

## LOS AMIGOS

By Juan Goytisolo (to Jaime Gil de Biedma)

Desde hacía seis días no había tenido un momento de reposo. El ritmo de vida de la ciudad se había alterado bruscamente y en la cara de los hombres y mujeres que cubrían las aceras, se leía una resolución firme, llena de esperanza. Una solidaridad muda nos unía a todos. Habíamos descubierto que no estábamos solos y, después de tantos años de vergüenza, el descubrimiento nos asombraba. Nuestras miradas se cruzaban y eran miradas de complicidad. Los gestos más insignificantes de la vida diaria —el simple hecho de caminar— revestían un carácter insólito y milagroso. La gente cumplía su trayecto habitual en silencio y este silencio, de centenares, de miles de personas, era más elocuente que cualquier palabra.

Ni mis amigos ni yo habíamos visto nada parecido y nos sentíamos como borrachos. Al cabo de muchos días de trabajo y espera, disponíamos libremente de la jornada. El espectáculo de las calles invadidas nos atraía y nos confundíamos en el gentío como unos transeúntes más, en silencio, buscando con avidez en cada rostro el apoyo y sostén de la mirada. Lo habíamos recorrido todo, el centro y las afueras, de la mañana a la noche, incansablemente. Hacía largo tiempo que aguardábamos este día y nos costaba convencernos de que había llegado. Después de la cena nos reuníamos a discutir en el piso de Julia y no nos íbamos a acostar hasta que amanecía.

Luego, la atmósfera se ensombreció y los periódicos se poblaron de amenazas. Había que vigilar y orar, el enemigo se

## FRIENDS

Translated by Mark Wynn

For six days there hadn't been a moment of rest. The rhythm of city life had suddenly changed and in the face of the men and woman that covered the sidewalks, you could read its firm resolution, full of hope. A mute solidarity united us with everyone. We had discovered that we were not alone and, after so many years of shame, the discovery amazed us. Our glances crossed and they were glances of complexity. The most insignificant gestures of daily life —the simple act of walking— acquired an unusual and miraculous character. People completed their habitual trajectory in silence and this silence of hundreds, of thousands of people, was more eloquent than any word.

Neither my friends or I had seen anything like it and we felt drunk on it. After many days of working and waiting, we arranged for a day off. The spectacle of the invaded streets drew us in and we mixed like transients with the crowd eagerly searching out in silence the support and base of the glance in each face. We had covered it all, the center and the outskirts, from morning until night, without tiring. We had waited for this day a long time and it took some effort convincing ourselves that it had arrived. After dinner we got together to argue over at Julia's and we didn't leave to sleep until it dawned.

Then the atmosphere darkened and the newspapers filled up with threats. One had to take care and to pray, the enemy was

insinuaba por todas partes. Una silueta familiar se recortaba sobre un fondo de aviones, tanques, cañones, navíos. El que tantas veces nos había llevado a la victoria, tenía conciencia de su deber y no desertaría jamás de su puesto de honor, de mando y de combate...

Todas las mañanas, al despertarme, leía los editoriales y telefoneaba a Julia, a Antonio o a Maximo para oír su voz y asegurarme de que nada había ocurrido. En la Universidad decían que Fulanito no había ido a dormir a casa; que desde el marte, no se tenían noticias de Menganito. Algunos se asombraban de verme allí y me aconsejaban cambiar de aires.

Un hombre que no tenía pinta de maricón seguía a Enrique como una sombra y, el mismo día, decidimos suprimir nuestras reuniones y esperar los acontecimientos en casa. Pero la soledad nos resultaba insoportable y, al cabo de unas horas, no resistíamos a la tentación de oírnos y, desde cualquier locutorio público, nos telefoneábamos con voz falsamente despreocupada, para preguntar si la madre de Zutano seguía bien o pedernos prestado algún libro.

Desde mi cuarto percibía el ruido del ascensor y mi corazón latía más aprisa cada vez que el timbre sonaba. Era el lechero con sus botellas, o la chica de la tintorería, o el inspector del gas. Una tarde fui a ver a Amadeo, y su madre, al abrir la puerta, dijo, elevando la voz: “No. No queremos más. Las latas que nos vendió la última vez no eran buenas y tuvimos que echarlas.” Dentro, se oía rumor de pasos y un hombre con gafas ahumadas se asomó a mirar, desde el pasillo. Incliné la cabeza y salí.

advancing on all sides. A familiar silhouette stood out over a background of planes, tanks, canons and ships. One which had so many times carried us to victory, conscious of its duty and would never desert its post of honor, of command and of combat . . .

