

## Una paz europea / A European peace

Fruela Fernández and Sarah Hartley

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The Language Scholar Journal is published by the Leeds Centre for Excellence in Language Teaching.

ISSN: 2398-8509

The Language Scholar Platform: <http://languagescholar.leeds.ac.uk/>

# Una paz europea / A European peace

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## Abstract

In this contribution Fruela Fernández shares his poem *Una paz europea* (Pre-Textos, 2016) and reflects on how the poem came about as a part of his personal history. Sarah Hartley then discusses the translation she produced of the poem (*A European Peace*), which is also provided. Hartley focuses on the intercultural dialogue underpinning her encounter with Fernández's poem and its rendition into English.

**Key words:** poetry, poesía, translation, traducción, Spain, España, Asturias, interculturalidad, interculturality, migración, migration, economy, economía.

## UNA PAZ EUROPEA

1

Por la parte de Paxumal, los abedules techan el camino

y nos oscurecen.

Sólo al pasar Riparape vuelve a abrirse

y vemos el valle, otra vez, estrecho y hondo,

entre los huecos que dejan las colinas, encajadas como nudillos.

Tenemos poco prado y es empruno. Repartos de repartos familiares que disminuyen  
de hermano a hermano, de primo en primo, por todo el monte.

Cada árbol tiene su tiempo. Cuando le toca, descarga. O suben los gusanos. O las  
nubes de la fábrica coinciden con la lluvia y el fruto cuece en la rama.

Vamos de un árbol a otro, pisando fruta podre, viendo qué nos queda: prunos,  
piescos, manzanas de sidra, manzanas de asar, manzanas de compota.

Mi abuelo saca dos sillas de la chabola. *Sabes tú que nun soy de muchu charrar*, pero  
le gusta que nos sentemos fuera, hacia los montes.

De cerca veo otra vez su lunar, el que se mueve. Una esquirla que le saltó en el taller,  
cuando hacían hexágonos:

uno tenía por la forma, otro descargaba el pilón.

La esquirla entró en el labio y aún avanza con la sangre, azulada.

(En el monte no se entiende el camino.)

Las curvas se pliegan y se estiran, a golpes.)

Una vez me enseñaron el árbol de familia, las fechas, los pueblos de los que fuimos  
bajando: Perabeles en el XVIII,

Riparape,

Les Pieces al cruzar el XX

y, monte abajo, raleando entre la maquinaria,

por El Trabanquín,

hasta El Llungueru.

Treinta kilómetros en trescientos años,

como si lleváramos el valle a cuestras.

## A EUROPEAN PEACE

1

On the way to Paxumal, the birches roof the road  
and darken us.

Only passing Riparape does it open up again  
and we see the valley, once more, narrow and deep,  
between the hollows that the hills leave, fitted like  
knuckles.

What little land we have slopes steeply. Divided and dived between families, diminishing  
from brother to brother, cousin to cousin, right across the mountain.

Each tree has its time. When its turn comes, it disburdens. Or the worms crawl up. Or the  
clouds from the factory coincide with the rain, and the fruit stews on the branches.

We go from tree to tree, treading on rotten fruit, seeing what we're left with: Sloes,  
peaches, cider apples, cooking apples, apples for compote.

My grandfather takes two chairs from the lean-to. *You know I'm not much of a one for  
chatter*, but he likes us to sit outside, facing the mountains.

Close up I see his mole again, the one that moves. A splinter which flew at him in the  
workshop, while they were making hexagons:

One held the shape, another was driving the hammer.

The splinter entered his lip and still shifts with the blood, bluish.

(In the mountains you can't fathom the road.

The curves fold and stretch, in jolts.)

Once they showed me the family tree, the dates, the villages from which we descended:  
Perabeles in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century,

Riparape,  
Les Pieces crossing into the 20th  
and, down the mountain, dispersing among the machinery,  
through El Trabanquín,  
up to El Llungueru.

Thirty kilometres in three hundred years,  
As if we carried the valley on our shoulders.

### **THE POEM (Fruela Fernández)**

This is the opening section to *Una paz europea* (Pre-Textos, 2016), a book-length poem that had been a long time in the making, but not in the writing. While my previous book, *Folk* (Pre-Textos, 2013), interrogated the meaning of belonging, *Una paz europea* retraces the experience of displacement. Shortly after publishing *Folk*, I arrived in Britain on a temporary contract, an unwilling move that brought back memories and echoes from my family's time in Belgium in the 1960s (the day before leaving, my grandfather advised me to check for job advertisements in the newspaper, as he had done in *Le Soir*). In a political and historical sense, I knew I had to complete the narrative of my family, and yet I encountered a personal resistance in the autobiographical, as if my writing was unfit yet: the feelings were there, but the places and the faces were absent, and they reclaimed their right to return. I spent a couple of years away from poetry, focusing on other texts—especially a memory of Northern England through the music of The Smiths—, waiting for the form. It came shortly after a summer visit with my grandfather to our family plot near Les Pieces, a small village on one of the hills forming the coal-mining valley of Langreo in Northern Spain. My grandmother grew up in one of the nearby houses, where her grandfather had founded the local committee of the socialist party PSOE at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and where he also hid during the first years after the Civil War. Listening to my grandfather on the way back, I had the intuition that the form I needed was emerging with his recollections, with our code-switching between Asturian and Spanish, with the historical burden of the landscape. The pieces fell into place after Les Pieces, so to speak.

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