

Off the Page

Südaka Magazine

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HISTORY

1492: The destruction that was baptized as "discovery"

By Sergio Rivera

October is always the month of the "discovery of America." Every year, in some plazas Spanish flags are raised, official statements reiterate the "encounter of civilizations," and textbooks turn the page without pausing. However, when the rhetoric of power tries to dilute a catastrophe into an "epic of adventures," it is necessary to pronounce the uncomfortable word again: it was not a discovery, it was an invasion, it was colonization, it is structural violence that continues to this day.

But the problem lies precisely in the name:
how can a continent inhabited for generations by tens of millions of people
be "discovered"?

The official narrative usually describes October 12, 1492 as a "great moment" for humanity: Columbus's fleet arrives at the island of Guanahani, in the Bahamas, and Europe and America "meet." The archives of the Ministry of Culture of Spain title that date "Discovery of America," define it as the realization of the "Columbian project," and legitimize the subsequent colonial conquest as "spread of the faith and territorial expansion." But the problem lies precisely in the name: how can a continent inhabited for generations by tens of millions of people be "discovered"?



*Representation of the discovery of America,
in accordance with the chivalric vision of Columbus*

The violence of a verb

The verb "to discover" presupposes that what was discovered was waiting to be discovered: without an owner, without a name, waiting to be given meaning. As historian Edmundo O'Gorman points out, America was not a preexisting entity, but rather became "America" at the moment it was "attributed meaning." In other words, the "discovery" is not the record of an objective fact, but an assertion of power: it declares who has the right to name, to possess, and to decide the destiny of a land and its people.

That right to name was accompanied, from the beginning, by a double backing: legal and theological. In April 1492, the Catholic Monarchs signed with Columbus the Capitulations of Santa Fe, granting him the titles of "Admiral, Viceroy, and Governor General" and promising him one-tenth of the profits from the lands he "discovered." The following year, Pope Alexander VI promulgated bulls that delimited the borders of Spanish expansion. The Treaty of Tordesillas of 1494 divided the world in two. In that legal framework, the native peoples were never consulted, never considered subjects of law. Their lands were defined as "empty lands"; they themselves, as pagans to be "reduced."



*Representation of Moctezuma's omen,
belonging to the so-called Durán Codex*

From "correspondence" to extermination

If "discovery" is a lie, "encounter" is a more refined disguise. It suggests equality, reciprocity, dialogue between civilizations. The reality was the opposite: a total destruction that used force, disease, and forced labor as tools.

Let us take Mexico. In 1519, Hernán Cortés set out from Havana toward the Mexican coast with some 670 Spaniards, 200 Cubans, some horses, and war dogs. His goal was to conquer. With the help of the Tlaxcaltecs—a people oppressed by the Mexica who chose to ally with the Spaniards—Cortés was able to advance toward Tenochtitlan. In 1520, smallpox arrived with the Spaniards and wreaked havoc among a population without immunity. The tlatoani Cuitláhuac died of smallpox; he was succeeded by Cuauhtémoc, barely 22 years old. On August 13, 1521, after 75 days of siege, hunger, thirst, and epidemic, Tenochtitlan fell. The city was razed and the empire annihilated.

In South America, the same script was performed in other ways. Lope de Aguirre, the "mad conquistador" whom Herzog brought to film, descended the Amazon in 1560 opening a path by blood and fire, until he died at the hands of his own soldiers. Pedro de Valdivia, conqueror of Chile, founded Santiago in 1541 and advanced southward, biting into Mapuche land with forts and cities.

The Mapuche resisted for decades, but Valdivia ended up captured and executed at the Battle of Tucapel in 1553. The conquest was never unidirectional, but its violence was systematic.