Every morning, after waking up, I read the editorials and called Julie, Anthony or Max in order to hear their voices and assure myself that nothing had happened. In the university they said that someone named Tom had not gone home to sleep; that since Tuesday there's been no word from that guy Dick<sup>1</sup>. Some were astonished upon seeing me there and advised me to take in a change of scenery.

A man that showed no sign of being a fag was following Rick like a shadow and, that same day, we decided to cancel our meetings and wait out the events at home. But the solitude became unbearable for us and, at the end of a few hours, we could not resist the temptation of hearing ourselves and we called each other up, from whatever public phone, with voices falsely nonchalant, in order to ask if the mother of some Harry was still well or petition the loan of some book.

From my room I could hear the noise of the lift and my heart beat faster each time the bell sounded. It was the milkman with his bottles, or the girl from the cleaners, or the gas inspector checking the meter. One afternoon I went to see Amadeo, and his mother, upon opening the door, said, raising her voice, “No. We don't want any more. The cans you sold us last time weren't any good and we had to throw them out.” Inside, the soft sound of steps could be heard and a man with smoked glasses leaned out to look down the hall. I lowered my head and left.

Ninguno de mis amigos sabía nada. Encontré a Máximo en la Biblioteca y me conminó a partir. Puesto que tenía el pasaporte en regla, lo mejor que podía hacer era largarme y aguardar al otro lado de la frontera a que la tormenta amainase. Tras unos instantes de vacilación, acepté. Aunque me angustiaba dejar a los otros, me daba cuenta de que mi presencia era inútil. La gente seguía caminando por la calle y temía no soportar más el sonido del timbre.

—Preferiría que hubieran subido ya, ¿comprendes?... Lo peor es la espera.

El tren salía al día siguiente y tenía mucho que hacer. Mientras devolvíamos los libros al empleado quedamos en reunirnos con los demás, después de la cena.

—Diles que vayan al Ranchito. Como en los buenos tiempos...

—Se lo diré —prometió Máximo.

—Tengo ganas de distraerme y no pensar...

—Yo también.

—Adviértelos a ellos.

—No te preocupes... Todos están tan hartos como tú.

—Beberemos...

—Sí —dijo él—. Beberemos.

Cuando llegué, Antonio aguardaba ya. Leía el periódico, acodado en la barra y me mostró un editorial encuadrado en rojo.

—¿Has visto?

—No —repuse—. Pero me lo imagino.

—Nos llaman gamberros ideológicos.

—Por una vez, tienen razón... Es la pura verdad.

—Eso es lo que digo yo —ríó. Zascandiles, gamberros y

None of my friends knew anything. I found Max at the library and he suggested that I leave. Since I had my passport in order, the best thing I could do was split and wait out the storm on the other side of the border. After some moments of hesitation, I accepted. Although it distressed me to leave the others, I realized that my presence was useless. People continued to walk the streets and I feared no longer being able to bear the sound of the bell.

“I would rather them just come up already, you know? . . . The worst is the waiting.”

The train was leaving the following day and I had a lot to do. While we returned the books to the clerk we agreed to get together with the others, after dinner.

“Tell them to meet up at The Shanty<sup>2</sup>. Like in the good ol’ days. . .”

“I’ll tell them.” Max promised.

“I feel like distracting myself from any thinking . . .”

“Same here.”

“Let the others know too.”

“Don’t worry . . . They’re all feed up as much as you.”

“We’ll drink . . .”

“Yes,” he said. “We’ll drink.”

When I arrived, Anthony was already waiting. He was reading the paper and, leaning on the bar, he showed me an editorial boxed in red.

“Have you seen this?”

“No,” I replied. “But I can imagine.”

“They’re calling us ideological hoodlums.”

“For once, they’re right . . . It’s the honest truth.”

“That’s what I say,” he laughed. “Hoodlums, hooligans and

resentidos.

