***ENCHUFE***

*After Denise Levertov*

Why did the people of Spain

adopt a pact of forgetting?

Did they leave their slaughtered

buried by roadsides?

Did they live in fear,

leave sores unpicked,

scabbed over with silence?

Did El Caudillo’s hand-picked heir,

a king, elected by a dictator,

oversee a transition,

to a democratic state?

Did that state use back handers?

Cronyism spreading like a stain,

impacting on land-use, urbanisation,

tourism, football; the virulent virus of *enchufe*

Sir, all countries have their secrets:

selective amnesias,

historical atrocities.

Truth and reconciliation commissions

are the exceptions to the rule.

Has Great Britain ever fully acknowledged,

eleven thousand Mau Mau killings,

150,000 Kikuyu in detention gulags.

Did *they* live and die in fear?

Sir, El Caudillo demanded respect

for forty years. Whilst Francophiles remain,

nationalists who remember

will soon be gone forever.

Not all the dead are buried

with due ceremony in official graves.

Roadsides sprout poppies,

reminding us of the fallen.

Sir, Democracies come in different guises,

dependent on who gets to vote,

what is said to win the ‘race’,

what power truly changes hands,

batons passing between politicians of differing hues.

Who you know has always held sway,

over what you know or promise,

a deadly silver thread that eschews

the power of *enchufe* to those who give favour.

Sir, Moors and Christians waged war

for centuries on Spanish soil,

built cathedrals, mosques, palaces,

El Caudillo used forced labour to build

a mausoleum in the valley of the fallen

Sir, The *pacto del olvido* was a deal,

republicans giving up a little power,

if nationalists didn’t rake the embers.

Does it matter how, where or why they died?

The dead are dead.

*Enchufe*: The art of being plugged in, having and cultivating contacts, especially one’s network of siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles.