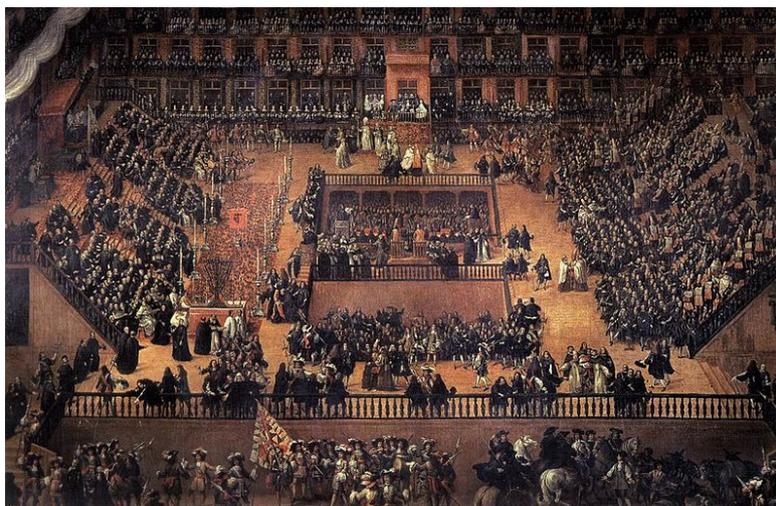


A (BASQUE) HALLUCINATION

Eneko Aizpurua Urteaga



Auto-da-fé in the Plaza Mayor of Madrid (1683), Francisco Rizi.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Francisco_Ricci_-_Auto_de_Fe_%281683%29.jpeg

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A (BASQUE) HALLUCINATION

The time is out of joint

William Shakespeare, Hamlet

I

As I'm pondering the notion of peaceful coexistence, my thoughts stray back to Constitution Square in the old quarter of San Sebastián, and the festivities marking the eve of the city's patron saint's day¹. Only now, the square has become a fortress surrounded by sturdy walls and towers vying to see which is highest, like the medieval Monteriggioni Fortress in Tuscany.

¹ See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tamborrada>

Sitting on the giant platform in the middle of the square, chatting happily while they munch away on their elver sandwiches, are two members of the Gaztelubide drummer company. Suddenly, a man holding the company banner strides angrily over to them. He tells them to stop lazing around and get to work. Don't they realise the spectacle is about to begin? The two drummers idly glance at the clock high up on the façade of the old library building, whose hands seem to be moving backwards at an alarming rate.

When the clock strikes twelve, they stop chatting, put away their sandwiches, stand ram-rod straight and launch into a long drum roll. On the wall of the old library, the inscription which reads *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori* suddenly lights up. Next, the members of the San Sebastián Choral Society climb up onto the platform and start singing:

Dies iræ, dies illa

Solvat sæclum in favilla

Teste David cum Sibylla!

Just then, a group of elite chefs dressed in white trousers, jackets and hats appear on the library balcony. To the sound of *Beotibarko Gudua* played by a string quartet sitting in the corner of the balcony (viola, cello, violin and lute), the spotlights on the platform project a huge 4K animation video featuring a modern-day version of Botticelli's Map of Hell onto the façade of the old library. The images of the painting become a moving three-dimensional being, brought to life within a world of digital hallucination. Thus, Constitution Square in the old quarter of San Sebastián, a place filled with people who have already sold their soul to the devil, becomes a 3D Basque Inferno or *Pandemonium*. It is as if the doors of the underworld have suddenly been thrown open, setting loose a swarm of the meanest and most villainous creatures imaginable. Horned, winged demons with terrible whips, lashing mercilessly at naked sinners; lamenters droning a death chant, over and over again: 'this fleeting world is but a vale of tears';

men, naked and headless, their bodies covered in excrement; lost souls boiling in rivers of blood, tortured wrecks, traitors, hypocrites, rotting corpses and fearful creatures with smoke billowing from their mouths. They scurry here and there like reptiles on the façade of the old library, while black smoke from the pile of books burning in the sacred, cleansing bonfire in the middle of the square slowly curls up past the walls of Constitution Fortress towards the cloud-filled sky, and the apocalyptic trumpeting of seven winged angels heralds the coming of Doomsday, when all men shall be judged.

The crowd in Constitution Square gazes at the Dantesque scene, terrified, curious and fascinated all at once. They drink and fart, lit torches in hand, taking selfies with their mobile phones in front of the burning books and uploading them to their favourite social media sites.