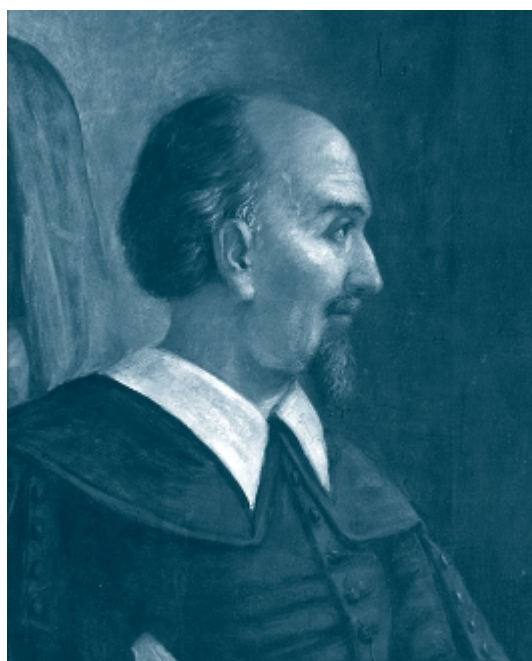
Population: the erased figures

To understand the magnitude of the catastrophe, demographic data are the most silent and most eloquent testimony. How many inhabitants America had before Columbus is a subject of academic debate to this day. Some researchers estimate about 80 million for the entire continent; bolder estimates speak of nearly 90 million. Whatever the figure, the demographic collapse of the following century is staggering. The Taínos of the Caribbean islands practically disappeared. The population of central Mexico fell by around 90% in the century after the conquest.

The chronicler Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo wrote that in the governorship of "Castilla del Oro" alone, in Panama and Nicaragua, during the 16 years of Pedrarias's government (1514–1530), two million Indigenous people died. Whether the figure is exact matters less than its direction: it points to a systematic process of extermination in which war, forced labor, hunger, and disease formed a death machine that reinforced itself.

Las Casas and the conscience of colonialism

Not all Spaniards remained silent before the destruction. Bartolomé de las Casas, a colonist who came to own an encomienda in Cuba, was transformed after witnessing the abuses against the Indigenous peoples. He renounced his lands, became a Dominican friar, and in 1542 promoted the New Laws, which sought to limit the enslavement of the natives. In 1552 he published *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, where, as a witness, he recorded the crimes of the conquerors.



Bartolomé de las Casas



*Massacre of the Templo Mayor,
ordered by Pedro de Alvarado
according to the Aztec version. Durán Codex*

In the famous Valladolid dispute, held between 1550 and 1551, Las Casas confronted the theologian Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda. The latter defended the war of conquest with arguments that included the "natural inferiority" of the Indigenous peoples, the obligation to extirpate "idolatry," and the duty to evangelize. Las Casas's response was blunt: freedom is a right granted by God to all human beings

and is essential to the person. To maintain that slavery is natural is "the most absurd, empty, and without reason or any authority." And he asked, resorting to the history of Rome: if the Romans had the right to divide up the Spaniards, take away their freedom, and force them to work in the mines, what should what the Spaniards did to the Indigenous peoples be called?

"... freedom is a right granted by God to all human beings and is essential to the person. To maintain that slavery is natural is 'the most absurd, empty, and without reason or any authority.'"

King Charles V came to authorize the publication of Las Casas's defense and prohibited Sepúlveda's work. But the pressure of colonial interests was stronger: Las Casas's writings were also censored in 1552 and their shipment to New Spain was prohibited. The colonial logic ended up imposing itself over the protest of conscience.

Five hundred years of continuity

"More than 500 years have passed and it is still necessary to speak of plunder, slaughter, extermination." It is not a rhetorical phrase: it is a fact. Indigenous resistance never ceased. From the long Arauco War that the Mapuche sustained in the 16th century to current Indigenous movements in Chile, Bolivia, Mexico, and Guatemala, the struggle for land, cultural recognition, and autonomy continues.

The data also weigh heavily. In Latin America, Indigenous peoples represent around 50% of the population in Bolivia and 48% in Guatemala; in Peru, about 38%. However, in those countries and throughout the continent, native peoples remain "the great absentees of modernity": their population grows, but their presence in political representation, economic resources, and the judicial system is far below their demographic weight.

Building on the truth

Eduardo Galeano wrote in *The Open Veins of Latin America*: "We had the land, they had the Bible. We closed our eyes. Then we had the Bible and they had our land." The phrase is sharp because it reveals the double expropriation of colonialism: not only the plunder of material resources, but the inversion of the world of meaning. The natives were told that their gods were demons, that their lands were empty, that their history began at the moment they were "discovered."

"To build the future, it must be built on the basis of truth, not on the myths of discovering what was in fact destroyed." This judgment is not a settling of accounts with the past, but a demand of the present. When certain political forces of the 21st century continue to invoke "civilization" to justify exclusion, when the demands of native peoples continue to be treated as "problems" and not as justice, the shadow of 1492 has never fully dissipated.

October arrives every year with its official date. But the true commemoration does not consist of celebrating a verb, but of looking squarely at everything that verb concealed: the burned cities, the erased names, the severed genealogies, and the people who still today fight for their ancestral rights. That is the history that "discovery" never told.



Off the Page

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LITERARY CRITICISM

A Tedeum for Death. **Volume II: The City of the Dead**

By Jack Solo

In the previous issue, we said that reading a novel of 1,400 pages divided into four volumes is an undertaking that few readers embark upon without a guide. In the case of *A Tedeum for Death* by Vicente de la Serna, whose second volume (*The City of the Dead*) can now be read in its entirety, the path becomes darker and more necessary. If the first volume was the presentation of the dictatorial ecosystem, this second one is its live dissection.

The greatest technical achievement of the novel remains the differentiation of voices. Pedro Cornejo consolidates himself as the moral center. His letters to Ramirito are, without exaggeration, one of the most moving pieces of Chilean narrative on torture. "Dying was a privilege that was denied to me," he writes, and that sentence sums up the paradox of survival under terror. José Pablo Moreira, the Creole Casanova, reaches his definitive form in the monologue "Sexual Love": a torrent of arrogance, misogyny, and delusions of grandeur that reveals his moral void. Javier Lavín reveals himself as the most hypocritical figure in the volume; his "stupid little giggle" is his condemnation. Adolfo Husmán, the regime's geisha, embodies the double life of power: Pinochet's advisor by day, a drag performer in a brothel by night. And Jérica Poblete, in her monologue "The Creed," traverses her life, her love for Mario, her broken faith, her solitary motherhood.

The second volume expands the novel's map. Lavín's office is the space of power and hypocrisy; the elevator is the conduit to moral degradation; the Mercedes Benz is the irony of the tortured man driving his torturer; the Bar Nacional is the crossroads between Pedro's memory and the frivolity of the perpetrators; the Colonia Dignidad, although only mentioned, is the horizon of horror.

The author also fulfills the promise of making the dictatorship not a theme, but a world: a complete ecosystem where drug trafficking, pedophilia, corruption, torture, and religious hypocrisy are all connected.

Pedro Cornejo is the hero who did not want to be one. The scene of the weeping willow with his children's toys — a prisoner recounts that he saw, from the basement window, a tree with hanging toys; Pedro recognizes his children's toys — condenses decades of horror into a single image. The

dialogue with the priest Pierre Dubois raises the moral dilemma of resistance: is it legitimate to use violence against violence? Pedro does not find an easy answer. His uncertainty is the uncertainty of all those who have suffered oppression.

The criticism of the Catholic Church is deepened. Father Baradima, confessor to the Lavíns and spiritual guide to Silvino, uses religion to justify pedophilia. "Every pleasure has its punishment," he tells Silvino while initiating him into oral sex. The contrast with Father Dubois — the Jesuit who places himself between the bullets and the shantytown dwellers — is brutal. The Church as a whole is complicit with the regime; Dubois is the exception that confirms the rule. The Te Deum of the title becomes a fierce irony: Ernestina de Lavín sings praises to God while her son is being raped.

Jésica becomes a witness to the rape of Ignacia, the fifteen-year-old girl. "Either you join in or you leave," Moreira tells her. Jésica leaves. Her withdrawal is an act of survival, but also of moral failure. The rape of Ignacia is described with a realism that makes it unbearable. De la Serna does not skimp on details because horror cannot be sweetened. Ignacia is drugged, confused, frightened. "She wanted it all to end. She missed her bed." That sentence sums up the entire tragedy of destroyed innocence.

De la Serna's style has been refined. The long sentences of the first volume have been replaced by a more restrained, more precise prose. Pedro's prose is reflective, measured, sometimes poetic: "Anxieties seek their outlets. They are like pincers that force their own way." Moreira's prose is visceral, crude, fast-paced. Jésica's prose is formal at work, intimate in monologue. The author has learned to trust the reader.



**If De la Serna maintains this level,
this will be one of the great Chilean novels of the 21st century.**

Did It Meet Expectations?

The first volume promised a monumental novel about the Chilean dictatorship, with unforgettable characters and an ambitious choral structure. The second volume more than fulfills that promise. It not only maintains the level; it deepens it. The characters that in the first volume were promises become certainties here: Pedro is not just another survivor, he is a tragic hero of the resistance; J sica is not just any secretary, she is the conscience of the novel; Moreira is not a Don Juan, he is a predator whose moral void is the mirror of the regime.

The author also fulfills the promise of making the dictatorship not a theme, but a world: a complete ecosystem where drug trafficking, pedophilia, corruption, torture, and religious hypocrisy are all connected. The Colonia Dignidad, Opus Dei, the CNI, the drag brothels, the businessmen's dinners: everything is woven into a network that the reader recognizes piece by piece.

However, there is one point where the author does not fully deliver on what the first volume hinted at: the action. The first volume ended with Lav n going to fetch J sica, and the reader expected a climax. The second volume offers climaxes, but fragmented ones: the rape of Ignacia is a climax for Moreira's storyline, but Pedro's attack — the great promise of the novel — remains pending. The third volume will have the responsibility of resolving that tension. For now, the author has chosen accumulation of intensity over resolution.



(Pexel_sxaxoxfz)



(Foto: Noname13)

Literary Comparisons

A Tedeum for Death is not an easy novel to compare, because its ambition is uncommon. However, some lines of kinship can be drawn.

With **Roberto Bolaño**, inevitably. *By Night in Chile* and *Distant Star* also address the Chilean dictatorship with a mix of black humor and horror, and they also play with the idea of the double life and the hypocrisy of intellectuals and artists. But Bolaño is more elliptical, more poetic, more fragmentary. De la Serna is more direct, more narrative, more "classical" in his character construction. If Bolaño is the poet of horror, De la Serna is its novelist.

With **Mario Vargas Llosa**, especially with *The Feast of the Goat*, about the Trujillo dictatorship. Vargas Llosa also constructs a complete dictatorial ecosystem, with the dictator at the center and a network of accomplices and victims around him. But Vargas Llosa is more sober, more "serious." De la Serna allows himself the grotesque, black humor, open satire. Vargas Llosa denounces; De la Serna does too, but sometimes he does it by laughing at his characters.

With **Norman Mailer** and *The Naked and the Dead*, where war is not just a setting, but a way of life that corrupts everyone who participates in it. De la Serna does something similar with the dictatorship: it is not just a political system, it is a human condition that deforms the characters. The parallel with Mailer is useful because both authors show the enemy from within, not as an abstraction, but as concrete people with complex motivations.

With the **19th-century Russian novel**, especially with **Dostoevsky** and his ability to create characters who are living ideas. Moreira is an idea (machismo as pathology), Lavín is an idea (bourgeois hypocrisy), Husmán is an idea (the double life of power). But De la Serna is not a moralist like Dostoevsky; he does not judge his characters from above, but lets them speak and act, and the reader judges.

With **Richard Flanagan** and *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, about the horror of the Japanese prisoner-of-war camps in World War II. Flanagan, like De la Serna, shows horror not as a catalog of atrocities, but as an inner experience that transforms the characters. Both authors write about suffering with a restraint that makes it more powerful.

A less obvious name: **Philip K. Dick**, not because of the theme (science fiction) but because of the paranoia. *A Tedeum for Death* is permeated by a paranoia that recalls *The Man in the High Castle*: everyone knows the regime is false, everyone knows power is an illusion, but no one can escape it. De la Serna, like Dick, writes about reality as a system of control.

Personal Opinion

This is a critic's opinion, not an academic's. That said:

A Tedeum for Death is the novel about the Chilean dictatorship that we needed and didn't know we were waiting for. It is not perfect. Sometimes it overdoes it in the satirical register; the joke about Gáceres and his flatulence, effective the first time, becomes repetitive. Sometimes the density of characters is overwhelming; the reader can get lost among so many names and subplots. Some interior monologues could be shortened without loss.

But its virtues far outweigh its flaws. The author has achieved something difficult: to show the dictatorship from all its perspectives — perpetrators, victims, accomplices, the indifferent — without ever losing sight of the moral dimension. Pedro and Jérica are characters the reader does not forget; Moreira and Gavilán are characters the reader detests with good reason.

What I value most about this novel is its courage. De la Serna has not written a complacent novel. He has not sweetened the horror, turned the victims into saints, or simplified the perpetrators. He

has written about the dictatorship as it should be written about: with rage, but also with lucidity. With denunciation, but also with art.

The second part of the saga is better than the first. The characters are already defined; the author already knows what he wants to say and how to say it. The structure, which in the first volume sometimes seemed scattered, becomes more organic here. Each chapter has a purpose, each voice has a place.

I await the third volume eagerly. If De la Serna maintains this level, this will be one of the great Chilean novels of the 21st century.

Rating: ★★★★★½ (4.5/5)

Jack Solo

Literary Critic

Publicidad Werbung advertising publicité publicidade

**"Tedeum des Todes" ist kein politischer Roman. Es ist ein Roman darüber, was geschieht, wenn Macht zur Gewohnheit wird und Grausamkeit zur Routine.
Es gibt hier keine Helden. Nur Überlebende.**

ISBN: 9789403921778



Off the Page

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NEW AUTHORS – NEW BOOKS

Eternal Love

A novel about the love that dares not speak its name

/SE

Eternal Love. The Shadow of Time, by Néstor Giménez, is a novel that presents itself as an investigative tale—a missing woman, a desperate client, a reluctant investigator—but the noir genre is merely the skeleton of a far more ambitious work: an inquiry into the nature of love, the weight of time, and the shadows both cast upon memory.



Néstor Giménez: *Eternal Love. The Shadow of Time.*

ISBN: 9789403917283

142 pages

The voice of a weary detective

Giménez constructs a memorable protagonist in Estanislao López, an investigator from Salamanca who defines himself as "a small, humble, simple house" where women pass through like visitors who rarely make it into the living room. There is in him a weary wisdom, an acid humor that does not hide his fragility, and a moving honesty when he confesses that he recognizes himself "as a being of autumn" [1].

Estanislao's narrative voice is one of the novel's greatest achievements. His tone combines the irony of the classic detective with an almost poetic sensibility, capable of lingering on small details—the aroma of a coffee, the light fragmented by a stained-glass window, the rattling of a train—to build an atmosphere of contained melancholy.

The title, *Eternal Love. The Shadow of Time*, works as an irony that the novel takes it upon itself to dismantle. The eternal, Giménez suggests, is not love itself but the search for it.

The plot as an excuse

The mystery of Minna Keller's disappearance works as a perfect McGuffin. What really matters is not where she is, but what her absence reveals about those who search for her: Peter, the boyfriend who confuses possession with love; and Estanislao, who hides behind the case so as not to look at his own loneliness.

Giménez constructs a network of clues that connect human cloning, Nazi genetic experiments, and the Raelian sect with a love story that spans decades. The novel takes science seriously, but never allows the technical detail to overshadow the human mystery. When Karl Fesser whispers the possibility that human beings have been cloned, the reader feels the same chill as Estanislao. But Giménez does not exploit that terror; he leaves it floating, like a question without a definitive answer.

The landscape as a character

Giménez writes with a prose that lingers on details. Salamanca, Las Hurdes, Nuremberg, and Heidelberg are not mere settings but states of mind [3]. The train that "leaves behind a trail of silent goodbyes," the rain that chases Estanislao "across Europe," Greta's bow window where light fragments into stained glass joined with lead: everything breathes melancholy.

The author, a musician by training—holder of a higher degree in jazz piano performance from ESMUC and an award-winning composer [1][3]—imprints on the prose a rhythm that recalls a musical composition: there are silences, pauses, themes that reappear and transform. It is no coincidence that the work cites Wagner, Chopin, and Tristan and Isolde; music is a constant metaphor for the search for eternal love.

Love as a red thread

The title, *Eternal Love. The Shadow of Time*, works as an irony that the novel takes it upon itself to dismantle. The eternal, Giménez suggests, is not love itself but the search for it. The "red thread" of Japanese legend appears here not as certainty but as a question: what if the thread gets tangled? What if the highway collapses?

The novel poses a reflection on love that is at once intimate and universal. Estanislao, who has known heartbreak, struggles between the fear of surrendering and the need to do so. Greta, the woman who bursts into his life, teaches him that love "has nothing to do with oneself: it has to do with the other, prioritizing the other more than one's own interest" [2]. That lesson of deconstruction—a term the protagonist uses at the end—is the true resolution of the plot.



Néstor Rubén Giménez

An open ending

Giménez resolves the detective plot in an almost anticlimactic way: Minna and Josef are together in Berlin, working for the biotechnology company linked to cloning. There is no crime, no kidnapping. Only a love story that, seen from the outside, looks like a betrayal. But the author does not judge. He lets Peter weep his farewell, lets Estanislao file away the photos, and lets the reader draw their own conclusions.

***Eternal Love. The Shadow of Time* is a novel that takes happiness seriously without falling into sentimentality.**

The true climax is not the reunion with Minna but Estanislao's encounter with Greta. The final scene, where the investigator puts away Greta's portrait and announces to his secretary that he will travel to Orense ("I must meet someone"), is an open ending, optimistic without being naive. Estanislao has not found eternal love; he has found, perhaps for the first time, the possibility of ceasing to search for it.

Conclusion

Eternal Love. The Shadow of Time is a novel that takes happiness seriously without falling into sentimentality. It is a work about detectives who end up investigating themselves, about disappearances that are in reality apparitions, and about a love that can only be eternal if we learn to love "beautifully, to miss sweetly and in silence, to remember without pain or resentment."

Néstor Giménez, a pianist and composer by training, has written a novel that deserves to be read with the same pause with which Estanislao drinks his coffee: slowly, savoring each sip, letting the aroma invade the room. And, as in the best stories, upon closing the book one has the sensation that the story has not ended, but continues somewhere, perhaps on a train crossing the plateau, perhaps in the memory of someone who is learning to live.

Off the Page

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NEW AND OLD VOICE



Alfonsina Storni

Alfonsina Storni and *La inquietud del rosal*: The Inaugural Cry of a Modern Poet

In the vast and often tempestuous sea of Latin American literature, the figure of Alfonsina Storni (1892–1938) stands as an unavoidable lighthouse. Poet, playwright, teacher, and journalist, her life and work are a testimony of struggle, sensitivity, and a sharp critical consciousness that challenged the canons of her time. With her unmistakable voice, she became one of the most important figures not only of Argentine poetry, but of all Spanish-language literature of the 20th century.

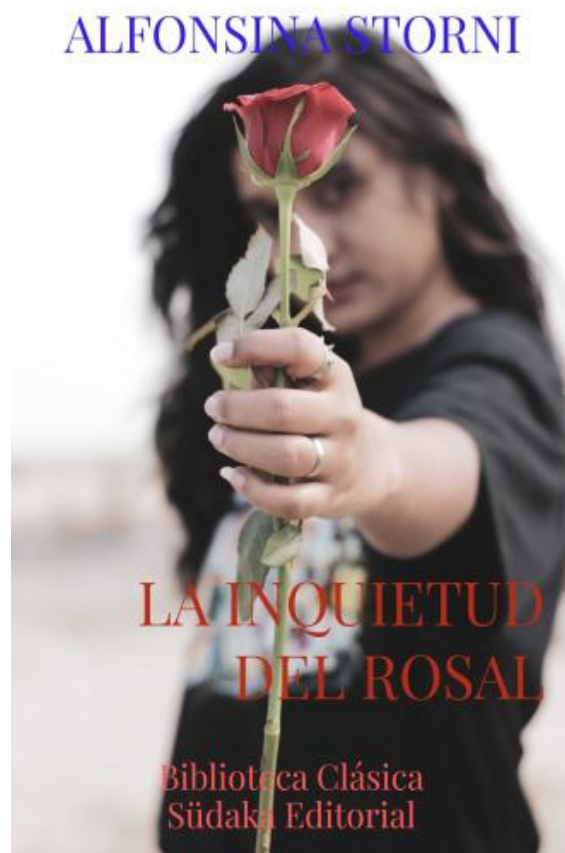
The publication of her first book, *La inquietud del rosal* (The Restlessness of the Rosebush), in March 1916, marked a turning point. Prefaced by Juan Julián Lastra, this poetry collection was not simply the debut of a young promise; it was the statement of principles of a new feminine sensibility in poetry. Storni herself, with the self-criticism that characterized her, went so far as to describe her work as a "terrible book of verses." However, over time, its value has been reassessed, and it is now understood as the cornerstone of her entire poetic oeuvre and a herald of female emancipation in literature.

A Manifesto of Restlessness and Liberation

The poem that gives the book its title is a clear manifesto:

*"The rosebush, in its restless way of blooming,
burns the sap that nourishes its being.
Look at the roses that fall from the rosebush:
So many are they that the plant will die of this evil!"*

At first glance, this can be read as a metaphor for youth that consumes itself by rushing to live. But contemporary literary criticism sees in these verses something much deeper: the representation of a "feminine restlessness" that becomes a herald of emancipation. The "rosebush" that blooms precipitously is the woman whom society forces to mature before her time, who is required to be an adult without having had the opportunity to know herself, and whose vital energy is exhausted in that attempt. This reading transcends the personal to become a social critique, a denunciation of the role imposed on women in her era.



