



DIGITAL COLLECTION OF EUROPEAN ROMA THEATER AND DRAMA

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With Profound Dignity

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(excerpts)

1.

Emilia: The son went to the darkness. My daughter went to the darkness. My daughter went away. No! Where did they take her? Why did they take her? Who took her from me? Blood of my blood. Who is capable of doing such a thing? Let me out of here! Let me go or kill me! You can take my life but cannot take my freedom! Let me! I am telling you! I am not crazy! You are making me crazy!

It hurts. Sings. The light makes the shadow, the Andalusian sun. Andalusia cries while it sings. Andalusia cries Gypsy romances every day when I cry after my son and my daughter. They stole my daughter from me! They killed my son. They killed him in my belly. But you killed me twice. Bastards! Criminals! I curse you! I curse you a thousand times! I wish your offspring never would come out of the darkness! I wish they never come out of the shadows! This cursed darkness!

From this permanent darkness that you have condemned my eyes to in this prison! You have left me blind! No! Antonio was not blind, and you came for him! He did not want to go to a war that was not his! Is there a war that belongs to us? What war? We are sons of the road why would we burn down the roads! A road that is on fire is impassable, it is wasted, it is sad. We have never liked sadness. We like joy! We like living and still we must struggle with death much more than we would like! Viva happiness! Viva life! Antonio was not blind. You suspected that and came back for him. No. It was obvious that my Antonio was not blind. But you blinded my soul forever. Forever. Who of you, many years after the war can see the war with clarity? What is left from your republic? Militiamen? Who are these militiamen? How many dead men? How many dead women? How many living dead were left behind by your republic? How many daughters were left without fathers because you said that they were not blind? How many sons in the belly of their mothers?

And you people, can you see it now? And you, maybe? Can you stay calm when everyone around you loses their heads and blames you?

(...)

Emilia: I lived in a cave-flat above the city. Long live ostracism! Antonio! I will not let you fall! I work with the esparto grass and the tinplate and sell the things I make at markets. They also call it wicker, but what I do is making baskets from the esparto. Therefore, they know me as the basket-maker woman. I am the basket-maker woman. I love life very much, so I work a lot. In order to live more. In my house we have always worked much. Antonio also works a lot and works well. This way he will live more!

(...)

Emilia: I chose well. I died three days after giving birth to my daughter. A few days after my daughter Ángeles was born and a few months after the end of the Civil War on the 25th of January 1939, I died of a puerperal fever in addition to the symptoms of bronchopneumonia, according to my medical certificates. My remains were deposited in a common grave in the cemetery of Almería. I chose well. The militiamen of the second Spanish Republic locked me up and they let me die there pregnant with my daughter.

She lives. She is living even today, and she does not know anything about her parents. Who knows where? Who knows what? Can anyone tell me what has become of her?

2.

Gabriella: It is very hot. I was born in Seville, the 15th of August 1915. I was born as Gabriela, artist and creator of dramatized poems. I am considered as a universal reciter of bullfighting, inimitable in the art of uniting poems with the rhythm of the flamenco dance. I am Gypsy coming from a family of six generations of flamenco singers and dancers and the most prestigious bullfighters of the time.

(...)

Gabriella: 20 years passed after the end of the war. But they have not forgotten. They won. They were the nationalists, the Francoists. Spain had to be reconstructed. A new Spain, different without the republicans. Without the reds. They won the peace. The small peace with lower-case letters that always comes with the victory. I was Gypsy.

(...)

Gabriella: Resentment produces hatred. Hatred produces violence. Violence provokes massacres and then we are in a spiral that never ends. Poetry reconciles souls. I just recited rhythmic poetry. They said I did it very well. I went to the best schools. I was Gypsy and I went to the Irish school in Seville. My friends were girls from the Sevillian high society. Good people. I knew about literature and I grew up with the rhythm of flamenco in my genes. For what? Why? I just recited poems to those who came to see me in theatres. I gave them my words that I borrowed from the great masters of the generation of 27. I have to get out of here! I am suffocating. I am suffocating as if I had a plastic bag on my head. Plastic. Damn plastic.

They kicked me out. They sent me to exile. They rooted me out. They sent me away from Spain. I had to go. But my heart stayed in my homeland. In Andalusia. They pulled out my heart. And opened up the doors of the best theatres in Ibero America. I had to go. I had to go in order to live. I had to go to

keep myself alive. At least, that was what I thought. It will pass. I am sure it will pass!

But it never did. Argentina, Venezuela, Colombia, Mexico and many other places full of love. Fervour towards me. It was all about love for the motherland. Many Spanish people, all sons of Spanish people, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of Spanish people... who spent their whole lives there, but they felt it so close, so theirs, so ours, the horrible things that have happened and are still happening on the other side of the Pond in Spain, in Europe. America. There they all loved me, they adored me, they offered me roses and violets and gardenias and jasmines. It was all about perfumes and flowers. Flowers and perfumes. More perfumes, more flowers. America was the life, the explosion of life and emotions. People were overwhelmed during my performances. They cried from emotion. They cried as their emotions ran high. It was wonderful. It was marvellous. It was fantastic. It was unforgettable. It was an exile.

(...)

Gabriella: After the democratic transition in Spain in the seventies I went back. I was old. Forgotten. But some people, a few of them still remembered me. I was like a distant rumour. I felt myself reciting and I heard myself as an echo from the peak of a mountain. My life has disappeared from my homeland. I was just reverberating.

3.

Emilia: They called up Antonio for military service. At first, he managed to liberate himself.

In July 1936, the war started, and the republic conscripted all young people. Antonio and I got married according to the Gypsy ritual two years later hoping it might help him liberate himself from being sent to the front. My wedding was beautiful! I loved him so much! And he loved me! I cannot even tell you! He did not understand what was going on. We had always had a hard life we did not know about anything else than just working, in order to live more. As I said before, when they called up Antonio, he could liberate himself by saying he was blind. And that in a way was true.

In reality, we did not see what was really going on. For us two, the republic has not changed life in any way. We had worked a lot before the republic and worked even more after its advent. They say it was the 14th of April 1931.

At first, the militiamen believed the blindness of my Antonio, but something happened, and they came back. They were really pissed off. They took us both as prisoners. Well actually they took three of us, because I was already pregnant. They took us because they realised it was chicanery so that we could stay together and did not have to separate. They took Antonio to the Cárcel del Ingenio prison and they took my daughter and me to the Gachas Colorás prison.

They locked me up with a group of forty women who were there because they were practicing Catholics. What a crime of poor people. No one gave up. They all endured. They stayed firm in their religious convictions and rose above their fears and the risks hanging over them.

Guard: Who are they? Who were the ones who taught you prey? We want their names! Give us their names! Give us their names and we will set you free! We will let you and your child go! Think about it you Gypsy crapbag!

Emilia: And I thought about it. What is life about? Dying standing? What is life? Crawling on your knees? A frenzy, a fiction, a shadow maybe. I do not want to and what is more I am not capable of doing it. I am a person because I can think on my own. I think therefore I am. If I accepted the offer, if I denounced them, I could not live with myself and it would be dying alive forever. They with their dignity helped me and comforted me. I joined them. All united. All as one. This

was how I could go on with my pregnancy. They gave me power. They gave me faith. They helped me. I fought, fought, and fought. Always together with them. Then my daughter, Ángeles was born. It would not have happened without them. But me, I could not endure.

I died a few months before the end of the war.

4.

Gabriella: I studied dramatic art at the University of Seville, I became the first actress of the Spanish University Theatre. I interpreted classic Spanish and European plays, plays like The Great Theatre of the World by Calderón de la Barca, or the Mistress of the Inn by Carlo Goldoni. Nothing of this was good for nothing? I was the first to play a classic drama in the Maria Luisa Park of Seville.

(...)

Gabriella: When I was young my family moved to Madrid. It was an important change. It was for professional motives, my brothers who had already been bullfighters had more opportunities there to triumph. Me there, continued connecting to the world of art participating in literary events. I knew many poets of the generation of 27 who gave me their poems to read and when they saw me reciting, heard my deep voice, saw my figure, and why not say it my talent, encouraged me to represent their poems on the stage.

(...)

Gabriella: In 1950 I had my first solo recital in the Lara Theatre in Madrid. Many cultural celebrities attended the event, it was a great success. (...) There were many.... many poets and cultural celebrities who praised my performance skills acknowledging, as they said, my many merits.

(...)

Gabriella: They did not lock me up. Those winners of enforced peace did not lock me up. I continued reciting my poems as always. Lorca, Alberti, Machado, and many others. But they did not want me to. They did not want me to recite

poems of poets who were singing about freedom, who were praying to the God of culture and knowledge.