cómo pregonan tranquilidad
cuando nos atormenta la autoridad.*

*Qué dirá el Santo Padre que vive en Roma
que le están degollando a sus palomas.*

(Extracto de *Qué dirá el Santo Padre*)

Si bien las críticas actuales a las élites gobernantes en Latinoamérica no suelen emerger desde lo cristiano – probablemente por la pérdida de legitimidad moral de la iglesia católica y sus vínculos con la pederastia, entre otros escándalos – estos versos describen con precisión algunas de las problemáticas latinoamericanas recientes.



De igual forma, en 2019 las manifestaciones sociales demandando un sistema socio-político-económico más equitativo en Chile dejaron más de 20 muertos y más de 400 personas con pérdida parcial o total de la vista a manos de la policía chilena y el uso inapropiado de balines de goma. Problemáticas similares se han visto

también fuera del continente latinoamericano, por ejemplo, las revueltas tras la muerte de George Floyd en Estados Unidos.

La Esperanza

Otro aspecto importante en las letras de Violeta Parra fue su sentido de justicia social. Esto lo hacía describiendo las condiciones de vida de la clase obrera y la precariedad a la que ésta era sometida por la clase dominante:

*En este mundo moderno
qué sabe el pobre del queso
caldo de papa sin hueso.
Menos sabe lo que es terno
por casa, callampa, infierno
de lata y ladrillos viejos.
¡Cómo le aguanta el pellejo!
Eso sí que no lo sé,
pero bien sé que el burgués
se pita al pobre verdejo.
(Extracto de *La esperanza*)*

En este extracto que es parte de sus décimas autobiográficas (no musicalizadas), Violeta describe con crudeza la separación entre ricos y pobres, y las condiciones diarias de vida de la clase obrera en la actualidad. Por ejemplo, el estallido social de Chile en 2019 es síntoma del descontento de la población chilena con las extremas precariedades a las que se ve sometida (ej. los precarios sistemas de

pensiones, salud y educación). Otros países de la región, como Bolivia, Colombia y Brasil, no se quedan atrás en esta desigualdad extrema.

Reflexión y acción pedagógica

Si bien los extractos anteriores no logran captar la totalidad de las problemáticas que aquejan a las sociedades latinoamericanas, estas sí logran ilustrar dinámicas sociohistóricas que con frecuencia son omitidas en los materiales educativos. Las divisiones de clases, la pobreza, el abuso de poder por parte de la autoridad, aunque no son exclusivos de Latinoamérica, son claves para entender el mundo hispanohablante de las Américas. El uso del lenguaje por parte de Violeta Parra para describir estas temáticas, le dan a la letra de sus canciones un valor único como recurso pedagógico, sobre todo cuando se contraponen con textos recientes acerca de estos temas como noticias en periódicos o textos en redes sociales.



Por ejemplo, el siguiente extracto de 'Me gustan los estudiantes', puede utilizarse para contextualizar el estudio de los movimientos estudiantiles de América Latina que frecuentemente se sincronizan con las crisis sociales mencionadas anteriormente.

*Me gustan los estudiantes
porque son como la levadura
del pan que saldrá del horno
con toda su sabrosura.
Para la boca del pobre*

*que come con amargura.
Caramba y zamba la cosa,
Viva la literatura.*
(extracto de *Me gustan los estudiantes*)

Tras leer este texto, a los estudiantes se les puede preguntar cómo las figuras literarias, en este caso símil/comparación (ej. los estudiantes que son como la levadura del pan) son utilizadas por Violeta Parra para aludir problemáticas sociales. Luego de esto, se le puede pedir a los estudiantes que a través de la creación de símiles/comparaciones, ellos/ellas puedan imaginarse como agentes de cambio social dentro de sus propios contextos.



Para concluir, en este texto he argumentado cómo la obra lírica de Violeta Parra es parte importante del repertorio lírico/cultural latinoamericano y cómo este repertorio puede ofrecer una fuente de material pedagógico para el estudio de problemáticas sociales clave en los contextos hispanohablantes. La obra de Violeta Parra es por supuesto mucho más amplia de lo que aquí he discutido. En canciones como ‘Gracias a la vida’, ‘Volver a los 17’ o ‘¿Qué he sacado con quererte?’, Violeta hace un uso riquísimo del lenguaje en temas como la felicidad, el amor, la adultez y el desamor, los cuales

pueden también utilizarse para su análisis lingüístico, lírico y sociocultural.

