



ENEMIES/ENEMIGOS

Laura Martin



EDITIONS

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COMMUNE EDITIONS

PURVEYOR OF POETRY & OTHER ANTAGONISMS

Oakland

2018

communeeditions.com

WHAT MISERY TO LIVE IN THIS WORLD! WE ARE LIKE MEN
WHOSE ENEMIES ARE AT THE DOOR, WHO MUST NOT LAY
ASIDE THEIR ARMS, EVEN WHILE SLEEPING OR EATING, AND
ARE ALWAYS IN DREAD LEST THE FOE SHOULD ENTER THE
FORTRESS BY SOME BREACH IN THE WALLS.

—TERESA OF ÁVILA, *THE INTERIOR CASTLE*

DEATH OF A DICTATOR (1)



The hand of Santa Teresa de Avila, encased in silver and precious stones.

I. The Translator

There is a family story.

About the death of a dictator, a phone call in the middle of the night, my grandfather, and a Spanish-to-English translation.

My American-born grandfather had moved his family to a country ruled by a sociopath, a man who slept with the mummified hand of Santa Teresa de Ávila on his bedside table each night.

In this country at the time there were acting jobs for men like my grandfather. The right-wing government was recruiting foreign directors to film spaghetti westerns in the southeastern desert. Sergio Leone's Dollars Trilogy was filmed there.

My grandfather appeared as a bit character in some of these westerns, although his name is not always listed in the credits. He had roles like "Proprietor" and "Bad Sheriff" and "Second Inspector." In all honesty, he was a failed actor whose biggest role, perhaps, was off screen and even that wasn't much: just a bit part he played on the historical stage.

II. The Speech

General Francisco Paulino Hermenegildo Teódulo Franco de Bahamonde died in the early hours of November 20th, 1975. He was 82 years old.

Carlos Arias Navarro, the Prime Minister, announced the death on national television at around 10 am that day. He talked for a few minutes, his voice shaking, at one point shedding tears.

He said: "Fellow Spaniards. Franco has died."

He said: "Spain feels now more than ever the infinite anguish of its helplessness."

He removed a square of paper from his breast pocket, unfolded it, and read a statement written by Franco on his deathbed, in which he said goodbye to the Spanish people.

Franco wrote, among other things: "I ask pardon of all my enemies, as I pardon with all my heart all those who declared themselves my enemy, although I did not consider them to be so." A statement that contradicts itself.

Actually, he didn't write those exact words. He wrote in Spanish, and his words were spoken by Arias Navarro on television in Spanish, but someone translated it into English, and that's the version I read online when looking for a transcript of the speech.

III. The Waiting Period

When Carlos Arias Navarro announced the death of General Franco, no one was surprised.

Franco's health had been in decline since July 1974 when he suffered an attack of thrombophlebitis, or blood clots in one of his veins. It was all downhill from there: partial kidney failure, bronchial pneumonia, pulmonary edema, bacterial peritonitis, gastric hemorrhage, endotoxic shock and, finally, cardiac arrest.

For the last days of his life he was more dead than alive. On November 18th doctors lowered his temperature to hibernation level and considered freezing him temporarily. Three generals volunteered their hearts to save him.

The leftist film director Carlos Saura recalled that there was plenty of time for people to stock up on bottles of cava, ready to pop open when the announcement was made. In the Basque region of southern France,

political exiles gathered in taverns to watch the news and wait. Each evening they listened to the report on Franco's medical condition, passed on to the media by his team of thirty-two doctors. An American reporter interviewing Basque militants described the scene in Bayonne, France: "The radio in the corner reports that Franco needs a third operation. The odds are 100 to 1 against success. There are smiles all around. 'Maybe tomorrow we drink champagne.'"

Those in Franco's inner circle who lacked confidence in modern medical intervention turned to older methods: prayer and the collection of relics. Franco's palace officials sent for a mantle from the Virgin Mary's shrine in Zaragoza and the hand of Santa Teresa de Ávila to place by the dying man's hospital bed. Santa Teresa, the 16th century mystic and writer, had her hand severed after death, as was the custom with saints, encased in a silver glove and encrusted with precious stones. The relic was kept faithfully by the nuns of the convent of Nuestra Señora de la Merced in Ronda until it was stolen by a Republican soldier during the war. It eventually made its way to Franco's bedside table.