Alfonsina Storni
La inquietud del rosal

ISBN: 9789403916545 - 120 páginas

Far from being pigeonholed into the stereotype of the "sentimental poetess," Storni used irony and subversion as her main tools. Although her poems explore love, death, and intimacy, they do so from a radically new perspective. For Storni, and for the generation of women writers she inspired, known as the **Generación del 16** — with figures such as Amalia Prebisch and Blanca Colt de Hume — writing was an act of rebellion. Their goal was "to ultimately write like a man," that is, with the same freedom and without the allegorical filters that tradition imposed on feminine lyricism.

In this sense, *La inquietud del rosal* upends the paradigm of Argentine poetry. The paroxysm and submissive surrender of romantic love are left behind to make way for a "pagan shamelessness overflowing with sensuality and genuine feminine feeling." Storni's poetic voice is that of a woman who is not afraid to claim her space, as evidenced in verses that resonate with surprising relevance:

*"Women! ... Beauty is a form
and the ovum an idea—.
Let the ovum triumph!"*

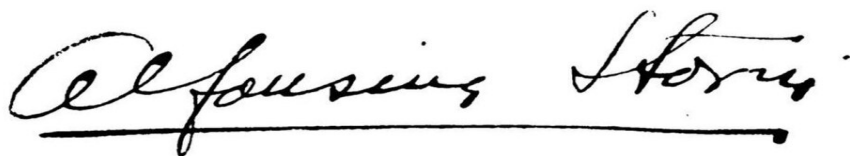
This statement, which could be considered a feminist cry avant la lettre, positions her as a forerunner of literary feminism in the Spanish language.

The Relevance of a Classic Voice

A hundred years after its publication, the message of *La inquietud del rosal* remains "unwavering and current." The present has been, paradoxically, cruel to Storni, sometimes reducing her legacy to anecdotes about her tragic death. However, it is precisely in the complete and attentive reading of her work that we find the true Alfonsina: a woman who at 24 years old had already "been able to find and see much of life without having gone through its key moments: illness, pain, torment, and the decision of her own death." Her poetry is a hymn to life, at the same time as an exploration of death, lost innocence, and the legacies we leave behind.

It is here that publishing projects such as that of **Südaka Editorial** acquire fundamental relevance. Their mission to give voice to "new and old voices" of the continent, distributing "memory, design, and living word" in Europe and the world, is a pillar for the dissemination of our literary heritage. By rescuing and republishing works such as *La inquietud del rosal*, publishers like Südaka, which seek to publish and promote Latin American writers with a deep respect for the original text, allow new generations of readers to rediscover a Storni who is not just an icon of the past, but a vibrant and contemporary voice.

Thanks to these initiatives, we can continue to immerse ourselves in the poetry of Alfonsina Storni and understand why that "restlessness of the rosebush" continues to bloom, more alive than ever, in the garden of world literature. Her legacy, far from being exhausted, invites us to keep reading, to keep questioning, and to never stop seeking our own voice.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Alfonsina Storni". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Below the signature is a single horizontal line.

Off the Page

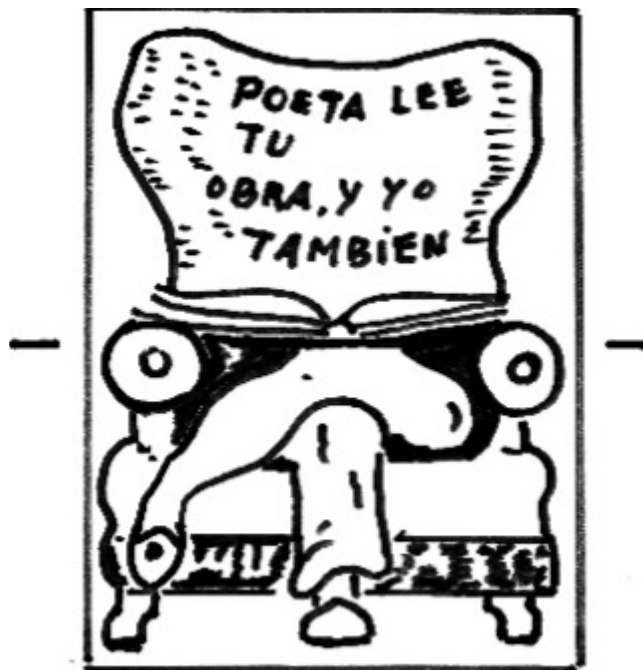
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PEOPLE

Fifty Years of Words: The El Butacón Literary Gathering Celebrates Half a Century in Hamburg

A refuge of Spanish in northern Germany that has kept the flame of migrant literature alive for five decades



There are gatherings that are born of necessity and become legend. The El Butacón Literary Gathering is one of them. It was 1976 when a group of Spanish emigrants, settled in Hamburg and faced with the daily reality of the German language in their jobs and in their children's schools, made a decision that would mark half a century of cultural life in the Hanseatic city: to found a space where Spanish would not only be preserved but would flourish.