Luis Carabantes es profesor de inglés y doctor en lingüística aplicada. Actualmente enseña inglés para propósitos académicos en la universidad de Bristol. Sus líneas de investigación son la formación de profesores de inglés, el desarrollo de materiales para la enseñanza de lenguas, y la teoría sociocultural aplicada a la educación en lenguas.

¹ Arauco es parte de la zona cordillerana de Chile habitada por el pueblo mapuche.

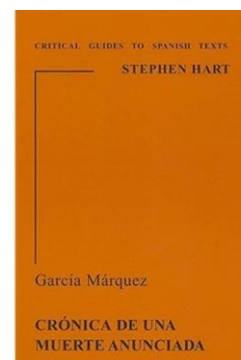
² Huenchullán es un nombre mapuche.



Crónica de una muerte anunciada: download the Critical Guide here.

BAS editor Stephen Hart makes his out-of-print Critical Guide available to Bulletin readers.

The first edition of this Critical Guide of Gabriel García Márquez's *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* (1981) was commissioned in the late 1980s by Professor Alan Deyermond when he was Head of the Critical Guides Series and Head of the Department of Spanish at Westfield College, University of London, along with the Business Manager at that time, Stephen Cooper.



The Critical Guides Series was a flourishing enterprise created as a result of the ongoing partnership between the Spanish Department and the booksellers, Grant & Cutler. I was teaching *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* to first-year students in

Westfield at the time, and it proved to be a very popular text, mainly as a result of its brevity, but I also liked to think that it was appreciated because of its elegance. In many senses it is a perfect little text: every word has been used by García Márquez with a clear sense of purpose, and my original aim in writing this Guide was to demonstrate this.



The author of the Critical Guide meets the author of Crónica

Another of its attractions was that almost every Latin American scholar seemed to have written on it. There was therefore a vast variety of interpretations of the novel, which was intriguing.

By the time the first edition came out in 1994 I had moved to the Department of Spanish and Italian at the University of Kentucky. When the second edition came out eleven years later, I was teaching at University College London.

The main difference between the two editions was the fifth chapter added to the second edition, which drew out the implications of the preceding four chapters.

In my opinion, *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* is Gabo's second best novel, the first being *Cien años de soledad* because of the swarm of allusions to a myriad of literary texts that hover over it. I am pleased that the *Bulletin of Advanced Spanish* is making this photocopy of the second edition available, and I hope it will be helpful to students preparing for exams.

[Crónica de una muerte anunciada – Critical Guide – Stephen Hart – 3rd edition](#)





Did the Falklands War end the culture of military dictatorships in South America?

BAS editor Robin Wallis

A well-armed regional power attempts to change the political map by invading a smaller neighbouring territory, citing a century or more of its justifiable claims being ignored. The invaded territory enlists international assistance and fights back.

As with Russia/Ukraine now, so then in 1982 with Argentina/the Falkland Islands (also known as las Islas Malvinas). In both cases the invading state was governed by a faction that held power by oppressing its political opponents, murdering many to secure its authority.

The similarities end there. Few would expect Russia to be expelled from its newly seized territories in the way that Argentina was then. Putin's regime is expert in controlling its citizens; Argentina's military junta wasn't even good at running the military.



Between 2003 and 2015 I guided a number of British Sixth Form students around Buenos Aires. I made sure always to take them to the Monumento a los Caídos en Malvinas. For most of my group, my potted history of the

1982 conflict was the first they had heard of it. Yet it was a conflict that re-shaped both the UK and South America.

The Falklands dispute is a bottomless pit that goes back to the claims and actions of various seafaring adventurers in the 18th and 19th centuries. For some, it all comes down to whether three dozen Argentines left the Islands of their own accord in 1833 or were forcibly expelled by the British.

For me, that period is of scant relevance to present-day realities. The Islands were British-administered since 1833, with only sporadic grumbling from Argentine governments before 1982. Nonetheless, Argentine schoolchildren were taught that the Islands were a part of their country that had been ‘usurped’ by the British; Islander families of mostly British origin could trace their presence in the Islands back several generations, some to before Argentina existed.