When the animated images of the painting finally disappear down the gaping hole of the spotlights, the chief of the elite group of chefs, i.e. the person appointed High Chef

(also known as 'the Almighty') steps forward, his golden *Michelin* star on his collar and his shiny *Masterchef* sash over his shoulder, to a long banqueting table covered in a white tablecloth. Then he lays his hand on a facsimile of the Old Law² and solemnly swears:

Humbly, before God,
Here, on Basque soil,
In memory of our ancestors,
Under the tree of Guernica,
Before the representatives of my people,
I swear to faithfully do my duty.³

After swearing the oath, the Almighty commands the crowd gathered in the square to 'stand and pay tribute to the Old Law'. Once they have done as instructed, the charismatic leader makes a solemn announcement:

² 'The Old Law' is a reference to the charter of ancient rights and privileges which once governed the Basque Country. Sabino and Luis Arana, the founders of the Basque Nationalist Party, coined the slogan *Jaun Goikoa eta Lege zarra* (God and the Old Law) when laying the foundations for Basque nationalism.

³ This is the oath traditionally sworn by Basque Presidents during their inauguration ceremony.

'In the name of peaceful coexistence, I hereby declare the Insurgency Court constituted'. While the crowd shouts: 'Long live the Court of Blood! Long live the Iron Chef!', the High Chef orders the accused to be brought up onto the platform and moves to the centre of the long banqueting table. The other chefs arrange themselves on either side.

*Quantus tremor est futurus,
quando iudex est venturus,
cuncta stricte discussurus!*

At a nod from the court secretary, a herald holding the hammer of the Gernika Assembly House blows his trumpet and a group of guards rush down from the battlements to slowly raise the thick gate blocking the entrance to the fortress that is Constitution Square. Three or four carnival horsemen pull a large wheeled cage over to the platform. The crowd pushes and shoves to get a closer look.

*Tuba mirum spargens sonum
per sepulcra regionum,
coget omnes ante thronum.*

The horsemen hoist the cage up onto the platform with some pulleys and the accused is taken out. It's a dwarf. He's wearing a kind of Phrygian cap with a bell at the tip and brightly-coloured gypsy clothes, like a jester. There is a gag over his mouth. The horsemen push him to the centre of the platform, where he is exposed to a shower of insults from the crowd:

You pig, you pig,
you great big pig,
you pig, you pig,
you filthy gypsy pig.

The accused falls to his knees and starts to pray, looking up at the balcony as he does so. The ropes tying his hands and feet creak and the little bell on his cap tinkles.

Our devil chef,
who art on the balcony
of Constitution Square,
cursed be thy hated name.

Furious, shaking their lit torches in rage, the crowd interrupts the accused's prayer with shouts of 'Burn the fool!' and 'Put him on the bonfire!'.

*Mors stupebit et Natura,
cum resurget creatura,
iudicanti responsura.*

The carnival horsemen take the accused over to an arsenal located in a corner of the platform, dragging him towards some old law books nestled among the crossbows, arrows, spears, bunderblusses, bullets and other munitions there.

They force him to his knees in front of the dusty tomes and, one by one, make him kiss the Sacred Scriptures, the French and Spanish Constitutions, the Compendium of the Old Laws of Navarre, the Statute of Guernica, the Navarra Statute of Autonomy and all the other prophetic texts.

*Liber scriptus proferetur,
in quo totum continetur,
unde Mundus iudicetur.*

The High Chef sits down in the presidential chair with the other members of the tribunal arranged on either side, and officially opens the feast and the trial.

*Iudex ergo cum sedebit,
quidquid latet apparebit,
nihil inultum remanebit.*

At a loss as to what to do to get himself out of the mess he seems to be in, the dwarf sits trembling in the accused's chair, exposed to the stares of the hostile crowd. Suddenly a tremendous commotion occurs among the onlookers standing around the platform. Shouts, curses and catcalls can be heard.

Constitution Square has started roaring.

Constitution Square is roaring.

The wave of roars emanating from
Constitution Square seems endless.

The infuriated crowd starts closing in on the fool. Dozens of people manage to jump up onto the platform and try to pummel him. The horsemen somehow manage to fight off the would-be attackers and force them down again.

The crowd is incensed, shouting that their rights in general, and particularly that enshrined in the law against minstrels enacted in 1221 by Frederick II, which grants them leave to insult, hit and even kill fools, are being undermined.

Quid sum miser tunc dicturus?

Quem patronum rogaturus,

cum vix iustus sit securus?

The High Chef soberly reminds the crowd that the banquet and trial are already under way, and rings his bell to ask for silence. The members of the Choral Society stop singing but the common people continue to howl and roar, slavering like hungry dogs. They stare up at the platform and the balcony, where the gluttonous group of chefs sit before a splendid repast, enjoying every delicious morsel with sensuous delight.

In an attempt to calm things down, the High Chef orders his servants to throw the leftovers from the feast down to the square below. The crowd pushes and shoves like a pack of starving dogs, struggling to catch one of the scraps of meat or crusts of bread which begin to rain down. Once they have settled down to gnaw on the remaining bones, the High Chef nods to the prosecution, which begins to call its witnesses.