El tocadiscos transmitía una musiquilla de acordeón. Una mujer bailaba sola en el centro del bar y las parejas sentadas en las mesas charlaban en la penumbra. Encarna apareció por la puerta de la trastienda y, al vernos, se acercó a estrecharnos la mano.

—Hola, queridos. —Estaba espléndida, con un traje amarillo descotado, que dejaba al desnudo sus hombros de matrona y sus brazos carnosos, robustos—. Hacía tiempo que no os dejabáis cair por aquí...

—Sí —dije yo—. Hacía tiempo.

—Me preguntaba si os había pasado algo...

—¿A nosotros? —exclamó Antonio—. ¿Por qué nos iba a ocurrir nada? ¿No ves que somos muy buenos?

—No sé —dijo Encarna—. En este país pasan cosas tan raras...

—¿Cosas? ¿Qué cosas?

—Misterios... A la gente le da, de pronto, por caminar... Mi criada, que vive en Horta, se tira cada día varios kilómetros...

—Los médicos dicen que es bueno para la salud.

—Sí —dije yo—. Es un ejercicio magnífico.

Encarna se puso un Player en su boquilla de ámbar y arrimé el encendedor.

—Me parece que vosotros andáis algo lunáticos, este noche.

—¿Lunáticos? ¿Por qué?

—No sé... Sicalípticos... Si fuese vuestra mamá, os habría mandado a la cama...

—No tenemos sueño —dijo Antonio.

—Valiente par de pájaros estáis hechos los dos...

malcontents.”<sup>3</sup>

The record player was playing a little piece by an accordion. A woman danced alone in the center of the bar and the couples seated at the tables chatted in the half-light. Encarna<sup>4</sup> appeared at the backroom door and, on seeing us, came over to shake our hands.

“Hello darlings.” She looked splendid, in a yellow suit with a low-cut neck that left naked her matron shoulders and meaty, robust arms. “It’s been a while since you’ve dropped by around here...”

“Yeah,” I said. “It’s been a while.”

“I was wondering if something had happened to you . . .”

“To us?” Anthony exclaimed. “Why? Nothing’s going to happen to us. Can’t you see we’re just fine?”

“I don’t know,” Encarna said. “In this country the strangest things happen . . .”

“Things? What things?”

“Mysteries . . . They happen to people, suddenly, when walking . . . My maid, who lives in the Groves<sup>5</sup>, takes in several miles every day . . .”

“The doctors say it’s good for your health.”

“Yes,” I said. “It’s an excellent exercise.”

Encarna put a Player in her amber cigarette holder and I brought up a lighter.

“It looks like you boys are out like lunatics tonight.”

“Lunatics? How?”

“I don’t know. . . Lecherous, maybe? If I were your mother, I’d have sent you both to bed . . .”

“We’re not tired,” Anthony said.

“A brave pair of birds you two make . . .”

—Todo es obra de un puñado de agitadores, a sueldo del enemigo —expliqué—. ¿No has leído la prensa?

—No.

—Pues haces muy mal —le reprendí—. Todo español que se respete tiene el deber de leerla.

—Hala, callaos —dijo Encarna—. Estáis de mucha broma por lo que veo y me vais a poner de mala uva.

—¿De mala uva? ¿Tú?...

—Cosas que pasan... —Se acarició el pelo, gravemente—. ¿No os enterasteis de la jugada que me hicieron?

—No.

—Me han cerrado el bar durante un mes y, encima, me clavan una multa.

—No fastidies...

—Como os lo digo. —Encarna bajó la voz y miró atrás, asegurándose de que nadie la escuchaba—. Fue el día de la Concepción... Uno de esos inspectores de paisano, entró a beber un vasito de leche y, al salir, va y me denuncia a los grises.

—¿Por qué?

—¿Yo qué sé!... Por lo visto, parece que en el bar vio muchas pros—ti—tu—tas...

—¿Llevaba gafas?

—Dijo que estaba lleno. —Volvió la cabeza y contempló a las mujeres sentadas en el fondo—. Yo, no sé si debo ser idiota o qué, jamás he visto ninguna...

—Nosotros tampoco —afirmó Antonio.

