



Fernando Sánchez Marcos (1943-2020)

Fernando Sánchez Marcos, a professor of History at the University of Barcelona, passed away on the morning of Saturday, 4 July. Although he had been born in Ávila, he pursued most of his academic career in Barcelona, punctuated by a ten-year period at the University of the Balearic Islands.

His desire to build bridges between his native Castile and his adopted home of Catalonia led him to direct the first research into an issue that is essential for understanding our current era: the frustration caused by the Catalan defeat in the war against the Spanish monarchy in the 17th century. Despite the time that has passed since its publication, his book *Catalunya y el Gobierno central tras la Guerra dels Segadors (1652-1679)* [Catalonia and the Central Government After the War of the Reapers' War (1652-1679)] remains highly illustrative.

He later shifted his attention to the field of historiography, a specialisation of prime importance that was not always appreciated by historians who love data and are allergic to theory. Two books contain the bulk of his contribution in this regard: *Invitación a la Historia: La historiografía, de Heródoto a Voltaire, a través de sus textos* [Invitation to History: Historiography, from Herodotus to Voltaire, Through his Texts] (1993, third edition 2002) and, more recently, *Las huellas del futuro: historiografía y cultura histórica en el siglo XX* [Traces of the Future: Historiography and Historical Culture in the 20th Century] (2012).

Despite the time that we had worked together, some of us discovered the real scope of his intellectual productivity when he retired in 2013. We wanted to give him a volume of studies and invited everyone who had ever crossed paths with him to participate. The response was astonishing. *A vueltas con el pasado. Historia, memoria y vida* [Around the Past. History, Memory and Life] (2013) brought together contributions from some of the main figures of historical theory in the second half of the 20th century.

Many of those who could not participate in the book were involved in the digital platform <http://culturahistorica.org>, on which he worked in the final years of his life. This platform is devoted to the study of what he called historical culture, meaning the literary, artistic and theatrical representations and performances of the past that arise and permeate popular culture, civic life and political discourse, including the fascinating subject of social memory. His desire to break down academic boundaries and strike up a dialogue with society prompted him to create the Master's programme in History and Cultural Communication that he directed from 2002 to 2013.

For years, he was the only Spanish member of the International Commission for the Theory and History of Historiography, a committee of experts dedicated to examining how visions of the past shape how we behave today, among other things. He liked to recall meetings with historians from the other side of the iron curtain before 1989. “In those meetings, I discovered the benefit of putting yourself in another man’s shoes before judging him”, he would say. Those who attended staff meetings with him at the University of Barcelona or Geography or History Department faculty meetings can attest to just how far he tried to turn this principle into a model of behaviour. In times of intense politicisation of university life and difficulty in adapting divergent sensitivities, he always had a kind word and warm treatment for those who did not think the same as he did.

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