Preceded by *dulzaina*⁴ players and various smaller festival figures, three giant figures with papier maché heads dance their way up onto the platform to testify: Ferdinand the Catholic, John III of Navarre and Catherine of Navarre. All three confirm that the accused had to have been behind their demise, otherwise they would not have died so soon after one another 'just after the joining of Navarre and Castile' points out Ferdinand the Catholic, 'just after Castile conquered Navarre' clarify John III and Catherine of Navarre.

⁴ A double reed instrument in the oboe family

And while they present the documents and original testaments that verify their date of demise (a key part of their testimony): 23 January 1516, 17 June 1516 and 12 February 1517, the three monarchs also add that the accused has always scoffed at historiography and has never taken part in any official or alternative event designed to commemorate historic events. For example, he did not participate in the 500th anniversary celebrations to commemorate the joining of Navarre and Castile, organised by the Government of Navarre, nor in the events held every year beside the monolith erected on the site of Amaiur Castle in memory of all those who died defending it. They also explain how he has tried to make people doubt the legitimacy of the monarchy and forget the memories, historical events and history itself that is based around their names and deeds. And to prove all this, they accuse him of failing to respect history (the mother and source of all truth) and denounce him for having said that 'History is just a means for those in power to cover up their crimes;

it is nothing more than the narrative created by those who dominate the written word'.

And as if that wasn't enough, they also accuse him of having distorted the ideas of the famous 16th century thinker and canonist, Martin Azpilkueta, by claiming that kingdoms are not made for kings, but rather kings for kingdoms. Or in other words, a kingdom does not belong to its king, but rather to its people, and that according to the laws of nature, a king's power is actually the people's power, not the king's, and the power required to watch over, govern and command a society, make laws and sit in judgement, is given to everyone, i.e. is bestowed directly on all humans so that they may naturally govern all affairs pertaining to nature, and live happily and with dignity, according to nature's judgement.

And to round off their testimony, they tell the court that the accused used all his evil manipulations of *Doctor Navarrus'* ideas to claim that there are no kings or sovereign nations,

but only citizens and individuals - the exact opposite of what *Doctor Navarrus* proposed!

As they conclude, the smaller carnival figures start singing, while a large black eagle circling overhead croaks out the words to 'Navarre shall be the wonder of the world':

For a nation to be free,
The people must be free!
Let all free people unite
in favour of a free nation!

The horsemen herd the giants off the platform, with the smaller procession figures leading the way, and Thomas of Torquemada, Grand Inquisitor and bane of witches, the light of Spain, saviour of his people and most honoured member of his order, climbs up to the sound of a drum roll to give his testimony.

He is accompanied by his fellow inquisitor, Pierre de l'Ancre. Torquemada begins by stating that the Inquisition is neither created or destroyed, but is only transformed from one form to another. To prove his impartiality, he admits outright that he was appointed Grand Inquisitor by the very same Catholic Monarchs that the accused has so maligned, and then goes on to state that the fool, in addition to denying that the Earth is at the centre of the universe and claiming that it in fact revolves around the Sun, has also tried, time and time again (albeit in vain) to disavow the indisputable truth that the sun never sets in the glorious empire built by the Catholic Monarchs.

To scandalised gasps and murmurings from the crowd, the Grand Inquisitor charges the accused with being not only a fool, but a Jew also, and to prove it, produces the Edict of Expulsion ordering all Jews to be expelled from the kingdom, which features the accused's name in one of its appendixes.

And to drive his point home, Torquemada adds that he has not a shadow of a doubt about the Jewish origins of the accused. He knows what he's talking about because, among other things, he himself had Jewish ancestors and if the accused were not Jewish, then why would he have so many books by Jewish authors hidden away?

As the terrified crowd starts shouting 'Burn the Jewish books!', Pierre de l'Ancre takes the floor. He confirms the accusation made by Torquemada and as proof produces a piece of paper supposedly found stuffed into the accused's pocket, which contains a hand-written copy of the entire lyrics of the *Jüdiferraren kanta* (or the Song of the Wandering Jew). To general astonishment, Pierre de l'Ancre reads an excerpt from the song.

Is there anyone in this world
who can compare to the Wandering Jew?
I believe there is nowhere no one
more miserable,
no one who comes close to his bitter fate...

No sooner does the crowd hear this reference to the
Wandering Jew than the murmuring begins to grow.

I was named in the nation of Israel,
born in the famous city of Jerusalem,
Let your spirit be thus satisfied.
Lord, I am indeed the Wandering Jew.

By the time Pierre de l'Ancre finishes his rendition, the
murmuring has swelled to an agitated roar. Shouts and
insults can be heard once more.

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The wave of roars emanating from
Constitution Square seems endless.

Pierre de l'Ancre seizes this opportunity to add some more accusations to the list, charging the fool with being not only a wandering Jew, but also a witch. As proof, he calls attention to the strange, incomprehensible language called Basque that he speaks, and like Torquemada, claims to know what he is talking about because as well as being familiar with demons, dogma and heretics, he also confesses to have unwittingly spoken Basque on occasions in the intimacy of his own home, since his grandfather, Bernand Errostegi, had originally been from Lower Navarre, before he moved to Bordeaux and adopted a French surname, l'Ancre, because no good Christian could pronounce his old Basque one.

Next, the witch hunter accuses the fool of being an agitator, and of distributing copies of the false priest Joanes Leizarraga's Basque translation of Our Lord Jesus Christ's New Testament, commissioned by Jeanne d'Albret, the leader of the Calvinist Conspiracy of Béarn, among good Christians in order to poison their hearts. He also charges him with being a man of no allegiance, neither Spanish nor French, and of wandering errantly between the two countries with no fixed abode, as if national borders simply did not exist, never showing his passport or ID card to the border control guards. And all this with just one purpose: to establish a supranational association of witches, an association aimed at encouraging European citizens to rise up against their nations and states. He accuses him of organising lascivious clandestine libertine meetings in the Sara and Zugarramurdi Caves, at which sinners drink cider (that dangerous potion made from apples, the cursed fruit of paradise) to induce hallucinations and visions of a new demonic world, while they suck each other's cocks and lick

each other's clitorises, all the time shouting out incomprehensible curses against nations and states that they have learned from their co-conspirators from the swamp-like, inhospitable, beggarly, faithless, witch-infested countries of northern Europe.

But Pierre de l'Ancre leaves his most serious accusation to the end of his testimony. Not only has the accused helped spread the influence of the association of witches throughout the lands governed by the European kings and queens, he has also interfered with the solemn work of the Inquisition. He told a member of the San Juan de Luz cod-fishing fleet that his wife, mother and daughters had been stripped and stabbed, thus convincing the poor fool to help him assault a convoy of witches condemned to burn at the stake, freeing them all and, in doing so, preventing the Inquisition from proceeding with its witch trials.

The inquisitor's words trigger another wave of shouts and insults, with cries of 'Witch! Witch!' and 'Burn him! Burn him!' sounding from all corners of the square.

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The High Chef rings his bell again to ask for silence, while glancing suspiciously at the clock. A couple of hours have passed since the start of the trial and the gluttonous group of chefs have at last eaten their fill. Sated and sleepy, they doze in their seats. In an attempt to calm the crowd down and give his companions a chance to recover from the effects of their gorging, the High Chef announces that there will be an hour's recess.

But the onlookers are incensed, and remind the High Chef in no uncertain terms that they have the right to insult, beat and even kill all fools. For its part, the prosecution reminds him that there are still more witnesses waiting to testify.

Realising that the situation is in danger of getting out of hand, and to avoid an uprising, the High Chef announces free drinks and snacks for all throughout the Old Quarter's Golden Mile of *Pintxos* (Tapas). No sooner is the gate lifted than the crowd streams out of Constitution Square and into the various bars of the Old Quarter, full of jubilation and raising endless toasts to the High Chef.

II

After the recess, in an attempt to avoid further delays and move things along, the High Chef orders the prosecution to bring the principal charges against the accused.

In deference to the Almighty's command, the prosecution orders some maps to be brought up onto the platform. First of all a giant map of the Basque Country is brought up by some horsemen wearing white, red and green sashes. Using a ruler much like the ones used by teachers when giving explanations at the blackboard, the spokesman for the prosecution points to the map and accuses the fool of never having accepted that the Basque Country is over one thousand years old and never having accepted the full extent of its territory, quoting as evidence his statement that 'there is no Basque Country, there are only Basque Countries'. He then adds that the accused has never accepted the idea of the Basque nation or the historic nation, advocating multilateralism instead of unilateralism or bilateralism,

arguing that the road to either complete or partial national sovereignty is nothing but an obsolete relic from a bygone era. As the crowd yells out 'Long live the Free Basque Country!', the prosecution reminds the court that, instead of giving his life for his country, fighting its enemies or doing something useful in the name of the Basque nation, the accused has preferred to waste his days in idleness and cowardliness, laughing and joking with any Tom, Dick or Harry, engaging in malicious plays on words and scribbling satirical verses on scraps of paper, while all the time sipping absinthe and pretending to be a culture vulture enamoured of literature, despite claiming that Basque literature is not just literature written in the Basque language, but rather any literature written in any of the official languages of the Basque Country.