—Si llevaran un número en la espalda o les colgaran un cartelito... Algo que las distinguiera, qué caray... Podría decirles: No, lo siento, en mi establecimiento no admito

“It’s all the work of a handful of agitators, on the enemy’s payroll,” I explained. “Haven’t you read the press?”

“No.”

“Well, you’re not keeping up,” I chided her. “Every self-respecting Spaniard has the duty to read it.”

“Come off it, quit,” Encarna said. “From what I see you guys are full of it and you’re turning me into a sour pus.”

“A sour pus? You?”

“Things happen . . .” She caressed her hair, gravely. “You guys didn’t hear about that dirty trick they hit me with.”

“No.”

“They closed the bar for a month and, on top of that, they stuck me with a fine.”

“You’re kidding . . .”

“Like I tell you . . .” Encarna lowered her voice and looked back, assuring herself that no one was listening. “It was on the day of Conception . . . One of those plainclothes men came in for a small glass of milk and when he left, he went and denounced me to the grays.”

“Why?”

“What do I know! . . . apparently, it seems he saw too many pros - tee - toots in the bar . . .”

“Was he wearing glasses?”

“He said that it was full of them.” She turned her head and contemplated the woman sitting in back. “Me, I don’t know, I must be an idiot or something, I’ve never seen any . . .”

“Neither have we,” Anthony affirmed.

“If they carried a number on their back or if they hung little signs on them . . . Something that would distinguish them, Heavens . . . I could tell them: No, I’m sorry, I don’t allow

pros—ti—tu—tas (¿se dice así?). Pero, de otra forma, ¿cómo puedo saberlo?

—No hay manera, claro.

—Es lo que le expliqué al señor comisario (que rayo le parta...) Las chicas que vienen a mi establecimiento tienen una cara y dos ojos como las otras y hablan el español tan bien como usted y como yo... Yo no puedo saber si, cuando salen, en lugar de irse a dormir con la mamá, se ponen a hacer porquerías...

La llamaba un cliente, al otro lado de la barra y se alejó contoneándose. Su popa era increíblemente voluminosa, pero sabía moverla con gracia.

—¿Qué bebes?

—Lo que tú quieras. A mí, me da igual...

Antonio pidió una botella de Moriles. El bar tenía la puerta entreabierta y, acodado en la barra, espí el movimiento de la calle. Vi a un grupo de americanos borrachos, y a uno de la vigilancia, acompañando de dos policías. Otros iban del brazo con mujeres y entraron en el mueblé de al lado. Después de tantos días de agitación, me sentía hueco como una esponja y absorbía la manzanilla sin darme cuenta.

Antonio había desdoblado el periódico y leía de nuevo el recuadro. Varios americanos charlaban en una mesa del fondo y uno se levantó e introdujo varias monedas en la ranura del tocadiscos. La musiquilla de acordeón cesó, reemplazada por un solo de clarinete. Alguien me tiró de la manga y me volví. Era Julia.

—Hola, gamberros —saludó (llevaba el periódico en la mano)

pros – tee - toots in my establishment (they say it like that?). But, any other way, how am I to know?"

“Obviously, there’s no way.”

“That’s what I explained to the inspector . . . to hell with him . . . The girls that come into my establishment have two eyes on their face just like any other and speak Spanish as well as you and I . . . I can’t know when they leave if instead of going home to their mother, they put themselves to some nastiness . . .”

A client was calling her from the other side of the bar and she went away with her hips swinging. Her stern was unbelievably voluminous, but she knew how to move it with grace.

“What’ll you have?”

“Whatever you’re having. It’s all the same to me . . .”

Anthony ordered a bottle of Moriles. The door was ajar and, leaning on the bar, I spied the movement of the street. I saw a group of drunk Americans, and an agent, accompanied by two policemen. Others went by on the arms of woman and entered a furniture store across the street. After so many days of agitation, I felt empty as a sponge and absorbed the cider without noticing.

Anthony had opened the paper and was reading the inset again. Several Americans were chatting at a table in the back and one got up and slipped some coins into the slot on the juke box. The little accordion piece ceased, replaced by a clarinet solo. Someone pulled me by the arm and I turned. It was Julie.

“Hello, hoodlums,” she greeted us, carrying a newspaper in her hand.

—Hola, resentida.