In the U.S., the dragged-out dying became comedic fodder. The new comedy sketch show *Saturday Night* coined its first catchphrase: "Generalissimo Francisco Franco is still dead!"

They were making fun of the US television newscasters who, on slow news days that month, kept turning to the dying dictator for a headline. They noted that Franco was "still alive," or sometimes "not yet dead." After Franco's death, Chevy Chase parodied the coverage in his *Weekend Update* segment, announcing: "This breaking news just in: Generalissimo Francisco Franco is still dead!"

The man who had sent so many hundreds of thousands to their graves found it harder to follow in their footsteps. "How difficult it is to die," he whispered from his hospital bed. Perhaps he worried about what plans the dead might have for him on the other side.

It was only after thirty-five days of fighting to live that his family agreed to remove the life support machines that, by then, were all that kept his flesh from rotting.

*A BRIEF HISTORY OF
FASCIST CINEMA*



Titlecard for the 1942 Spanish film *Raza*, based on a semi-autobiographical novel by Franco.

IV. Bit Parts

In the decade before Franco's death, my grandfather was in at least twelve movies—mostly westerns—shot in the desert of southeastern Spain.

He played the corrupt Sheriff Anderson in *The Christmas Kid* (released as *Joe Navidad* in Spain), and another, similarly corrupt, sheriff in the rape revenge western *Hannie Caulder*, starring Raquel Welch. He played unnamed small parts in *Captain Apache*, *Bad Man's River*, and *Pancho Villa*. He appeared briefly as a CIA Director in *Mister Dynamite*, and as a television reporter who announces a grisly murder in the Mario Bava-inspired *Sisters of Corruption*. The list goes on.

I wonder what the fascists thought about these movies, whether they saw them as distasteful spectacles, merely tolerated for their capacity to generate wealth for the country, or whether they actually liked them.

Perhaps the vigilante justice motif appealed to them: the hanging of outlaws, the slaughtering of Native peoples. Purifying the nation by purging the corrupt.

Government-sponsored Spanish filmmakers also made movies in the desert, and they told their own national myths. Instead of cowboys their heroes were soldiers and priests. And instead of outlaws, Native Americans, and Mexicans, their representatives of the uncivilized other were Moroccan tribesmen, Moors, and Communists.

And in both cases the desert canyons and cliffs became a weird

staging ground for stories of conquest, of the struggle between civilization and barbarism. As the film industry set down roots in the dry region known as the Tabernas Desert—chosen for its likeness to parts of Arizona and northern Mexico—the landscape was recycled endlessly in film after film, its arid blankness a stand-in for the American Southwest, for the Arabian peninsula, for ancient Palestine, for Mexico, and for northern Africa. Like the scrolling scenery of repeating cacti and cliffs in a Roadrunner cartoon, it came to function as a generic marker of untamed wilderness, upon which the celluloid heroes played out their tales of honor, redemption, and national belonging.

But even a backdrop has a history, and the Tabernas Desert is no different. In fact, it was the scene of a more recent conquest. At the end of the Civil War the surrounding region of Almería was the last province to hold out against the fascist victory, and Republican refugees from all over Spain clogged the roads trying to reach safety there. When it was captured they had nowhere left to go, and they were slaughtered or taken prisoner en masse.

Also: the last movie listed in my grandfather's IMDB biography is *The House on Garibaldi Street* (1979). It was released in Spain under a different title: *La Caza de Eichmann*, which means *The Hunt for Eichmann*. As you might be able to guess, it was about the capture in 1960 of former Nazi Adolf Eichmann by the Israeli Mossad. This movie was released in Spain less than three years after the so-called democratic transition and less than a year after the country's first post-dictatorship constitution was written. In that same year (1979) far right neo-fascist groups, opposed to the dismantling of the Francoist political system, killed ten people, mostly ETA militants, syndicalists, and Communists.