The founding act is dated September 11, 1976. Signed in the German city, those pioneers—mostly workers, with some academics among them—resolved that their language should not be relegated to the domestic sphere. Thus began a cultural epic that, fifty years later, is still alive and vibrant.

The wine cellar as a homeland

The first meetings took place in the back room—the wine cellar, to be precise—of a Spanish food tavern. On Friday afternoons, the participants took refuge there to speak freely, in their own language and at their usual volume, without disturbing the German patrons occupying the main dining room. The choice of space was no accident: in that basement, voices could be raised without hesitation, and nostalgia found a shared channel.

***Heimweh*—that German word so precise for designating longing for one's homeland—is a constant in the migrant's thinking.**

Soon, what began as informal conversation began to take on a literary tint. Someone would read a few lines from the classics; another, moved, would share their own compositions, written in the heat of migration and uprooting. Attendees arrived directly from their jobs, and their partners joined later. The gathering consolidated with a regularity that still holds today: the second and fourth Fridays of each month.

Thirty years of Latin American succession

About three decades ago, the baton passed to Latin American emigrants. Gesine Mariona and José Napoleón Mariona—who today, in July 2026, coordinates the gathering—took over with the conviction of positioning Spanish in northern Germany. "We are 500 million Spanish speakers in the world," they argue, "but that figure is not reflected in the real space our language occupies in Germany." They observe, with a certain empirical lament, a kind of "invasion" of Russian, French, and English in spheres that, by number of speakers, should correspond to Spanish. Far from discouraging them, this perception fuels their enthusiasm and their commitment.

Writing as a balm

Heimweh—that German word so precise for designating longing for one's homeland—is a constant in the migrant's thinking. Writing, sharing, reading aloud: all of this produces a calming effect on the spirit wounded by uprooting. El Butacón thus becomes a space for encountering that need to overflow with feelings, to project mutual accompaniment in the migratory phenomenon.

But the benefits go beyond the emotional. The gathering soothes sorrows, yes, but it also reduces social vulnerability. It promotes socialization among migrants, strengthens the gregarious instinct, and endows its participants with vital energy. In a foreign country, where integration often passes through linguistic assimilation, El Butacón offers a necessary counterpoint: the possibility of being oneself, in one's own language, without renouncing identity.

Free of charge and freedom of thought

One of the pillars that has sustained the gathering over these fifty years is its free character. This decision, made from the beginning, has allowed them to avoid formal subsidies and, with that, preserve freedom of thought. There is no limit other than respect for local laws on political and religious matters, and participants voluntarily adhere to that framework. Ideas, whatever they may

be, find here an open and hospitable channel.

Beyond Fridays

El Butacón's activity does not end with the two monthly gatherings. Each year they hold the Spanish Language Contest, which allows them to maintain ties with other Spanish-speaking groups throughout Germany and Europe. At the end of the year, they publish their literary notebook *Viento Sur*, a review of what has happened that serves as memory and testimony.

A year of celebrations

2026 marks the fiftieth anniversary of that founding, and the gathering is celebrating it in grand style: all sessions of the year bear the stamp of the special and the commemorative. But there is one date that shines with its own light on the calendar: September 11, 2026, when exactly fifty years will have passed since that resolution signed by the Spanish emigrants. That day, the gathering will meet again to honor the memory of the founders and renew its commitment to the shared word.

A bridge that goes both ways

El Butacón is not only a meeting place in Hamburg. It is a bridge that transports its participants—by means of the melodious common language—back to their places of origin in Ibero-America. It is also proof that migrant culture is not a heritage of the past, but a living reality that reinvents itself every Friday, every poem, every conversation.

Half a century later, the gathering is still standing. And it promises to continue celebrating, with each meeting, that spiritual and intellectual feast that has made it a silent but indispensable institution of Hamburg's cultural landscape.

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