

A EUROPEAN PEACE

UNA PAZ EUROPEA

by FRUELA FERNÁNDEZ
translated from the Spanish by SARAH HARTLEY

FRUELA FERNÁNDEZ
(1982-) is the author of three
books of poetry: *Una paz
europea* (*Pre-Textos*, 2016),
Folk (*Pre-Textos*, 2013), and
Círculos (KRK, 2001).
He currently teaches
Spanish Translation at
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UNA PAZ EUROPEA

8.

AHÍ, detrás del puente,
donde esa sábana anuncia una boda,
ahí
(no lo veréis ahora, con tanta mata),
en el verano del 36,
los anarquistas construían blindados —

camionetas requisadas que cubrían de chapa,
armadillos minuciosos,
en cal tiesa cada nombre
CNT — FAI — UHP
hacia el frente de Oviedo.

La guerra aún no lo era,
aún creían
que lo viejo
se desplomaba
queriendo
negar lo nuevo.

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8.

It still wasn't war,
they still believed
that the old
would collapse
wanting
to deny the new.

Aquel verano fue como el mortero que cegó al Padrino Camilo
en El Mazucu:
un zumbido que se mezcla con la luz, arriba,
y parece indeciso,
aunque el metal no tenga humores,
hasta que la espoleta
revienta.

That summer was like the mortar that blinded Uncle Camilo
in El Mazucu:
a buzzing that mixes with the light, on high,
and seems indecisive,
 though metal has no moods,
until the shell
blows its fuse.

13.

TENGO que imaginarlos,
aunque algo falte:
la camilla de la Cruz Roja, carretas de mulos,
el desvío a Collioure,
a Argelès,
cercados en la playa, sin lona ni manta,
escarbando camas en la arena,
un chusco de pan, una lata de sardinas
a veces.

Tratáronlos más mal que dios, dice mi abuelo. Piensa en Camilo, su padrino, ciego de mortero,

de Argelès a una granja de Toulouse.

Camilo distinguía la faba buena por el tacto,
distinguió cálculos, teorías, rumor a rumor
hasta el verdadero:

Parkinson/
úlcera/
fracaso renal/
neumonía/
heces

y al fin

la muerte del expulsor,
el agraciado,
el perro de sacristía.

13.

I HAVE to imagine them,
even if something's missing:
the Red Cross stretcher, mule-drawn wagons,
the diversion to Collioure,
to Argelès,
penned up on the beach, without a tarpaulin or blanket,
digging beds in the sand,
a chunk of bread, a tin of sardines
sometimes.

God knows they treated them bad, my granddad says. He thinks of Camilo, his uncle, blinded by a mortar,
from Argelès to a farm in Toulouse.
Camilo would pick out a good bean by touch,
he picked out calculations, theories, rumour by rumour
to the truth:

Parkinson's/
ulcer/
kidney failure/
pneumonia/
faeces

and finally

the death of the exiler,
the graced one,
the vestry dog.

Y Camilo en el valle, otra vez,
ciego
guiaba a mi abuelo de memoria, *recordábalo todo*,
La Felguera toda,
intacta cada calle, cada chigre, cada casa tirada,
echaba a andar su mapa
contra los años de baja paz, de guerra acurrucada, de ronquidos.

—2016

-2016

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: The two translations here are taken from *Una paz europea (A European Peace)*, a book-length poem by Fruela Fernández comprising fifteen sections. Influenced by the political crisis in Spain and across Europe, the work engages both the historical and contemporary in order to examine themes of migration, identity and political resistance through a series of narrated observations, recollections and snatches of dialogue.

The two sections appearing here center around the poet's native Asturias, an industrial region that was heavily politicized throughout the whole 20th century. In 1934, the Asturian miners' strike—led by a coalition of Socialists and Anarchists under the name *Uníos Hermanos Proletarios* (UHP)—had developed into a wide-scale rebellion against the rise of the Right Wing, which was starting to flirt with fascism. Section 8 casts back to two years on, during the early months of the Spanish Civil War,

when the balance of forces allowed Anarchists to gain important local power in many Spanish regions—yet the initial hope is tinted with a violent foreboding. Further on, Section 13 imagines the internment and exile of defeated Spanish Republicans in France in the aftermath of the Civil War. Simultaneously previewing the death of Franco ("the exiler/ the graced one/ the vestry dog"), the poem juxtaposes the fierce resistance of the Spanish left with the political apathy of many citizens towards Francoism.

Told through conversational imaginings and recounted family memories, the central figure in the two sections is the Anarchist Camilo, the godfather and uncle of the poet's grandfather. This individual experience, nevertheless, serves as a wider window onto a collective national experience; dancing between present and future, the work demonstrates the importance of memory in understanding and constructing a modern Spanish

identity. Over recent years, reflections on Spanish exile and its aftermath have been a central element in democratic culture. Moreover these echoes of tensions on the brink of explosion are equally as pertinent to the current political climate, bringing to mind the economic crisis and the clash of left and right over issues such as austerity, immigration and the future of the European Union.

It has been a pleasure to work collaboratively with Fruela Fernández to bring these poems to a wider audience. Perhaps the chief concern in translating the poems was how they would appear, divorced from their Spanish context; would the political references of the original poems hold meaning for an English speaking readership? With this in mind, the acronyms of the coalitions in Section 8 have been translated in their full form, while the references to Franco in Section 13 have been slightly re-worded in an attempt to elucidate the as-

sociations present in the original. Likewise, *padrino*—literally, “godfather”—became *uncle* to avoid the less benign connotations of godfathers! Finally, as the title indicates, the concept of Europe is central to the poems and therefore British English spellings have been used here to reflect the geographical and cultural setting. This also follows the wider translational approach; elsewhere in the collection, British dialect and colloquialisms stand in for the poet’s Asturian-inflected Spanish. While a translation is never an exact replica, the aim has been to convey as closely as possible the spirit of the poems, the richness of imagery and the idiosyncrasies of the language that give the work its evocative, thought-provoking nature.

—Sarah Hartley

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in Translation Studies where she concentrated on the translation of political Mexican journalism in the context of the drug wars. She lives in Hull, in the North of England.