

Galicia has, for the last decade or more, been an incubator of the most radical tendencies in Spanish narrative cinema. The third feature by Eloy Enciso, one of contemporary Galician cinema's leading lights, is set in the region during what we gradually realise are the early years of the Franco dictatorship, when the victorious Nationalists' repression was at its most deadly. *Endless Night* centres on the nocturnal wanderings across a town, and across then snowy, forested landscapes, of Anxo (artist Misha Bies Golas), a Republican returned to his homeland now the Civil War has ended, and on his encounters and conversations that gradually assume darker hues as they recount the murderous reprisals that are being unleashed.

One impetus for *Endless Night* was Enciso's discovery of diaries, letters, memoirs, exile literature and other personal writings from this period, most barely known even in Spain owing to contemporary state suppression, that give detailed accounts of the suffering and violence endured by opponents of the newly installed fascist regime during what writer Celso Emilio Ferreiro called 'the long night of stone' (the same line provides the film's original Galician title, *Longa noite*). Excerpts from these piercing texts are used understatedly to intense effect: most notably in the middle section of the film, where the acting takes on a recited, almost mediumistic quality; and in disembodied voiceover in the hypnotically extended final section, which immerses us in an eerily rendered night-time forest that ultimately seems to swallow Anxo.

For Enciso, these writings seemed to connect more powerfully than any others with his own despair at the political disasters being inflicted today; as the title suggests, the darkness of this period extends into the present and beyond. Darkness in *Endless Night* is literal as well as metaphorical: a virtually tactile, occasionally oneiric and uncanny presence thanks to Mauro Herce's magnificent cinematography. We are compelled to inhabit the darkness of those times by way of imaginative solidarity with the agonies endured, with the lives erased.

The Galician landscape also assumes prominence, a psychic space profoundly marked by history's vicissitudes. The texts speak of forcible deracination, not only of obliterated family and community bonds but of a broken connection with the land itself. As all this becomes apparent – slowly, stealthily – the film acquires immense force and gravitas, becomes pervaded by an overwhelming sadness. *Endless Night* is a cry in the night: an act of remembrance and resistance that restores but a few of history's forgotten voices, its recuperated fragments shored against all our ruins.

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