—Máximo, se había parado junto a la puerta y se acercó, del brazo de Encarna.

—Les estaba contando a tus amigos la faena que me han hecho...

Julia quiso saber de qué se trataba, y repitió la historia. Habíamos acabado la botella y pedí una nueva y un par de vasos.

—...Total que no me valieron coplas, y tuve que pagar la multa.

Cuánto, si se puede saber...

—Diez mil, hiza, diez mil. Aparte de lo que perdí durante el cierre. —Señaló a los americanos con la boquilla—. Si no llega a ser porque tengo todo el día a estos benditos...

Como si hubieran adivinado que hablaba de ellos, los marinos reclamaron su presencia. Encarna gritó: «Ya voy, preciosos» e hizo una mueca de disculpa.

—El de los lentes se ha enamorado de mí —susurró mientras se iba.

Al quedarnos solos, nos sentamos en la única mesa libre. Teníamos tantas cosas que decir, que no sabíamos por donde empezar y permanecimos callados, cada uno absorto en su vaso de manzanilla. Esperábamos que el alcohol nos desatara la lengua y bebíamos rápidamente, con gran aplicación. Acabada la segunda botella, pedí otras dos. La música cubría el rumor de las conversaciones, varias parejas bailaban. Julia se tiraba del flequillo con ademanes nerviosos y, cuando veía un vaso vacío, se apresuraba a llenarlo. Bebimos la tercera botella (el tiempo de tres discos) y, al atacar la cuarta, los ojos de mis

“Hello, hooligan.”

Max had stopped just at the door and then he came over on the arm of Encarna.

“I was telling your friends about the job they did on me . . .”

Julie wanted to know what had happened and so she repeated the story. We had finished the bottle and I ordered another and a pair of glasses.

“...in the end my songs didn’t save me and I had to pay the fine.”

“How much, if one may ask . . .”

“Ten thousand, child, ten thousand. Apart from what I lost from being closed.” She signaled to the Americans with her cigarette holder. “If it hadn’t been for having all day with these kind souls . . .”

As if they had guessed she was talking about them, the Marines demanded her presence. Encarna shouted, “I’m coming, darlings,” and pulled an apologetic face.

“The one with the glasses has fallen in love with me,” she whispered as she went.

After leaving us alone we sat at the only free table. We had so many things to say that we didn’t know where to begin and we remained silent, each one absorbed by their glass of cider. We hoped the alcohol would untie our tongues and drank rapidly, with great industry. The second bottle finished, I ordered two more. The music covered the sound of conversations, several couples danced. Julie threw her bangs about in nervous gestures and, when she saw an empty glass, she hurried to fill it. We drank the third bottle (in three records time) and, upon attacking the fourth, the eyes of my

amigos brillaban y sus miradas estaban como empañadas de ternura. Antonio dijo: «Qué gamberros somos!» y respondimos a coro: «Y zascandiles, y resentidos!». Habíamos perdido, de golpe, el deseo de hablar y no deseábamos más que continuar así, unos al lado de otros, como si ya no hubiéramos de vernos nunca...

Después, nuestra atención se fijó en un hombre enjuto, vestido con una guerrera de legionario, que había abierto la puerta de rondón y se había plantado en medio del bar, en actitud agresiva. De mediana edad, llevaba el pelo cortado al rape y un bigote cuadrado, lacio caído. Por espacio de unos segundos, su mirada recorrió el público, desafiante. Finalmente se dirigió a un hueco de la barra y pidió un vaso de manzanilla.

—Bebida nacional española —proclamó.

La muchaca del bar cambió una mirada con Encarna y llenó un vaso hasta el borde. El hombre se aupaba los pantalones y escupió en el suelo. Sus ojos escudriñaban el cuerpo de la chica. Con un ademán brusco, agarró el vaso y lo vació de un tirón.

—Pónme otro, nena —dijo.

Visiblemente inquieta, Encarna vino a sentarse con nosotros. El americano de las gafas la había invitado a güisqui y se llevó el vaso a los labios, dando un suspiro.

—Los tipos esos tienen muy mall folla —susurró.

—¿Mala? Por qué?

—¿No lo habéis visto?

—Es uno de nuestros gloriosos soldados —dije yo.

—De nuestros gloriosos salvadores —corrigió Julia.

—Hala, achantadla —dijo Encarna—. Como volváis a

friends shined and their glances were like pies filled with gentleness. Anthony said, “What a bunch of malcontents we make!” And we responded in chorus, “and hoodlums and hooligans!” We had suddenly lost our wish to talk and we did not wish to carry on that way, everyone at each others’ side, as if we might never have seen each other again . . .

Afterwards, our attention fixated on a lean man, dressed in the trench of a legionnaire, who had unexpectedly opened the door and planted himself with an aggressive posture in the middle of the bar. Middle aged, he wore his hair cut close and his mustache, square, straight and drooping. For a space of some seconds, his gaze ran over the crowd, defiantly. Finally, he headed for a hollow at the bar and ordered a glass of cider.

“National Spanish drink,” he proclaimed.

The bargirl exchanged a glance with Encarna and filled a glass to the brim. The man was helping up his pants and spat on the floor. His eyes scrutinized the girl’s body. With a brusque gesture, he grabbed the glass and downed it in a shot.

“Bring me another, baby,” he said.

Visibly disturbed, Encarna came and sat with us. The American with the glasses had given her a whiskey and she raised the glass to her lips, letting out a sigh.

“Those types always have fucked up luck,” she whispered.

“Fucked up? Why?”

“You didn’t see him?”

“He’s one of our glorious soldiers,” I said.

“One of our glorious saviors,” corrected Julie.

“Come on, back off,” Encarna said. “If you guys are gonna

empezar os echo fuera.

—Estamos en un país libre —protestó Antonio.

—En una democracia orgánica —dijo Julia.

—Eso se lo contáis a vuestra abuelita. —Encarna vigilaba al hombre con el rabillo del ojo—. ¿Sabéis lo que me dijo el comisario cuando me llamó?

—No —contestamos todos a coro.

—Que si me cerraba el establecimiento, lo hacía por mi bien y, que encima, debía darle las gracias por la multa.

—Magnífico —exclamó Máximo—. El tipo tenía toda la razón. A Dios no le gustan las prostitutas.

Encarna amagó arrearle con la mano.

—¿Dios, dices?

—Sí.

—Valiente punto filipino está hecho tu Dios. —Se cruzó desdeñosamente de brazos e hizo una vedija de humo con el cigarrillo—. Volando por las nubes, sin enterarse de lo que pasa... «Ay, que bajo, que bajo»... Pues, ¡que baje! Ya se las cantaré bien claras, si lo agarro algún día.

La boquilla en la boca, el pelo recogido detrás de las orejas, nos observaba a nosotros —y a los demás clientes del bar— con viva reprobación. En mi vida la había visto tan imponente. Todo el furor de la humanidad ofendida parecía concentrarse en el intenso azul de sus ojos y, al coger el vaso de güisqui y vaciarlo de un trago, comprendí que era alguien a quien los agravios de la existencia llenaban de ira y que, en lugar de resignarse y olvidar como el común de los mortales, acreedora implacable, los anotaba cuidadosamente en una lista.

Habíamos acabado la manzanilla y la muchacha vino con

start, I'll toss you out.”

“We're in a free country.” Anthony protested.

“In an organic democracy,” Julie said.

“Tell that to your grandmother,” Encarna was watching the man out of the corner of her eye. “You know what the inspector said when he called me?”

“No,” we answered in chorus.

“That if he closed my establishment, he was doing it for my own good and, above that, I should thank him for the fine.”

“Magnificent,” Max exclaimed. “His type is always right. God does not like prostitutes . . .”

Encarna threatened him with her hand.

“God, you say?”

“Yes.”

“A brave fraud<sup>6</sup> your God is.” She crossed her arms disdainfully and made a spiral of smoke with her cigarette. “Flying through the clouds, without a clue as to what goes on below . . . ‘Oh, how low, how low’ . . . Well, go low then! I'll sing it to him loud and clear, if some day I ever catch him.”

The cigarette in her mouth, her hair pinned back behind her ears, she was watching us —and the other customers in the bar— with livid disapproval. Never in my life had I seen her so imposing. All the fury of offended humanity seemed to be concentrated in the intense blue of her eyes and upon seizing the glass of whisky and emptying it with a gulp, I understood that she was someone whom every offence of existence filled with rage and that, instead of resigning and forgetting like most mortals, this relentless creditor, carefully annotated them onto a list.