The mid-20th Century was a period of mass decolonisation. By the time Mrs Thatcher became Prime Minister in 1979, with a remit to rationalise the UK, the Falklands looked like an anomaly. Foreign Office Minister Nicholas Ridley was sent on a joyless expedition first to the Islands, then to Buenos Aires, peddling a ‘lease-back’ proposal partly inspired by Hong Kong (ie sovereignty to be transferred at an agreed date several generations in the future).

The Islanders hated it. They just wanted to be British, with the attendant safeguards that implied. The last thing they wanted was to be bound to a dysfunctional state run by a military regime, unprotected by the rule of law. The Argentines weren’t impressed either: the time frames didn’t accord with the junta’s ambitions.



Crucially, the House of Commons opposed a lease-back deal, with the opposition Labour Party – normally in favour of decolonisation – decrying the idea of leaving the Islanders’ fate in the hands of a military junta. Their opposition, combined with a ‘Falklands lobby’ that held influence with a number of Conservative MPs, made the issue too hot to handle. In December 1980 the proposal was dropped.

Watching from Buenos Aires, Rear Admiral Jorge Anaya – a member of the three-man ruling military junta – saw his moment. He nurtured a life-long urge to right the historical wrong of British usurpation of Argentine territory (cf Putin/Ukraine). At the end of March 1982 his invasion force set sail, convinced that the British Government would not fight back. Other members of the junta

supported the move as a way to neutralise increasing domestic opposition to their rule.



When the UK did fight back and sank the General Belgrano, Anaya's navy ran for cover, leaving pitifully unprepared conscript soldiers and the Argentine air force to take heavy casualties. The UK landed troops that by mid-June had crossed East Falkland to liberate the Islands' capital, Port Stanley.

The Argentine surrender led to the resignation of the junta and an 18-month transition back to democracy. Argentina's military was scorned by its people, its capability allowed to wither as a result of successive economic crises and the absence of external threats. Former junta leaders were tried and imprisoned for human rights abuses.

This humiliating outcome had an exemplary effect on neighbouring states. Juntas established in an era of Cold War anti-communism now found their credibility undermined: in 1985 Uruguay and Brazil transitioned to democracy, with Chile following suit from 1988-90. The process was profound in that it not only ended the military regimes of that period; it seems to have brought about a culture change,



discrediting the very notion of military rule that had become a recurrent part of Latin American political dysfunctionality. After the 1980s the military stayed in their barracks: the last thing the generals wanted was to risk the kind of humiliation and punishment meted out to Argentine junta leaders Galtieri, Anaya, Videla and others.

Yet it could all have been different. Had the Argentines used the April 1982 invasion to make the point that only they, rather than the UK, could protect the Islands, and then withdrawn without a conflict, leaving only a political office (ie government in waiting) in the Islands, they would probably have won international support and made it impossible for the UK to delay further an agreement to transfer sovereignty. Indeed, as the UK Task Force sailed south in April 1982, a proposal along these lines was sent from the UK government (still hoping to avoid fighting) to Buenos Aires. There, Galtieri's junta – too brain-

fogged by militarism, machismo and, it has been said, alcohol – missed their chance.



The botched invasion, rather than secure the Islands for Argentina, has justified a post-1982 Islander veto over contact with Argentina that has no prospect of changing in the foreseeable future. Public opinion in the UK is equally entrenched: Argentina lost the War, British blood was spilt... there can be no weakening of the UK's position.

Since 1982 the Falklands has sprouted a military base and a thriving fishing industry. The population has risen slightly, a Constitution has been enacted, and under the UK's protection the Islanders see themselves as a self-governing territory rather than a colony (though some experts argue that the role of the Governor – appointed by London – means that the UK still has quasi-colonial control over the territory).

The mantra which justifies UK rule is that the wishes of the Islanders should be paramount. Argentine experts respond that the Islander population is not the result of a free migration of peoples (all migrants have to receive approval from the Island authorities before they can settle there). It is therefore a transplanted rather than a natural population, which undermines the insistence on self-determination.

So did the 1982 conflict really change Latin American political culture? Yes, in that there have been no further seizures of power by the armed forces. Military take-overs of the past reflected the weak institutions of Latin American states since their independence from Spain in the early 1800s. Independence back then was mainly a way for the ruling classes to gain greater control of the state. From the 1820s to the 1980s the military could be manoeuvred into collaborating with the elite through corruption, co-option or ideology.

