

Aceptación del Doctorado “Honoris Causa” por la Nottingham Trent University

Nottingham, 7 de noviembre de 1996

It is an honour for me to be here today, to share with you in this Graduation Ceremony and to accept this Honorary Degree.

I know that this has been an important, indeed bouyant, year for the Media Arts Faculty here in Southampton Institute, marked by several achievements worthy of mention. The Faculty organised with the City Art Gallery the centenary exhibition marking John Everett Millais' death, during which the Institute Gallery was officially named by the artist's grandson, Sir Geoffroy Everett Millais.

Congratulations to Ruth Turner, awarded the Southern Daily Echo Student Journalist of the year award. And congratulations to 3rd year Film Studies and Media with Cultural Studies students whose work was assessed by none less than Ken Russell and screened at the London Short Film Festival and the Gantry Arts Centre. I know that this is a particularly dynamic Faculty, and I wish all fellow graduates here great success as you embark on your professional careers.

As I do so, I am conscious of the fact that my presence here indicates the degree to which education is transcending national borders, as universities and centres of higher education become increasingly aware of the importance of working together with their colleagues in Europe and further afield to internationalise the educational scene.

When I arrived at Alicante University as a Senior Lecturer 15 years ago, Spain was still waking up to modern European systems and structures and struggling to find its feet in an international context. My University was a relatively small centre, unable to offer the opportunity to many students to enrich their educational experience by travelling abroad. Today things have changed considerably and I am pleased to say that through European programmes, government grants and direct agreements between Alicante and partner universities abroad, our 34.000 students can apply for numerous possibilities available to them to study in countries worldwide.

My first real opportunity to widen my horizons as an academic came when I was granted an Eisenhower Fellowship Scholarship in 1987. I visited seventeen different American universities, talked and worked with many experts in the field of Economic Analysis in which I was specialising at the time, and furthered my research and study with material which was impossible to obtain in Spain.

But my experience was not limited to academic results which, although important, proved to be only a small part of the overall impact the visit had on my personal and professional life. I was greatly impressed and influenced by the organizational structure and vision of American universities which was years ahead of their Spanish counterparts. I was presented with a whole series of ideas and opportunities which have served as an inspiration to me and which I have since tried to adapt and apply to the Spanish system with, I believe, some degree of success.

While travel is then vital to the internationalisation of education, the ability to welcome visitors and colleagues to our native surroundings is equally important. It gives us an opportunity to show others how we live and work, and to learn, by being open to suggestions and comments of people whose educational and professional environments are totally different from ours, and whose advice can help to enrich our own. An example of this is the joint initiative taken on by Southampton Institute and Alicante University in the creation of the International Maritime Institute, a model I think of the sort of international collaboration we should be striving towards in modern education.

My firm belief of the need to internationalise the role of universities as centres of knowledge and learning is reflected in the international policies I have introduced in Alicante. An example of this is our campaign in Latin America. The historical, cultural and linguistic links between the Latinamerican continent and Spain have, in recent years tended to take second place faced with the need to forge links with our European partners. I believe that this is a mistake and that Spain should never underestimate the great role it has to play in bridging European and Latinamerican relations.

The Latinamerican continent has much to learn from the achievements and errors which have made in the last forty years of European Union, and much to offer Europe in terms of culture and trade. We have created in Alicante University a Secretariate in charge of relations with Latin America, whose mission is to cement relations with universities in the Latinamerican continent and to carry out campaigns for sponsorship from the private sector. This sponsorship is used each year to offer as many scholarship

grants as possible to Latinamerican students wishing to carry out postgraduate studies in our university but unable to finance their journey or stay.

Alicante University has an outpost in Cuba where we offer courses to Cuban students. This outpost is conceived essentially as a solidarity initiative with Cuban university students and academics, but is also seen as a potentially strategic outpost from which to offer courses to other Latinamerican countries once the Cuban regime has outlived the present dictatorship.

I would certainly urge my fellow graduates here today to grasp any opportunity given to you to further your academic and professional development in another country, and, in the same way, to collaborate in welcoming visitors to your environment here. I am convinced that learning different cultures and languages is vital in a world where the speed at which modern technology advances, undermines the relevance of national borders, is not always accompanied by an increase in tolerance and understanding of other cultures. It is only by exchanging experiences, promoting joint activities and sharing know how with colleagues overseas that we will be able to keep pace with developments all over the world.

Thank you again for this award. I am proud to be included in the 1996 Southampton Institute list of graduates.

Thank you.