In addition to all this, he also accuses him of refusing to believe the myth of the Battle of Roncevaux Pass, of not flying the Basque flag from his balcony on Basque National Day,

of telling schoolchildren that Gartxot should not have killed Mikelot, and of making fun of the priest from Soule Bernard Goienetxe, alias 'Matalaz', saying that no nation is worth dying or killing for, and that there is no way of telling who the 'real Basques' are anyway.

But the most serious accusation has yet to come. The prosecution accuses the fool of not wanting to establish a unified, single Basque Country, of being against the construction of a nation and against the Basque statute, and of arguing that instead of building a new state, we should overthrow the ones we have. The prosecution spokesman continues, saying that, time and time again, and in front of numerous witnesses, the fool has shamelessly denied that the Basque Country is an emotional superpower, and is therefore a profligate traitor to his nation and an enemy collaborator. Hearing these terrible accusations, the crowd goes wild and shouts of 'All fools are curs!' rebound around the square.

The ungodly clamour echoes off the high walls of the fortress that is Constitution Square, while the prosecution continues to press its case for treason. It is clear that the accused himself has confessed to betraying his country, and has repeated, time and time again, with no shame or hesitation, that solidarity with one's fellow man should come before national compatriotism, claiming to have more in common with, for example, a pro-European Bavarian than with an anti-European fellow Basque. He has also cast doubt on the question of who exactly *we* are, arguing that far from being a nation rooted in our birthplace, language or culture, or a rabble of people empowered to make unfair and arbitrary decisions (such as the establishment of the death penalty), *we* are actually citizens united by our agreement regarding the legitimate laws that we ourselves have established, who make decisions in accordance with those legitimate laws.

Upon hearing this, cries of 'Gascon!'⁵, 'maketo!'⁶ and 'cosmopolidiot!' are added to the general clamour, and loud choruses of 'We are the new Basque youth, the Basque Country, our nation, is indivisible!' can be heard.

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When the ruckus finally dies down, some soldiers carrying long pikes, muskets and arquebuses and wearing the uniform of the Army of Flanders bring a giant map of Europe up onto the platform. Pointing at it with a ruler, the spokesman for the prosecution accuses the fool of sympathising with the Dutch rebels who signed the Brede Commitment, demanding that Philip II, King of Spain,

⁵ A disparaging term for someone who cannot speak Basque.

⁶ A disparaging term used to refer to emigrants from other regions of Spain to the Basque region.

ruler of the most powerful of all European nations at that time, put an end to the Inquisition and promote religious freedom. Moreover, he adds that the accused has, on numerous occasions, denied the principles of national sovereignty and territorial unity established in the Westphalia Agreement, advocating instead a supra nation-state European Republic of free citizens.

Amidst the incensed shouts and insults directed at the fool by the crowd in a wave of indigent patriotism, some horsemen with red and yellow, and blue, white and red sashes carry a map of Spain and a map of France up onto the platform. Pointing again at the maps, the spokesman for the prosecution accuses the fool of having constantly engaged in insulting characterisations of these two nation-states, despite their glorious and stainless past. And to prove it, he takes a long list from his pocket and, one by one, begins to enumerate the accused's heinous crimes:

He has denied that the battles of Covadonga and Santiago and the Glorious *Reconquista* are true national legends and that Spain's destiny is to be united and indivisible. He has scoffed at those who say that France is universal because it spans all five continents, and laughed at the tales of Clovis, Poitiers and Charles Martel. He has claimed that these two nations are not united and singular, has put both French and Spanish on the road to extinction by calling for language diversity and claiming that minority languages are in danger of dying out. He has insulted the national symbols of Spain and France and said that far from civilising America, the only thing Spain did was conquer it. He has refused to take part in the military act of swearing allegiance to the Spanish flag on 12 October in the Intxaurreondo barracks in San Sebastián, on the basis of the lame and insulting excuse that dozens of Basque citizens have been tortured there, and has refused also to kiss the French flag in the military procession organised in Paris on 14 July

to commemorate the glorious Storming of the Bastille, in tribute to all those oppressed by the *Grandeur* of France.

As the spokesman for the prosecution struggles to get his breath back after reading out the list, loud chants of 'Viva España, Viva el Rey, Viva el Orden y la Ley!' and 'Allons enfants de la Patrie, Le jour de gloire est arrivé!' resound around the square.

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Summing up the list of charges, the spokesman solemnly accuses the fool of striving to promote an uprising against the laws of France and Spain by inciting the seditious masses and placing their interests before those of the States.

'And for all the charges levelled here,' he adds, struggling to make the sentence agreed upon by the entire prosecution heard over the deafening shouts of 'Terrorist! Terrorist!', 'and in light of the fact that the accused's stated purpose was to bring about the ruin and downfall of nation-states, calling them crimes against humanity and claiming that they destroy natural communities and demolish their languages and culture by setting up borders by dint of force; and, even more gravely, given that he has betrayed his country by striving to retrieve its enemies' names and deeds from the backwaters of history to which they had been banished to oblivion, saying that what really matters are people's standard of living and free choice, and that therefore, the true sovereigns are citizens, not countries; we, the prosecution, unanimously call for the accused to be sentenced to death for his rebellious, systematic and deliberate disobedience!'.