The end of the Cold War limited scope for ideological coups ('protecting the state from communism'). Instead, Latin American democracy is now imperilled more by populists, the most effective of whom (the late Hugo Chávez in Venezuela) frequently appeared in uniform as a former military officer. Such autocratic leaders need the army's



support to maintain their hold on power, and use generous pay-outs from state funds to buy its loyalty; but the generals these days stay clear of running the government.

I mentioned my view that the Falklands War also changed the course of UK history. I have in mind here our party politics. In 1981 British politics was polarised between a right-of-centre 'monetarist' Conservative government and a Labour Party opposition that was turning radically to socialism. Labour moderates broke away to form the Social Democratic Party (SDP). In the month before the Falklands War, SDP leader Roy Jenkins won an astonishing by-election victory for the new party, which in the opinion polls was ahead of both Labour and Conservatives.



The War changed all that: Prime Minister Thatcher impressed the electorate with her leadership during the conflict and won by a landslide in the next two elections. By the end of the 1980s the SDP and its leaders' political careers were finished.

What of the future? Brexit has given the Islanders a nasty shock about access to EU markets. High energy prices may make oil exploration viable around the Islands, which could significantly change their nature. Climate change may have an impact.

The least likely scenario appears to be another Argentine assault on the Islands. Though I notice that the Argentine defence minister was recently lobbied regarding arms purchases by... the Russian Ambassador.

Robin Wallis was a UK diplomat in Argentina when relations were restored in 1990. He has served as Hon Secretary of the South Atlantic Council, an organisation formed after the Falklands War to encourage understanding between Argentina, the Islands and the UK.



Vanessa Neumann: “Con un nuevo liderazgo femenino, Venezuela podría acercarse al cambio que necesita”

BAS editor Alfredo Benito

Casi con las maletas preparadas para salir hacia la Cumbre de las Américas, en Los Ángeles, donde es una de las participantes destacadas, charlamos en el *Bulletin* con Vanessa Neumann, venezolana afincada en Estados Unidos, que hasta diciembre de 2020 fue la embajadora diplomática de Juan Guaidó en Reino Unido e Irlanda. Ciertas desavenencias con la oposición venezolana, además de poderosas razones personales le hicieron volver a Nueva York.

Allí, a la espera de convertirse en mamá en agosto, lidera Asymmetrica, una consultoría que ella misma fundó especializada en anticorrupción y anti-tráfico ilícito, y que es miembro de la Red Mundial de investigación contra el Terrorismo del Consejo de Seguridad de las Naciones Unidas. Autora del libro *Lucros de Sangre: Cómo los Consumidores*



Estadounidenses Inconscientemente Financian Terroristas (2017), charlamos con ella de la actualidad que rodea al últimamente siempre convulso país venezolano. Neumann sigue apostando y trabajando por una salida negociada que devuelva a Venezuela la estabilidad política, social y económica que merece.

BAS. – *Hace más de 1 año y medio que abandonaste tu puesto en Londres como enviada diplomática del líder de la oposición venezolana, Juan Guaidó. ¿Ha cambiado algo la situación que provocó tu renuncia?*

Vanessa Neumann. – Todo está igual. Desafortunadamente se ha agudizado incluso un poquito. Es decir, las razones que provocaron mi renuncia siguen ahí, pero yo sí he visto recientemente algunas cosas positivas, que me dan un poco de esperanza. Yo también tuve una razón personal. Necesitaba volver a una carrera, a ganarme ingresos, a estabilizarme. Volver a un país [Estados Unidos] donde tengo visa, donde tengo hogar...porque quería tener una vida familiar. Pero obviamente, la razón profesional hay que buscarla en que había una gran división [en la oposición venezolana], que no había una estrategia bien articulada y que yo me sentía demasiado prisionera del grupo del G-4 [formado por los partidos opositores Acción Democrática, Primero Justicia, Un Nuevo Tiempo y Voluntad Popular], y eso me frustró mucho.

BAS. – *Pero antes mencionabas que habías visto últimamente algunos aspectos positivos. ¿Cuáles son?*

Vanessa Neumann. – Como te decía todas esas divisiones siguen ahí, pero lo que sí ha cambiado, y eso me inspiró bastante, fue un evento al que asistí en Washington DC, “Unidas por Venezuela”, de mujeres líderes de mi país, organizado por Atlantic Council y el Gobierno de Canadá, y surgieron estas voces de estas líderes, que



hablan muy bien, son muy inteligentes, tienen argumentos muy bien articulados, y yo me siento representada y otra mucha gente también. Y son voces políticas, potentes, que tienen apoyo del pueblo venezolano y que no se han visto ni se han escuchado antes. Yo siento que el sistema político del G4, al que yo renuncié, silenciaba voces como estas. Ahora los americanos y los canadienses las ven, ya no están invisibilizadas y eso me da esperanza de que la inclusión femenina, que es tan importante en un proyecto de transición, de negociación, de estabilización, consiga que esto vaya a cambiar.

Yo creo además que la situación de Juan Guaidó se ha agudizado, porque ha perdido mucho apoyo dentro de Venezuela. Ya pasó enero de 2021 que hubiera sido el final de su mandato, lo cual es una lástima y es muy triste para todos.

BAS. – *En las últimas semanas, algunos medios sugerían un posible levantamiento de las sanciones a Venezuela por parte de Estados Unidos. Sin embargo, en la reciente Cumbre de las Américas celebrada en California, Estados Unidos vetó la asistencia de Venezuela. ¿Podemos decir que el aislamiento internacional del país sigue vigente y que la posición de Estados Unidos por tanto no ha cambiado?*



Vanessa Neumann. – Los Estados Unidos siguen reconociendo a Juan Guaidó oficialmente. Pero también ve, como el resto del mundo, que esta estrategia con Guaidó no ha funcionado y además, que llevamos el plazo de toda una presidencia estadounidense, 4 años, y esto no va mejorando. Entonces ellos, por un lado, se tienen que quedar con su reconocimiento, pero, por otro lado, tienen que ser más pragmáticos si quieren ver el cambio. En definitiva, tienen que balancear que están en contra de Maduro -y de Daniel Ortega -, pero, también necesitan flexibilizarse

un poco con la región. Es básicamente un juego diplomático. Uno tiene que entender que, en la política, en las relaciones exteriores, uno no tiene amigos, tiene intereses.

BAS. – *En las últimas semanas hemos presenciado varios ejemplos del reforzamiento de la cooperación entre Rusia y Venezuela. ¿Qué opinión te merece ese acercamiento entre ambas naciones justo en medio de una guerra como la que tiene lugar en Ucrania?*

Vanessa Neumann. – Yo creo que Maduro lo está pasando muy divertido, porque ahorita es como *'the man of the hour'*, como dirían los americanos. Por un lado, tienes a los gringos diciendo: *"ven pa'ca, abandona Rusia y de repente te compramos petróleo"*. E incluso Venezuela ha dicho cosas en favor de los EEUU...hay un vídeo por ahí de Tareck El Aissami -ministro de Petróleo de Venezuela- con el embajador iraní, en el que se escucha a ambos decir "vivas" a sus respectivos países, pero cuando el embajador iraní dice: *'abajo Estados Unidos'*, El Aissami le dice *'no digas eso'*...Entonces, por supuesto que sí están buscando un acercamiento a los EEUU, por ejemplo, soltaron un par de rehenes. Y por otro lado, Rusia que está muy aislado, que ya no tiene amigos, busca a Venezuela. Así que de repente, Venezuela se ha vuelto un país como muy importante geopolíticamente y tiene dos

pretendientes. Así que desde el punto de vista de Maduro todo esto le parece muy divertido.

BAS. – *Precisamente ese conflicto de Rusia y Ucrania ha beneficiado económicamente a Venezuela a cuenta del petróleo. ¿Ha mejorado realmente la situación financiera dentro del país?*

Vanessa Neumann. – Ha mejorado para una pequeña élite dentro de Caracas. Los Ferraris, las Rumbas, los bodegones... Con tal de que tú estés ganando en dólares, tú puedes conseguir todo lo que tú quieras. Han liberalizado un poquito el dólar para cierta gente cercana al régimen. Y eso siempre tiene un océano de dólares donde hay



narcotráfico. Porque el petróleo no se paga en rublos, se paga en dólares. Y, por tanto, claro, la vida ha mejorado para toda esa gente. Y si yo me quiero ir a cortar el pelo, a la peluquera también le va mejor, porque yo le voy a pagar en dólares. Y entonces ese efecto secundario sí se produce, incluso a ese rango económico social más bajo, que ofrece los servicios o los bienes a la gente que gana en dólares. Lo cual está muy bien, pero si te sales de ese círculo, en el resto de Venezuela la gente se está comiendo un cable. No tienen agua, no tienen comida, no tienen medicina... Fuera de Caracas la situación está mal.