We had finished the cider and the girl came over with

otras dos botellas. Durante varios minutos escuchamos la música. La presencia indignada de Encarna nos dispensaba de hablar y, aunque sin confesarlo abiertamente, se lo agradecíamos. Era nuestra última reunión y, cada palabra, cada gesto, contaban. Desesperadamente, luchábamos contra la solemnidad. Antonio escribía sobre la mesa, Julia se acariciaba el pelo. Nos mirábamos en silencio y sonreíamos.

Empezaba a sentirme borracho y cerré los ojos. Las conversaciones se enmarañaban como serpientes en torno de mí. Recuerdo vagamente que Antonio cambió una palabras con Máximo. Después, Julia me tiró de la manga y me sacudió. El legionario discutía con la muchacha y Encarna se había interpuesto y señalaba la puerta con la mano. La música impedía oír lo que decían. El hombre se desabotonó la camisa para mostrar el pecho. Mientras ella hablaba, había mirado hacia las mesas, como aguardando una reacción favorable, pero nadie se movió. Le oí gritar algo ininteligible y se marchó dando un portazo.

Encarna volvió con nosotros. Había tentado el respaldo de una silla al sentarse y se acomodaba nerviosamente el pelo.

—¿Lo habéis oído?

Máximo dijo que no.

—Quería cantar el Himno. Muy chulo él... Lo he mandado a hacer puñetas.

—¿Qué te ha dicho?

—Que venía de Ifni. Ifni de Africa. Y ¿sabéis qué le he contestado? —Encarna puso los brazos en jarras—. Pues figúrase usted, aquí donde me ve, yo vengo de Nueva York y cuando tengo ganas de cantar me aguanto. De modo que, si

another two bottles. For several minutes we listened to the music. The indignant presence of Encarna excused us from talking, and although without openly confessing it, we were thankful for it. It was our last meeting and, each word, each gesture, counted. Desperately, we fought against the solemnity. Anthony was writing on the table; Julie was stroking her hair. We were watching each other in silence and we were smiling.

I began to feel drunk and closed my eyes. The conversations were becoming entangled like serpents all around me. I vaguely remember that Anthony exchanged some words with Max. After that, Julie grabbed my arm and shook me. The legionnaire was arguing with the girl and Encarna having intervened, signaled to the door with her hand. The music prevented us from hearing what they were saying. The man unbuttoned his shirt to show off his chest. While she spoke, he looked toward the tables as if waiting for a favorable reaction, but nobody moved. I heard him shout something unintelligible and he left slamming the door.

Encarna returned to join us. She touched the back of the chair as she sat down and nervously adjusted her hair.

“Did you hear that?”

Max said that we hadn't.

“He wanted to sing a hymn. How very pretty of him . . . I told him to go and get stuffed.”

“What did he say to you.”

“That I came from Ifni. Africa Ifni. And do you know what I told him?” Encarna put her hands on her hips. “Well just imagine yourself, here where you see me, I'm from New York and when I feel like singing, I hold back. So, if you want to

quiere usted armar jaleo, lárguese a otro sitio.

—¿Y la camisa? ¿Para qué la abrió?

—Para enseñar sus heridas. El pobrecito fue herido dos veces por los rojos... Quería impresionarme...

Como si hubiera adivinado que hablaban de él, el hombre empujó la puerta y se plantó en el umbral. Había comprado una botella de Moriles en el colmado de la esquina e hizo ademán de empujar el codo para beber, pero cambió de idea a la mitad y, con una voz áspera, cascada, empezó a cantar el Himno.

Fue algo extraordinario. Hacía más de doce años que no lo escuchaba (sentado en las rodillas de mi padre, cuando había desfile) y, tímidamente primero y, con decisión y de manera festiva después, los clientes del bar lo coreamos. Parecía hecho de propósito, como una prolongación de nuestras bromas de zascandiles, gamberros y resentidos. Al oírlo, Julia había comenzado a reír y sus ojos se inundaron de lágrimas. Adiós camisas, boinas; adiós escudos, mártires, luceros caídos. La angustia almacenada durante tantos días de espera se evaporaba a cada estrofa. Milagrosamente dejamos de pensar en Amadeo, olvidamos la proximidad de mi partida...