V. *The Miracle*

In the 1960s and 70s the Tabernas Desert was a little Spanish Hollywood. American movie stars like Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, Clint Eastwood, Sophia Loren, and Charlton Heston lived there while filming

spaghetti westerns and “sword and sandal” movies like *Lawrence of Arabia*.

This was all part of the “Spanish miracle”: Francoist Spain’s opening in the 1950s to foreign investment and the subsequent rapid development of the national tourist industry. The connection established between Hollywood and Francoist Spain in this period says much about the relationship between Cold War geopolitics, economic development, and the culture industry. American movie companies looking for inexpensive filming locations found the offers made by Spain’s Orwellian Ministry of Information and Tourism difficult to resist. In exchange for access to Spanish locales and cheap labor, Hollywood had only to feature sunny Spanish settings and publicize the glamorous seaside getaways of its stars.

The arrangement had an ideological purpose too. Hollywood provided authoritarian Spain with a means of overcoming its image problem in the US and Europe. It also allowed Spain to establish strong economic ties with U.S. corporations. Spain was thus able to maneuver its way into political normalization. Post World War II political realignments also helped Spain’s international standing, as the US found in the Francoist regime a loyal Cold War ally.

The regime recognized that foreign films had a veneer of objectivity about them that government propaganda couldn’t achieve. In 1960 it created the classified program “Operación Propaganda Exterior” in order to make the most of this opportunity.

From a classified document, part of OPE: “[Films that] a foreigner produces in Spain, about any facet of the national life, present to the foreign public a character of objectivity and dispassion that is not always conceded to nationals...Co-production means...the guarantee of a worldwide distribution of the film, leaving the public unaware of the actual origin, obviating all possible suspicion of propaganda.”

Of course, these arrangements were not without their challenges for a regime ideologically founded on the notion of maintaining Spain as a bulwark of medieval Catholic values, even as the rest of Europe rushed headlong into secular modernity. The deeply Catholic and Falangist minister of Information and Tourism, Gabriel Arias-Salgado, worried about the “cultural pollution” flooding Spain through the tourism and

film industries. One frustrated film director recalled the schizophrenic nature of the MIT in the 1960s: “Our Ministry...functioned as two ministries that contradicted each other. The one...prohibited bikinis on the screen and the other was encouraging tourism that brought bikinis.”

Such were the contradictions of conservative nationalism at a time when economic development was increasingly tied to global financial institutions and free markets, and when anti-Communism was organized politically through ideologically internationalist bodies like the United Nations.

VI. *Lost in Translation*

Most of these films were complicated international collaborations, employing American and Spanish actors, Spanish technicians, Italian or Spanish or British or American or West German directors. Sometimes they were shot in multiple languages, with the American stars giving their lines in English, the Spaniards in Spanish. Often the films were recorded without sound, and then simply dubbed afterward into various languages for international distribution. A secondary dubbing industry flourished in Madrid, as Americans like my grandfather were employed to read the lines originally delivered by Spanish actors, and Spaniards recorded the parts of American stars.

But dubbing was also employed for foreign films shot outside of Spain. As part of the country’s elaborate censorship codes, all foreign movies had to be first translated into Spanish, then reviewed by a censorship board, then dubbed, sometimes with dramatic alterations. All films shot in Spain had to pass through the censorship board before receiving permission to film, and directors soon learned to avoid topics that were likely to offend the censors. Sometimes they were able to plead their case. The producers of *Doctor Zhivago*, for instance, received special permission from the government to film a scene in which the characters sing *The Internationale*.

So there’s a politics of translation, a connection between language and Cold War international arrangements, a slippage between what

is said and how. Lips move in English or Italian, voices speak in the Spanish of the regime. The whole Western Bloc arranges itself to give voice to the Francoist ministers of information, translating dollars and lira and deutschmarks into pesetas. The global economy of the fascist culture industry. And of course, the internal contradictions of autarkic nationalism became increasingly impossible to hide. The fact was that the regime couldn't survive without this outside.

All of which reminds us of what we already know about translation and its relationship to meaning: it's not a neutral mirror, but a producer of new knowledge, of new national myths.

VII. (Re)conquests

The Francoist regime founded the Junta Nacional Cinematográfica in 1937, before the war had even ended. In the decade after its bloody victory, as tens of thousands of Republican prisoners were still being held in concentration camps, and tens of thousands more were being disappeared, the regime used its control over the film industry to create a new national cinema committed to re-writing the story of the Civil War. The genre was called “*cine cruzada*”: crusades movies.

For Francoists, the Spanish national character, or “*espíritu de la raza*,” was forged in the medieval struggle of the Christians against the Muslim “infidels” in the centuries of the Reconquista. Franco saw a parallel between the Crusades of the Middle Ages and the Nationalist cause in the Civil War. He and his fellow Nationalists were the true inheritors of the Spanish crusading spirit, forced to reconquer Spain from the “infidel” communists, Freemasons, and Jews.

The archetypal film of the “*cine cruzada*” genre was called “*Raza*.” It was based on a semi-autobiographical novel written by none other than Franco himself, under the pseudonym of “Jaime de Andrade.” The novel tells the story of an honorable military family from Galicia whose son—a stand in for Franco—becomes a Nationalist hero during the war.

The family patriarch is a Spanish Navy officer who dies in Cuba during the Spanish American War (quite different from Franco's real

father, a womanizer with a fondness for drink who abandoned the family when Franco was young). The protagonist, José Churruca, faces adversity but fights bravely in the Civil War. During a particularly harrowing battle he is left for dead (mirroring Franco's experience as a young officer in Morocco), but survives and recovers in time to watch the victorious Nationalists parade through the streets of Madrid.

In the novel, Franco gives voice to his vision of the Spanish crusading spirit. He has José's father give the boy a lecture on the significance of the *almogavares*, the famous roaming guerilla foot soldiers of the Crusades: "The pretty name has been lost, but the *almogavar* will always be the chosen soldier, the volunteer for the riskiest and most difficult tasks. His spirit is alive in our race and rises up whenever it is needed." (Translation mine.)

It's significant that that "pretty name" comes from the Arabic word "*al-mugawir*," meaning "the one who provokes riots." The fiction of a pure, original Christian Spanish identity is exposed in the language itself. The root turns out to be a branch entangled with other branches, in a forest of subterranean trees.

Actually, what stands out to me about Franco's story is its familiar structure of feeling: its reliance on Hollywood sentimentality and a narrative sensibility lifted from classic American movies about heroism and patriotic sacrifice.

It makes sense that so many right-wing dictators have fancied themselves artists, and that they are, almost always, very bad artists. They see themselves as visionaries, although their political visions rely on platitudes. They are the men who dab their eyes during the scene in the movie when the hero is decorated for his service, or falls in the line of duty, or comes home to the (manly) embrace of his stern father after finally earning his approval. Their nationalism hinges on a reverence for hackneyed tropes. But a man with the power to enact his fantasies, no matter how laughable, on the world stage is a dangerous man — especially when those fantasies hinge on the narrative role of mass violence in redeeming the nation.

Raza was released in Spain in 1941, as war raged across much of Europe. The Spanish (state-controlled) movie press lavished praise

on the picture, even calling it the “Potemkin of Franquismo.” Odd, considering that Eisenstein, the director of *Potemkin*, was practically unknown to Spanish moviegoers at the time: as a Soviet Communist, his work was banned in Spain.

Raza had a limited foreign release, perhaps due to the distractions of a world war, but the regime did manage to secure a private viewing for a select group in one country: Germany. It was screened in Berlin to Nazi officials in 1942.

FAMILY STORIES



The bombing assassination of Prime Minister Luis Carrero Blanco in Madrid in 1973.

VIII. Ties that Bind

I looked and looked at my family's history.

I looked for stories like the ones I read about in revolutionary novels and memoirs. For moments where individuals rose to the occasion historical forces set before them. What do I mean by that? I mean that Spain during and after the war was a place where, to love freedom, to oppose fascism, took great personal courage. And where, in many ways, to act in accordance with your principles marked you as doomed.

And yet so many did. There was the old man who tried to launch himself at Franco, engulfed in flames, so that the dictator could smell the fire and death of the Guernika bombing. The Scottish anarchist who crossed the border from France with explosives under his kilt. The Basques who spent weeks digging a tunnel under the streets of Madrid. All the people who hid someone, who helped someone escape, who lied and kept secrets, who held demonstrations, who went on strike, who wrote against the regime, who distributed illegal books and pamphlets, who protected one another. The strict moral code of a resistance forced underground.

Casualties of midnight in the century. I hope that their gestures were not completely in vain, that they achieved the intimacy of accomplices, the freedom of spirit that grows in the space cleared when the brute drive to avoid personal suffering and death no longer defines one's existence.

Not in vain, too, because they set an example for us now, of what human beings are capable of, of the responsibilities we have to one another.

I don't know why it should matter, but I wanted to find that kind of story in my family history. Something about the honor of the doomed, pushing back against midnight.

My mother, daughter of American and Brazilian expats, once told me, of her time as a teenager in Madrid, that it was perfectly ordinary. "You couldn't tell" there was a dictatorship, she said. In fact, she remembered feeling safe.

My father, a Spaniard, the son of peasants from rural Andalucía, remembers the times more bitterly. But even he tells me that Spanish society has no need to reckon with its past. "Why re-open wounds?" He says.

When his mother, my abuela, was in the early stages of Alzheimer's I decided to interview her about her life. I asked her about her childhood in rural Spain, as one of seven daughters living through the war in a farmhouse with no electricity. What she remembered most was how the Republicans seized her father's house and put him in jail for a time. Her father worked for the village's largest landowner, supervising the local tenant farmers. "La guerra es horrible," was her refrain. I have never lived through it, so I can't even imagine her pain. And yet for her, the war had no politics to it. It was just undifferentiated human suffering. She did not distinguish between violence and oppression. My father accused her of harboring Francoist sympathies, and it makes sense. She was the dictator's Spanish female ideal, after all: a pious peasant girl. She had heard, too, about Rojos in a nearby village who stoned a priest to death.

I looked, and I found people who acquiesced to fascism in ordinary ways. No one did anything drastic, just lived their lives, brushing up against the world-historical in the narrow squeeze to move ahead, bit players swiping shoulders in the hallway with the stars. Just normal people thinking they had no responsibilities beyond their families, their bank accounts, their cholesterol levels. Thinking they didn't have blood on their hands.

IX. The Translation

The family story, as told by my mother, is that when Franco finally died, my grandfather—presumably on friendly terms with some people in the regime, presumably trusted, presumably someone whose number was kept handy—got a phone call in the middle of the night. I don't know who was on the other end of the line, but he was asked to translate the speech of Prime Minister Carlos Arias Navarro (including the last words of Franco himself) into English, so that it could be released to the foreign press the following day. Which he did.

The way the story was told, by my mother, was sort of—how cool that your very own grandfather got to be part of this major historical moment.

I don't usually focus too much on the power of words when it comes to people who also have the power of guns, and I'm not actually arguing that a simple act of translation changed history. Nor am I suggesting that any of the rest of us are pure.

But still, that story—it gets to me. My grandfather was a solitary alcoholic and former World War II soldier with PTSD. My childhood memories involve him lying in bed at his house in Fort Lauderdale reading spy novels, refusing to eat anything but Salisbury steak TV dinners and chocolate ice cream, and pronouncing that Ronald Reagan's face should be added to Mount Rushmore. He and my grandmother were locked in a loveless marriage, and after he'd been drinking his acid tongue came out. "Don't touch me, harpie, I can't wait till you die!" he'd hiss. But they were joined together by a deep political conservatism shaped by American Cold War ideology. Looking back, it's clear to me that they both admired Franco for his ability to maintain order and stability, and for his success in driving the Communists underground. It was shortly after Franco's death that he and my grandmother decided to leave Spain and move to Florida.

In translating the news of Franco's death, it seems to me that he was grasping onto the coattails of history. The insignificance of his role on the historical stage makes him a rather pathetic figure. It seems fitting for someone who was a C-list actor, a man destined to be killed off within the first ten minutes of the show, his name misspelled in the credits, if listed at all.

It's a reminder that, for some of us, family ties are the ties that bind us to our enemies. What obligation do we have to love those that have loved us? Does the work of care entitle the caregiver to receive love in exchange? It feels like a kind of blackmail, a contract that was signed without the informed consent of both parties, before one of the parties was capable of freely choosing such things. How devious, to love us before we have become sentient enough to know who we are really loving back. And by then it is too late, we are already making exceptions, fencing off topics that are likely to cause a fight, careful to maintain peace at the dinner table.

I mean, what is a family anyway but the organized cruelty of the state shrunk down, uppercase "Daddy" swapped for the lowercase? The silence of mothers to their daughters; the drunken absence of fathers; vicious sibling rivalries impinging upon the small, threatened field of love. Yes, there is love, and I don't mean to dismiss it. But given form through the family, the love is so often not an exception to but a part of the disavowals of private citizenship. Circle the wagons, there's not enough of our meager portion to share with others.

My grandmother, a Brazilian expatriate, sat in a living room in Florida in 1980 and watched the footage on television of the Salvadoran military massacring people attending the funeral of Archbishop Óscar Romero. She commented to my father, her son-in-law, that that was what they got for rebelling against the government.

Should such people be loved?

In a world where we are not always forced to make our positions visible, we live warily with our enemies, fingering our weapons, waiting for the drawing of lines.

X. Sides

Am I being unfair? Am I fetishizing the individual gesture, am I being unrealistic about the potential for resistance? Who can really claim to live right in this world, where the simple acts of eating, of putting on clothes, enmesh us instantly in a global network of pain? It's a world

where life thrives on death, where each person has their shadow twin, lurking on the opposite point of the globe, whose life force ebbs as theirs grows. It's a vicious, zero sum game and none of us gave permission to be thrown into play. Does it even make sense to judge individuals for their actions, when all of us are guilty? Or perhaps the idea of guilt or innocence is wrong-headed, a substitution of liberal morality for mass politics?

And then, too, there's the question of lines versus continuums, qualitative versus quantitative difference, kind versus degree. Is there a tipping point, where a person's necessary acquiescence becomes real collaboration? Is it an accumulation of small betrayals, or an act that crosses an unspoken line? Is it objective, measurable? And if so, what is the index? When they take a certain kind of job? When they vote a certain way? When they vote at all? When they translate a fascist dictator's last words? When they leave a country after the dictator dies? When they "didn't pay attention to politics" in the 80s? When they cry watching Reagan's televised funeral? When they don't cry watching people attending a funeral get mowed down by government guns?

XI. Lessons Unlearned

I thought about all of this while watching footage from a Neo-Nazi demonstration in Sacramento, getting texts about the status of the five people stabbed by the Nazis that day, reading about the rise of racism in Britain in the wake of the Brexit vote, posting a link to a Rally fundraising site for teenagers being charged with assaulting Trump supporters. While watching friends on social media argue about whether or not Trump's rise signals the possible re-emergence of fascism. Whether fascism is the right word to use for what is happening.

While listening to the chorus of voices condemning violence, calling for freedom of speech, claiming the fascists and antifascists are indistinguishable from one another.

And hearing the sickening thud of history repeating itself, of lessons unlearned, of liberal civil society playing itself out.

Too many people translated the commands of the wolves of the twentieth century. The messages relayed, translated, sent back, dubbed, re-translated, like a game of telephone garbling the execution orders into greater and greater extremes of violence. The casualties of all this talking.

Everyone is opposed to tyranny in the abstract. My father once righteously announced that he would have sacrificed his life to fight the Nazis if he'd been a German citizen. In the same conversation he ranted about the social deviance of gitanos. For most of us, our moment is never that golden moment from the history books when we're sure we would have been on the side of the angels. Our time and place is always more gray, the victims less pure, the oppressors less cartoonishly evil. We mistake complexity for moral ambiguity. We use it to rationalize our accommodation to organized cruelty.

People always look back at Germany on the verge of the Nazi slaughter and wonder how ordinary citizens failed to take a stand. We judge these little Eichmanns. We feel superior to them. We feel certain they are not us.