BAS. – *Hace unos días en una columna de opinión en el Washington Post, el historiador Tomas Straka se preguntaba si Venezuela está más cerca de un cambio o de una nueva etapa en la tragedia. ¿Cuál es tu opinión?*

Vanessa Neumann. – Yo quiero pensar que va a haber cambio, pero no le veo una línea recta. Yo creo que sí hay posibilidades de negociar, con un liderazgo fresco, venezolano, de negociar dentro de Venezuela con las comunidades. Y empezar a recrear lo que es ser venezolano. Y eso es algo que sabemos hacerlo de otros procesos de reintegración. Pensar cuál es la Venezuela que queremos y empezar a hablar de eso de una manera muy amplia. Con este nuevo liderazgo femenino, creo que eso sí sería posible, que podría haber un cambio. Pero yo creo que no vamos a llegar a lo que queremos hacer hasta por lo menos 2030.

BAS. – *Por lo que dices, entonces el papel del liderazgo femenino será esencial para el futuro de Venezuela, ¿no?*

Vanessa Neumann. – Sí, yo creo que hace falta más liderazgo femenino. En esta crisis, son las mujeres las que son más traficadas, las que dejan de comer primero

para darle a sus hijos. El 80% de las familias en Venezuela son mujeres solteras. Es un número extraordinario.

BAS. – *Todos sabemos que hay millones de venezolanos que siguen saliendo de su país en un éxodo masivo. ¿Crees que muchos de ellos piensan que no van a volver nunca a su país?*



Vanessa Neumann. – Ojalá que no. Yo siempre he querido volver a mi país, a pesar de que me he armado la vida fuera. Me va bien, tengo carrera, tengo hogar. Pero aparte de eso, me duele mucho en el alma que no pueda volver. Toda la diáspora sufre la separación de su familia, la separación de su país, a pesar de que se hayan construido una vida. Pero claro se te complica mucho más si ya tienes a tu mujer o tu

pareja en otras ciudades, tu carrera y tus hijos en el colegio en otro país. Entonces se te complica agarrar todo eso y volver a Venezuela. Pero yo no he conocido a nadie en la diáspora que no quiera volver a visitar, volver a tener un hogar, volver a abrazar a sus seres queridos, volver a su tierra, a su casa natal, a su familia. Todos sufrimos de eso definitivamente. Todo el mundo quiere volver de cierta manera. Y otra cosa muy importante es que la diáspora venezolana se tiene que tomar en cuenta y sentirse representada por la oposición. Porque el régimen ha borrado a todos esos millones de personas. Por eso es muy importante que la oposición no nos borre.

Estamos aprendiendo a estas alturas a ser venezolanas, y qué implica eso, y esa unidad de identidad es muy importante. Y claro, a unos chavistas duros mega criminales no les vas a cambiar, pero puedes agarrar a algunos para que se acerquen más al centro



Gustavo Petro: retrato de un auténtico líder populista

Clara Riveros

Gustavo Petro es un político colombiano de 62 años y el candidato presidencial que representa las tendencias y corrientes de izquierda agrupadas en el Pacto Histórico.

Petro es reconocido como gran opositor y orador. Adicionalmente, ha sido notable como senador. Desde esa posición denunció la corrupción en el manejo de diferentes asuntos y bienes públicos, fue un duro opositor del entonces presidente y populista de derecha conservadora, Álvaro Uribe, así como de los vínculos de políticos municipales, regionales y nacionales, senadores y representantes, con paramilitares y narcotraficantes. Esas denuncias hicieron que miembros de su familia tuvieran que exiliarse porque sus vidas corrían peligro.

Meses atrás, el podcast de *The Washington Post* –[El Post](#)– destacó que el colegio del frío municipio cundinamarqués de Zipaquirá donde estudió Gustavo Petro estaba regentado por curas franquistas anticomunistas, lasallistas, y fue allí donde

ese joven costeño y caribeño habría empezado a forjar su ideario, imbuido por la teología de la liberación.



El político tiene formación de economista, es egresado de la Universidad Externado de Colombia, una de las universidades privadas más importantes del país, cuenta con una especialización en Administración de la Escuela Superior de Administración Pública (ESAP) y aunque inició estudios de doctorado en Nuevas Tendencias en Administración de Empresas, por la Universidad de Salamanca, este doctorado está inconcluso.