Absorto en la parodia de la canción no me di cuenta de que unos matones agarraban al legionario por los hombros, ni de que lo echaban a la calle. Cuando me recobré (la borrachera me había pasado de pronto), los clientes habían vuelto a sus mesas y, más bella y majestuosa que nunca, Encarna estaba, de nuevo, entre nosotros.

—Los españoles son de órdago —decía—. Porque han hecho la guerra, se imaginan que lo han hecho todo.

kick up a row, take it somewhere else.

“And the shirt? Why did he open it?”

“To show off his wounds. Poor thing was wounded twice by the reds . . . He wanted to impress me . . .”

As if he had guessed they were talking about him, the man pushed open the door and planted himself on the threshold. He had bought a bottle of Moriles from the grocer on the corner and raised his arm as if to drink, but changed his mind in mid motion and, with a raspy cracked voice, he began to sing the hymn.

It was extraordinary. It had been over a dozen years since I had heard it (sitting on my father’s lap, during a procession) and, timidly at first, and with a decisive and festive manner the next, the customers in the bar joined in. It seemed to be done on purpose, like a prolonging of our jokes on hoodlums, hooligans and malcontents. On hearing it, Julie had begun to laugh and her eyes flooded with tears. Goodbye uniforms and berets; goodbye shields, martyrs and fallen stars. The anguish warehoused from so many days of waiting evaporated at every stanza. Miraculously we stopped thinking about Amadeo, we forgot about the proximity of my departure . . .

Absorbed in the parody of the song I didn’t notice that a couple of thugs were grabbing the legionnaire by the shoulders, nor that they were throwing him out into the street. When I recovered (the drunkenness had suddenly passed), the customers had returned to their tables and, more beautiful and majestic than ever, Encarna was with us again.

“Spaniards are amazing,” she was saying. “Now that they’ve had a war, they think they’ve done everything.”

## NOTES:

1. Fulanito, Menganito, Zutano – Typically Fulano, Mengano, y Zutano are translated as Tom, Dick and Harry (outdated names and idiom for English, but appropriate for the piece). However, here they are broken up across two paragraphs, intermixed with real names and the first two are in diminutives. Thus, “someone named Tom ... that guy Dick ... the mother of some Harry”. My reading is that the first two diminutives are used to show that someone is concerned about these people and that they are not just undesirables disappearing of the street. They were phrased as above to maintain the connotation of anonymity the names convey (these disappearings could happen to anyone).
2. El Ranchito – Literally small ranch, but colloquially can mean a shanty town or a place to get together.
3. Zacandiles, gamberros y resentidos – to maintain the temporal valence of a fifties flavor: hoodlums, hooligans and malcontents was chosen.
4. Encarna – This is a common woman’s name in Spain. It is a shortening of *incarnation*, but the noun in its shortened form also refers to baiting dogs with animal entrails. In a first draft, I translated the name to “Encarna” to capture that meaning but reverted back to the name as it is in the final draft.
5. Horta – A municipality of Barcelona, but due to its likely unfamiliarity to readers, “the Groves” renders a typical suburban, outskirts flavor.
6. Punto Filipino – a good-for-nothing, a scoundrel, referring to a scam where people said they had business in the Philipines but would disappear with one’s money. Secondly, the line “que bajo, que bajo...¡que baje!” is problematic as I am unsure if it a lyric of a known song or hymn. The first “que’s” should have an accent mark to exclaim “how”, but if it is a command, “bajar” should be in the subjunctive mood.

## COMMENTS:

- Spaces exist only for the alignment of paragraphs and lines.
- The use of ellipses. It might appear to some readers that they are overused by Goytisolo here; however, their use (at least to my sensibilities) does not seem so forced when introducing dialogue with dashes. When switching a single dash to a comma and a pair of quotation marks, their use does become more intrusive and messier. However, they have been kept so as not to make editorial decisions on which ones were necessary as their use in this story is used to indicate trailing thoughts and pauses. In no case are they used to show omission. Additionally, I opted for the spaced ellipses to make their appearance less cluttered.