But when did they cross the line from being ordinary people, living their lives, navigating a violent world, to being collaborators and accomplices? Is there a date we can point to, when the duty to oppose the regime became clear? Was it the Beer Hall Putsch? The Night of the Long Knives? Or earlier, when the first street gangs targeted Jewish shops and Communist bars?

I imagine these citizens after the war, trying to defend themselves: "But it wasn't like that. It didn't feel like there was a moment when we crossed into a new reality, where everything was black and white. It was so much more gray than it seems now."

*DEATH OF A
DICTATOR (11)*

front **libertaire** des luttes de classes

edite par l'Organisation Revolutionnaire Anarchiste

sauvons llobet et sugranyes



**Derriere FRANCO
un seul ennemi
le CAPITAL**

A poster protesting the execution of Salvador Puig Antich by the Spanish government.

XII. Teresa's Revenge

Franco was not the only person who lay close to death in Madrid's Hospital La Paz in November of 1975. Six floors above the general, a 25-year-old student named Juan Alberto Sevilla Quintana was hooked up to a kidney dialysis machine, passing in and out of consciousness, after ten days of detention and torture by the Spanish police.

His bones were severely broken. His kidneys had been stomped on to the point where they no longer worked. His face had been melted into a pulp by hundreds of cigarette burns. His tongue was practically burned out of his mouth.

Under the new anti-terrorism law passed in August, individuals could be detained for ten days without charge. Sevilla Quintana, arrested for writing political commentary in a university student newspaper, was never charged.

But Juan Alberto Sevilla Quintana lived, while Francisco Franco de Bahamonde did not. I like to think about that. I like to think of a life/death force flowing between the two men, a transfer of health from the old dictator to the young student, the one gathering strength as the other fades. About the regenerative powers gathering in the young man: skin collagen expanding into the burn wounds, nephrons in the kidney re-growing and filtering blood, the fractured bone knitting itself together.

The tongue growing long again, in order to tell its story.

And a parallel weakening in the dictator's body: uremic poisoning spreading through his kidneys, a holy penance for the destruction of the student's; hemorrhoids and ulcers appearing in the gastrointestinal tract; rectal bleeding; and finally, the heart seizing up.

I like to think that Franco and his inner circle put too much faith in those Catholic relics. That the severed hands of women mystics are wont to issue forth powers not quite subject to the will of dictators, no matter how devout. That the spirit of a person who eschewed marriage and family life so that she could live in a continual state of ecstatic communion with creation might not perceive the corpse of fascism rotting in a Madrid hospital bed as the embodiment of religious purity he felt himself to be. That relics could be instruments of justice, and revenge.

XIII.

It's strange to think about how intimately the Spanish people came to know the workings of the dictator's body in those last weeks, as news of the attack on his kidneys, the gas in his intestines, and the weakness of his heart was broadcast daily. The people, whether pro- or anti- Franco, all had opinions about the civil war raging within the old man's body, the likelihood of his survival.

And this was a final victory over him, though of course much too little, much too late: the humiliation of being verbally dissected by the masses, flesh laid bare for all to see. Photos of the dying dictator were not released until 1984, and even then their publication was extremely controversial, for he was mostly tubes and wires emerging from pale, wrinkled flesh. The man behind the curtain revealed at last for what he really was: a mere mass of human matter, vulnerable and exposed as a body bombed from above.

Men like Franco attach much importance to the way they die. In their hero-myths, men perish on the battlefield, in full health. For someone whose political philosophy made a fetish of masculine strength

and decisiveness, it must have been difficult to die in such a slow, inglorious way. In dying, Franco lost control of the cinematic narrative he had made of his life. The generic conventions of the cine cruzada collapsed in on themselves, as though a different director had taken the helm: someone interested in exploring the ultimate fragility of myths and their makers, the inescapability of death, and the existential cowardice of evil men nearing a final reckoning with their god.

And perhaps the movie veers even further off its path, into the realm of supernatural horror/vengeance. I like the narrative possibilities: the dictator, as he nears death, is visited by ghosts, the tormented spirits of those he killed during and after the war. With obvious pleasure, they whisper in his ear, telling him that the afterlife is not what he has imagined it to be. There are no fascists in heaven.