Petro ha definido a la oligarquía colombiana como sectaria, atrasada, feudal y asesina. Públicamente se reconoce como gran admirador del expresidente chileno Salvador Allende y, al parecer, los acontecimientos que desembocaron en la dictadura de Augusto Pinochet, incidieron o determinaron su forma de ver y de percibir a los Estados Unidos, según registró [El Post](#).

La lectura crítica de la realidad colombiana que mantiene Petro sobre diversos actores y eventos, no obstante, parte de un entendimiento sesgado y amañado de la Historia. No es usual oír del candidato una aproximación crítica en torno a la combinación de todas las formas de lucha, postura avalada hace décadas por considerables segmentos de la izquierda legal e ilegal. Tampoco se le reconoce por la agudeza al cuestionar los ingentes esfuerzos de la izquierda armada para lastrar el desarrollo económico y desestabilizar la democracia colombiana durante medio siglo. Menos aún por reconocer el papel que han desempeñado las guerrillas en el devenir histórico conflictivo del país. Ni hablar de abordar la incidencia del secuestro (un mecanismo utilizado por las guerrillas para financiarse que fue soslayado por la izquierda), responsable de la emergencia de los grupos paramilitares escorados a la extrema derecha.



Algunos datos útiles: Gustavo Petro se sumó a la guerrilla M-19 cuando tenía 17 años. Esa guerrilla surgió tras el fraude electoral del 19 de abril de 1970. La elección cuestionada le arrebató el triunfo al otrora dictador y expresidente, católico, populista y bolivariano, general Gustavo Rojas Pinilla. El M-19 tuvo una fuerte incidencia e influencia religiosa. No fue una organización guerrillera marxista

leninista. El M-19 era una guerrilla urbana, bolivariana, nacionalista y populista. Sus integrantes, los liderazgos visibles, eran jóvenes de clases media y alta que en varios casos recibieron educación confesional católica, incluso hubo quienes se formaron bajo la impronta jesuita.

El guerrillero adolescente se convirtió en 'Aureliano', en honor al personaje de *Cien años de soledad*, la célebre obra literaria de Gabriel García Márquez. Durante algún tiempo, el joven Petro combinó todas las formas de lucha: hizo política legal y fue funcionario a la par de su accionar ilegal y subversivo. Después se decantó por la lucha total contra el Estado. Años más tarde, ya desmovilizado, dicen que participó del proceso constituyente que llevó a la promulgación de la Constitución de 1991. Algunos observadores de ese proceso indicaron que Gustavo Petro no hizo parte de la Constituyente de 1991 y, en ese sentido, el político habría mentido en la solapa de su libro ([Una vida, muchas vidas](#)). No hay que olvidar que Petro representa actualmente una de las corrientes políticas que quiere redactar una nueva Constitución a medida.

Su discurso es anti-establecimiento, pero ello no le impidió ser funcionario del Estado, unas veces nombrado o designado, y otras como político electo (representante, senador o alcalde). Desde los años noventa, Gustavo Petro ha estado vinculado a la política legal y al establecimiento.

En 2010, Petro lanzó su primera candidatura presidencial, pero el crecimiento del centro relegó sus posibilidades y no obtuvo los resultados esperados. En 2012 se convirtió en



alcalde de Bogotá y, aunque fue destituido por el procurador Alejandro Ordóñez (un fundamentalista católico y lefebvrista cuyo nombramiento fue apoyado por el congresista Gustavo Petro), tras la destitución, el entonces alcalde impugnó el fallo en instancias internacionales y la CIDH le otorgó medidas cautelares, gracias a ello logró culminar su gestión. Petro reaccionó a su destitución acusando al procurador de fascista y de darle un ‘golpe de Estado’.

Al término de su mandato el alcalde Gustavo Petro tenía un 70% de desaprobación. La gestión de Petro como alcalde de la capital colombiana, el segundo cargo de elección popular más importante del país, generó muchas críticas y mostró las fisuras al interior de su movimiento. Algunos de sus correligionarios más notables lo abandonaron y hablaron públicamente de su mesianismo y autoritarismo. Sus credenciales e idoneidad en términos de gestión y administración de la ciudad se vieron cuestionadas por políticos, opositores, copartidarios y por los medios de comunicación.

