

FUNDACIÓN
**CORRIPIO
ALONSO**

SPEECH BY VANESSA GUTIÉRREZ GONZÁLEZ

Regional Minister for Culture, Language Policy and Sport
Government of the Principality of Asturias

Speaking here today at Teatro Riera, at the presentation of the Corripio Alonso Foundation, is more than simply a source of pride. It is an opportunity to tell a moving story of departure and return—a story of a universal Asturian identity embodied by Pepín Corripio and his family. It is a story that began in Arroes, here in the land of Villaviciosa; crossed the ocean to put down deep and fertile roots in the Dominican Republic; and now returns as a legacy of generosity to be shared with all the people of Asturias. Let me begin by expressing the recognition and heartfelt gratitude of the Government of the Principality of Asturias to the Corripio-Alonso family. Because you remind us—you demonstrate to us—something that is sometimes forgotten: emigration does not tear up our roots; it can make them stronger.

Throughout our history, so many people, at different moments and for different reasons—though always under difficult circumstances—have had to make the painful decision to leave. They left with the hope of finding a prosperity that was not possible here, while carrying with them the pain of the life they were leaving behind. Their departure was accompanied by uncertainty and hope, leaving behind—as our much-missed poet Ángel González might have said—a vast sea and a long stretch of time.

And yet distance, rather than separating us, can strengthen our bonds. It connects the heart to memory through a kind of umbilical cord which, far from breaking, reaches forward to future generations. A cord that ties them to a land—Asturias—a land to which they belong, a land that needs them and welcomes them.

Across that physical and temporal distance—though never a distance of the spirit—love and longing are transformed into effort, work and new projects. Some will undoubtedly succeed more than others, but all are sustained by the solid foundation of memory that we call identity. And identity always, always keeps the possibility of return somewhere on the horizon.

In the case of the Corripio-Alonso family, that dream pursued in a foreign land has become a point of reference throughout the Caribbean. And we can only be grateful that such a prosperous journey, built through sacrifice and hard work, is now returning to Asturias in the



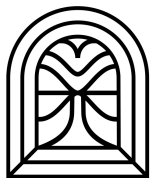
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form of shared prosperity: support for talent, encouragement for culture and a renewed commitment to Asturian identity.

Thank you, from the bottom of my heart.

Asturian emigration—the Corripio-Alonso family is part of that history—was never simply a farewell without return, nor was it an act of renunciation. It was a network that carried our customs and our culture wherever Asturians settled, preserving them, sharing them and enriching them through the experiences and traditions of the lands that welcomed them. Asturian centres, Casas de Asturias, cultural events, publications, mutual aid societies and magazines: thousands of people tirelessly wove the thread that kept communities connected on both sides of the Atlantic.

That is why, only a few months ago, the 46th Asturian Literature Week, organised by the Department of Culture, which I have the honour of leading, was dedicated to the Asturian diaspora. It paid tribute to those writers who, through exile or emigration, kept the flame of our own languages, traditions and culture alive—and shared them with pride. That edition honoured Xosé Álvarez “Pin”, who carried Asturian literature beyond our borders and gave voice to the experience of Asturian emigration. And alongside him, we remembered so many other men and women—many of them anonymous—who did the same, each according to their own possibilities. At that time, we published an anthology entitled *Per toa tierra*, bringing together the work of writers from different generations whose writing is deeply shaped by the experience of emigration. It was another gesture of gratitude and recognition—though, when it comes to those who kept our culture alive across the world, gratitude can never truly be enough.

That anthology does not include the poem I would like to share with you this afternoon, although it could very well have done so. It is a poem by Aurora García Rivas, originally written in one of our own languages, Eonavian, and I am going to read it in a somewhat improvised English adaptation. It is entitled ‘The Border’:

*There are places which,
no matter where you look at them from,
always seem to lie on the other side.
But there are no borders—*



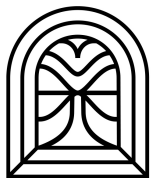
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*neither blessed nor cursed—
that humans cannot cross.
Our border was the river,
because the border drawn by history
had never meant anything to us.
In winter, in the little boat; in summer, among eels and geese,
stepping across the rounded stones,
we built a bridge every time we crossed the line.
And we always brought back,
stuck to the soles of our shoes, soil from the other side,
at least as much as we carried there from here.*

And that is what you are. That is what the Corripio Alonso Foundation represents today: a bridge, born from the greatness of your generosity. As the poem tells us, there is no boundary that humans cannot cross. And this is a beautiful story of departure and return—a story that writes an unbroken continuity here, in this land of Villaviciosa, which is your home, and throughout Asturias.

Dear Corripio-Alonso family: with this Foundation, you leave us an invaluable example. The example of those who do not forget. Of those who wish to give back to their homeland something of what that land first gave them. Of those who know where they come from while also honouring the land where uncertainty was transformed into prosperity. Your footsteps have shaped both lands, and you have helped make both of them better. And today, you are doing so once again by investing in something intangible, vulnerable and yet immensely valuable—something that gives us the humanity we need: culture. Thank you for believing in it. Thank you for supporting social action, for encouraging entrepreneurial opportunities and for helping create spaces where people can come together.

Today, you remind us that true wealth lies in what we share. And that nothing is more valuable than the culture and roots that shape our shared heritage. Caring for them is a responsibility that belongs to all of us. And your generous invitation to do so is also a responsibility that we must embrace.



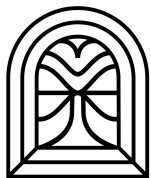
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Let me conclude by once again expressing, on behalf of the Government of the Principality of Asturias, our most sincere gratitude for this initiative.

Thank you for building this bridge between two shores of the Atlantic and reminding us, through this gesture, that the history of Asturias is written both by those who remain and by those who, like your family, never truly leave. Thank you for making possible this form of return—which today represents one of our greatest hopes and one of the finest legacies we can leave to future generations: a legacy of culture, knowledge, respect and love for others.

Congratulations on this Foundation, which is already a seed for the future, a driving force for the community and a guardian of a heritage that Asturias must never lose: the ability to work, to dream and to share, so that together we can become greater.

Thank you very much.



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