The High Chef asks the accused if he accepts the charges and admits his guilt. Both the crowd and the prosecution roar in protest, arguing that the procedural rules of the Inquisition do not contemplate the presumption of innocence and therefore do not confer on the accused the right to speak. But the Almighty calls for silence, saying that, according to Inquisitorial procedure, the accused may indeed be permitted to speak in order, and only in order, to admit his own guilt.

The carnival horsemen remove the fool's gag, making the bell on the end of his hat tinkle in the process. Once free of his restraint, the fool first turns to address the Almighty: 'Ave Caesar, morituri te salutant'. Then he turns to the crowd gathered in Constitution Square:

'You, the common people; you, who are weary with much toil; come, you guilty ones, traitors and scapegoats, come to me and listen to what I have to say before I am burnt to a crisp in the fires of Hell.'

A deathly silence falls like a blanket over the crowd. As the faces all stare up at him in fascination, the fool starts to speak and his words rebound around the square, bouncing and echoing off its four high walls.

'My beloved citizens, nationalists, patriots and chauvinists alike, your countries are nothing but a fallacy; our nations are mere hallucinations. Have we not suffered enough by now at the hands of our false nations? For our own good, would it not be better to move beyond them, once and for all? How long must we continue to fight each other? How long must we continue to be crushed by the wheel of suffering? How long must we continue to be stretched on the rack? As a result of our nations, but mostly as a result of our own ignorance, the red marks of suffering have been tattooed onto our bodies and souls, generation after generation. But if we truly wanted to, we could live happily in our natural communities, carrying on with our everyday tasks and activities, managing our relations and disputes;

in a word, we could build and share our lives together and thus, little by little, we could forge a political bond and a common identity, with no need for nation-states, which at the end of the day are nothing more than a manifestation of an imagined, made-up community, i.e. a nation. When will we open our eyes and realise that the true *raison d'être* of a state goes against that of humanity, goes against autonomy and freedom, and is a totalitarian *raison d'être* in both the kingdoms of this world and all the kingdoms yet to come? Unless we leave resentment, anger and stupidity behind us, unless we wipe ignorance off the face of the Earth, unless we do this, we will never regain the hope we have lost.

Incensed with rage, the crowd starts throwing empty beer bottles at the fool's head, shouting 'No future for the fool!' in a kind of collective hysteria.

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Constitution Square seems endless.

Realising that the situation is on the verge of getting out of hand, and worried that one of the bottles may accidentally hit them, the High Chef and his entourage withdraw from the balcony and go off to the private room prepared for them at the Gaztelubide club to begin their deliberations.

While they do so, and to pacify the crowd, a group of cheerleaders dressed in the colours of the French and Spanish flags perform a dance. Once the performance is over, a rack is brought into the square and placed on the ethical floor⁷ of the wooden planks to force the fool, by means of torture, to confess his guilt before the good people of the nation.

⁷ This is reference to an agreement reached in the Basque parliament regarding a basic set of ethical principles upon which to build peaceful coexistence in the Basque Country.

Before they start, however, some technicians set up a huge, high-resolution screen just behind the platform, to enable the crowd to savour every tiny detail of the fool's exquisite pain.

The viewers enjoy an unbeatably bloody spectacle as the fool is tortured mercilessly, first on the rack and later on the circular wheel of history. One by one they destroy his limbs, bones and joints, until his agony causes him to start hallucinating. When one of the carnival horsemen asks him to confess his guilt, he says that first he wants to report the authorities for their illegal use of torture. So they call in the Inquisitorial forensic scientist who, after carefully examining the fool's broken body, announces that there is no evidence of torture. He therefore concludes that the accusation is nothing but a trumped-up charge, **explaining** at great length that it is no more than a piece of legal trickery often used by scoundrels to put a spanner in the workings of justice.

Another expert, a psychologist who came with the forensic scientist, adds that the accused suffers from a serious case of bipolar disorder, hallucinations and persecutory delusions.

Having resolved all doubts and reflected deeply on all the arguments put forward, the High Chef reappears on the balcony, followed by his entourage. To mark this historic moment, the secretary of the Insurgency Court reads from a long scroll of parchment.

Haeretici frexentur templa

boni nihil fecerunt contra;

ergo debent omnes patibulari

When he finishes reading, the square explodes into a tumult of shouts and cries, all calling for the *Iron Chef* to come forth. In response to the crowd's clamorous urging, the Supreme Judge takes a few steps forward and,

standing strong in the face of the camera flashes and microphones, pronounces the court's judgement in a serious tone befitting the occasion:

'We must and do condemn the accused to be burned to death in the eternal flames of Hell.'

An executioner with a thousand faces climbs up onto the platform to cries of 'Burn the heretic!'.

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With the help of some assistants, the executioner positions a tall stake at the centre of the platform. Then together, they pile smaller logs and kindling around its base and bind the accused's feet to the front and tie his hands together behind it. The executioner looks up at the balcony. So does the accused, shaking with the cold sweat of panic.

The Gaztelubide drummers let off a long drum roll. The members of the San Sebastián Choral Society start singing once again.

*Rex tremendæ maiestatis,
qui salvandos salvas gratis,
salva me, fons pietatis.*

The High Chef nods, and the executioner lights the bonfire. To the sound of his own death knells, the fool starts to sing:

Listen Beaumont,
Heed Agaramont,
The alder has no heart,
And the curd has no stone.
I did not think
that nobles lied.

III

Amidst the sound of the crowd's guffaws and laughter, the fool reflects that he's going to need more than help from the goddess of good fortune to get out of this one. As the smell of burnt flesh begins to creep up his nostrils, he realises that his feet are on fire. Then, as frightful images of punctured heads, beaten bodies and bruised limbs run through his head and his body slowly crisps in the flames, he hears a voice. At first he dismisses it as a hallucination, but then, through the thick veil of smoke curling up before his eyes, he thinks he sees the shadow of a woman. He soon realises it is not the goddess of good fortune. The woman is wearing a dark-coloured dress and spectacles, and has a cigarette in her mouth. 'As you can see,' the fool remarks, looking in panic at the cloud of smoke billowing up around him, 'I'm in a bit of a tight spot.'

'Yes, just like all those who have been hounded and condemned to death in this square before you. We seem to be stuck forever on the infernal wheel of Hell.'

Demands for 'no mercy' and 'tough on crime' have come round again. Unfair trials and biased judges have come round again. Ghettos and gulags full of outcasts, foreigners and those who dare to think differently have come round again. Your fate will be the same as theirs. They want to burn and destroy *their* memory along with *your* body; but don't worry, I've come to help you.'

'Help me?' The fool raises his eyebrows in surprise.

'Yes. I've come to help you, all those who have been killed before you and all those who will be killed after you unless we do something to avoid being trapped forever under the bloody wheel of history that comes hurtling towards us out of the past and which seeks to deny us the right to decide our own future,' replies the woman's shadow in a stern tone.

'That's why I dedicated my life to studying the totalitarian ideology that has reduced our world to ashes. The ideology itself and its sources. I want to understand, I need to understand, what happened here. For just like you, I too was imprisoned and persecuted, my rights denied.'

'Who are you?' asks the fool in amazement. 'Are you human?'

'Alas, no longer. But I was a woman once. Fourteen years I spent as a stateless person. Now the shadows are our nation, and there, in our moments of most profound weakness, we draw strength from the dark embrace of the night.'

While the woman's shadow is talking, the fool tries to understand what is happening to him. He once again considers the possibility that it is all a hallucination, but the pain in his feet and legs soon forces him to dismiss this conclusion. By now his legs are nothing more than blackened stumps, and a wave of panic hits him as he realises that soon, the rest of his body will be engulfed by the hungry flames.

The shadow tries to calm him.

'Totalitarian systems always use fear to oppress and subjugate people.'

Their ideal subjects are ones so paralysed by fear, so isolated and alone, that they are unable to distinguish between truth and lies; and personal autonomy is their worst enemy. That's why it's so dangerous to think. But not thinking is even more perilous. Take courage then, do not be afraid, do not give up in these moments in which fear gnaws at your very soul. I will be your companion on the long, winding road to freedom.'

'It's easy to talk about courage when it's not you being burnt at the stake,' thinks the fool, looking down in horror at his blackening thighs.

'Don't worry,' says the woman's shadow in a calming tone, 'every time someone dies, another is born, and a brand new world is created, a world free from the laws of nature and history, and therefore free from the claws of terror. Absolute terror is the cornerstone of all totalitarian systems, the resource used by the forces of nature and history to stop humans being born or to destroy those that have, because from a totalitarian perspective,

human birth and death are nothing more than irritating attempts to stop the wheels of nature and history. That's why terror annihilates human diversity and imposes uniformity, seeking to create people with no individuality and no capacity to think for themselves. A mindless mass of empty minds. A flock of docile sheep. Just like those standing before you now. Terror is the force that executes the death sentence imposed on people by nature "because they are not fit for life" and history "because they are classes that are dying out".'

Even though she is forced to interrupt her speech for a moment due to the overwhelming din emanating from the square, the shadow soldiers on, ignoring the insults and cries directed at the fool by the rabble.