Una de las genialidades progresistas, siendo alcalde de Bogotá, fue la gran innovación al estilo islamista de los iraníes, una política de segregación sexual en el transporte público, pero utilizando lenguaje reivindicativo. La medida fue aplaudida por sectas religiosas y sus respectivas fuerzas políticas. Sus simpatizantes y electores la cuestionaron severamente y la administración siguiente la deshizo en breve. Siendo el líder político de la izquierda progresista, Petro ha sido firme al respaldar a algunos correligionarios implicados en denuncias por violencia de género y violencia intrafamiliar. Estos hechos provocaron que varias mujeres de su movimiento tomaran distancia.



Un Petro excesivo y amante del balcón llegó a compararse con el caudillo liberal y líder populista Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, asesinado el 9 de abril de 1948. En alguna ocasión [le espetó a Mario Vargas Llosa](#), un poco en tono jocoso, que el escritor peruano tuvo alguna cuota de responsabilidad en su conversión guerrillera ya que tras la lectura de *Conversación en la Catedral* se hizo revolucionario.

Al obtener el segundo lugar en la elección presidencial de 2018, Petro obtuvo un escaño en el Senado. Se posesionó el 20 de julio de 2018 con la idea fija de presentarse a la elección presidencial que se definirá en breve. Desde el Legislativo se ha caracterizado más por impulsar la movilización social contra el gobierno

Duque y la alcaldesa Claudia López, que por jugar el mismo rol que lo dio a conocer en el Congreso en las anteriores legislaturas, según se extrae del perfil del candidato publicado por [La Silla Vacía](#).

Petro se presenta ante el electorado como el líder no contaminado por el establecimiento, pero su dilatada trayectoria política y algunos asuntos turbulentos, han mermado la pretendida imagen de líder político puro e impoluto. En 2018, en un debate en el Congreso, la senadora uribista Paloma Valencia mostró un video de 14 minutos en el que, en 2005, Petro aparecía contando billetes que luego depositó en una bolsa de papel “como si fuera un mafioso”. Sus explicaciones fueron contradictorias. “Primero dijo que se trataba de un préstamo del arquitecto Simón Vélez, quien negó haberle prestado dinero; después dijo que se trataba de una colecta de fondos para su campaña. Es un episodio que aunque quedó en manos de la justicia seguramente solo tendrá repercusiones sobre su imagen de adalid anticorrupción”, indicó el medio citado.

Hace unos meses, el académico Gustavo Duncan lo llamó [trompetista del apocalipsis](#) y recordó que el candidato tiende a defender con vehemencia sus aseveraciones sin importar que estas sean falsas o que no se correspondan entera o estrictamente con la realidad: “reconocer el error llevaría al debilitamiento de su mensaje general”.

El analista colombiano agregó que el mensaje de Petro toma elementos del discurso apocalíptico católico, extrapolados naturalmente a una dimensión terrenal, y plantea que “la sociedad va por el sendero equivocado, víctima de falsas creencias y ambiciones y de la codicia de sus líderes. Como consecuencia, el apocalipsis es inevitable, al igual que el regreso de Dios a traer orden. No es casual que Petro actúe, entonces, como trompetista del apocalipsis”. Petro asume el rol de gran líder, conductor y casi Dios. Es él quien se va a encargar de corregir el rumbo equivocado de Colombia y conducirla por un “nuevo camino”. “Delirios no le faltan”.



Duncan también dejó claro que la eventual llegada de Petro a la Casa de Nariño amenaza la institucionalidad y las formas democráticas: “supone unas fracturas demasiado grandes para mantener el diálogo democrático. No son acuerdos sobre las grandes decisiones del país, que llegan a un punto medio donde se ponderan

los intereses y las fuerzas políticas, sino choques con la visión del mundo de alguien que, más que electo, se siente el elegido”.

Hay cuestiones fundamentales de la vida democrática, como los límites al poder y la Constitución que la izquierda colombiana conoce, comprende bien y reivindica haciendo oposición. Sin embargo, las olvida rápidamente cuando quiere gobernar y hacerse con el poder.

Clara Riveros, Colombia, 1984. Politóloga, analista política y [autora](#). Ha vivido entre América Latina y el Norte de África. Sus [libros](#) abordan aspectos relacionados con populismos, totalitarismos, revoluciones, dictaduras, estados confesionales, regímenes autoritarios y la cuestión de las libertades a lado y lado del Atlántico.

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