The murdered have set up a medieval Inquisition hearing for him, where he will be asked to reckon for his crimes against humanity. Franco is brought into the chamber. He tries to protest in Spanish, but is quickly told that the proceedings will be conducted only in Basque.

The Grand Inquisitor turns around and he sees that it is none other than his beloved Santa Teresa! She is missing all the parts that were severed from her body after death: both eyes, her left hand, her right index finger. Inside her eyeless sockets a holy fire flickers, shimmering blue light that throws sparks into the air.

Relieved, Franco cries out to her: Santa Teresa! Please help your most loyal patron! Please, there seems to have been some terrible mistake! Help me!

But she does not speak to him, only approaches until her face is close to his. In her eyeless sockets he sees images of all his crimes, and feels with acute anguish the physical and psychological agony of each of the murdered. His body is covered in weeping sores. When the vision ends he discovers he has been tied down to a wooden chair and is unable to move. He feels pressure on his throat and realizes that the golden, bejeweled hand of Santa Teresa is tightening around it. Tighter and tighter it presses, and soon he is gasping for breath. Suddenly he knows. This is his fate: to be strangled by this jewel encrusted hand, abandoned by his god, straining for air for all eternity.

XIV. *Last Words*

On his deathbed, the old man was still signing death warrants. I guess he figured if he was going down, he would take as many of his enemies with him as possible. His last murders took place less than two months before his own death. They were five political prisoners, executed on the same day—September 27, 1975—in three different Spanish cities.

They were executed following the passage of a new public order law in August, which lengthened the list of terrorist offenses and extended sentences for any crimes where the victim was an agent of the authorities or a member of security forces. Those charged were tried by a military court. The law was applied to three members of ETA arrested in September, and retroactively to eight members of FRAP (Frente Revolucionaria Antifascista y Patriota). Of these eleven, five were executed—in the midst of national and international strikes and demonstrations.

The year before that, the old man authorized the last state execution by garrote in the world.

The principle of death by garrote is simple; it is basically strangulation. The prisoner is bound to a chair, and the executioner fits a wooden band around his neck. The band is then tightened with a crank until asphyxiation occurs.

The last person in the world to be strangled to death in this manner was Salvador Puig Antich, a 25-year old anarchist convicted of killing a Guardia Civil officer in a shootout, although there was no evidence that the fatal shots were fired by him. Puig Antich, the son of a Catalan militant exiled after the Civil War, was a member of the anarchist armed group MIL (Movimiento Ibérico de Liberación). He was murdered on the morning of March 2, 1974.

The young anarchist's last words were not written down on paper and read on national television, like those of Franco. They were not translated into English by American expats waiting by the phone. No surprise there. We all know how power amplifies some voices and strangles others.

I found the alleged last words of Salvador Puig Antich online, the words that, according to his biographer, he uttered just before his

death. I thought it would be a small act of karmic retribution if I, the granddaughter of the translator of Franco's last words, translated the last words of his avowed enemy: a gesture toward the balancing of scales. But Puig Antich's last words were brief, not much translation needed. Apparently, he was brought to the execution chamber and, upon seeing the executioner and the device, he said just two words: "Que putada."

Actually, it's not that easy to translate it literally, but I'd say the basic gist is something like "what a bitch" or "what shitty luck."

At first, this seemed inelegant, but the more I reflected on it, the more I thought: what else is there to say about the dark night, the long sleep without stars, the eternal stomping of a boot on a human face that is fascism? There are times when brevity is best. There's rage, there's despair, but there's also a current of the blackest humor, a hint of breaking the fourth wall, turning to some unknown audience beyond the screen as if to say, "Wow, you've gotta admit it, I really got screwed."

The casualties of the twentieth century take in their executioner, and utter their last words: "Que putada."

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I thought about all of this while watching footage from a Neo-Nazi demonstration in Sacramento, getting texts about the status of the five people stabbed by the Nazis that day, reading about the rise of racism in Britain in the wake of the Brexit vote, posting a link to a Rally fundraising site for teenagers being charged with assaulting Trump supporters.