'In an incomprehensible, ever-changing world, people sometimes reach a point at which they believe nothing and everything at the same time. And as a result of the apathy that this generates, the masses are unable to accept any association,

political party or trade union that works to promote the common good. There are people like this in every country: people who care nothing about politics, who have never been a member of any political party, who hardly ever bother to even vote. And in most places they are majority. Thus, apathy is an accomplice to your death. They make fun of you for being a fool, but in truth they are history's fools. History has tricked them.' The shadow pronounces these last words in a loud voice, staring challengingly out at the incensed crowd, which immediately starts baying and howling.

'Did that odious Jew just call us fools and halfwits? We're patriots!'

'It's not up to me to judge you. I'm just a shadow. But I'll tell you what I think in no uncertain terms. You are not patriots. You are malefactors infected by the stupidity and vanity of evil. You are sycophants who, instead of really loving and singing the praises of your country, instead feel obligated to flatter and fawn over it your whole lives.

You avoid thinking so as not to face the contradictions inside yourselves. That's why your conscience does not prick you, even when you say or commit atrocities.'

'You may be just a shadow, but you'll hear our judgement nonetheless. There is only one word to describe enemies of the nation: traitors. You may have managed to escape Gurs, Hannah Arendt, but the repugnant fool beside you will not escape Death. Death to all fools and Jews! Death to traitors!'

Constitution Square has started roaring.

Constitution Square is roaring.

The wave of roars emanating from Constitution Square seems endless.

'Are you Hannah Arendt? I've heard of you,' says the fool to the shadow, while empty bottles of beer rain down on their heads.

'Like I said before, I'm here to show you the way. I'm here to teach you,' replies the shadow of Arendt. 'I know what happened to you. When those in power or institutions which use force lose their legitimacy, they lose their ability to regulate and condition their subjects' everyday behaviour. That's what happened with you. They were unable to control your behaviour, your way of thinking. They were unable to make you see reason. And what do institutions do to counteract this loss of power? They resort to violence. But rather than being a demonstration of power, violence is an admission of failure. And in this case, those in power incited the people gathered here in this square to use violence for them, by brainwashing them into believing in the fallacy of a single, united nation. As long as the idea of nation-states remains rooted in our minds, then a specific nationality will always mean a state and a state will always mean a specific nationality. And as long as that is true, there will always be minorities and outcasts - enemies that do not fit into any of the nation-state's basic,

underlying concepts. They will not have a full set of rights, they will be outsiders, outcasts, sentenced, like you, to death.'

The fool realises that Arendt is right. The aim is not to integrate others into 'our' culture or ask them to adapt to 'our' customs, but rather to build a culturally-diverse multi-ethnic society; in short, to create a community over and above the concept of nation. 'Only by accepting others and recognising that they are part of us too, can we be ourselves. Only by doing that will we achieve true inclusion and peaceful coexistence, both here and in the world at large. That's why, on the path to this goal, the first vital step is to create a new Europe based on diversity,' thinks the fool, heartened by Arendt's words.

He remains lost in his thoughts, oblivious to the flames lapping at his body, but the fire is growing larger and larger, and by now has engulfed his entire torso.

The crowd grows more and more agitated, the glowing flames reflected in their feverish eyes as they cry 'Death! Death to the fiendish fool!'.

Constitution Square has started roaring.

Constitution Square is roaring.

The wave of roars emanating from

Constitution Square seems endless.

Writhing in agony, the fool thinks how much better everything would be if this really were a hallucination or a nightmare. But then he sees the executioner fanning the flames with a huge pair of bellows and he knows it is not. The stench of burning flesh invades the square. Now a burning ball of flame and half choked by the smoke, the fool starts moaning and screaming. He's at death's door. His only friend is the ghost of Arendt, who remains by his side.

'Do not be afraid. As long as we remain capable of debating with ourselves and with others, we are not lost, we are not divorced from reality. I'm here, by your side, ready to help you. For it is only in our relationships with others that we can be individuals, with all our different characteristics, without losing the capacity for freedom and creativity.'

Although he feels Death approaching, Arendt's words gladden the fool's heart and, gathering the little strength he has left, he frees his hands from the bonds tying him to the stake and, just before he breathes his last, he addresses his final words to the crowd gathered in Constitution Square: 'As a blind wise man once said, many years ago, this has happened before and will happen again. I don't particularly like being a fool, but I'd like even less to be in your skin. By judging me today, you have sealed your own dark fate.'

And with that he starts to sing:

Brothers and sisters, do not think
that I am happy up here,
I'd much rather be
down there with you, looking up.
If you are not content
that's not my fault,
you catcall me
but I still love you.

As the fool's last words fade, an almighty commotion erupts
in the Square.

Constitution Square has started roaring.

Constitution Square is roaring.

The wave of roars emanating from
Constitution Square seems endless.