

VISIBLE MYSTERY
Lorca's *Duende* and the Art of Memoir

Anne McDuffie

Critical Paper and Program Bibliography
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the MFA (Master of
Fine Arts) in Creative Writing, Pacific Lutheran University, August 2007.

Visible Mystery: Lorca's *Duende* and the Art of Memoir

I.

Angel and muse escape with violin and compass; the *duende* wounds. In the healing of that wound, that never closes, lies the invented, strange qualities of a man's work.

—Federico García Lorca, "Play and Theory of the *Duende*"

Federico García Lorca was assassinated at the start of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, and his works banned in Spain for nearly twenty years. Now he's the most translated Spanish writer of all time. In his early poems and particularly in his plays, he captured the essence of Southern Spain (Andalusía) and his own province, Granada, but he was never a local or a provincial writer. Even in his early work, he addressed questions of identity that still resonate today.

Lorca and his contemporaries, known as the "Generation of '27," were influenced by modernism, surrealism and cubism. Lorca's work bears the marks of all these movements, though he never truly followed any of them. He experimented with their stylistic innovations, but he was always a romantic at heart. In the course of his own evolution as an artist, he was a modernist who never broke with the past, and a surrealist who never disavowed emotion. He looked deep into geometry and form but would not allow them to dominate what he had to say. Expression was all, for Lorca.

Today, Lorca is probably best known for his most accessible works—the *Gypsy Ballads* that made him famous, and his stark, dramatic trilogy—*Blood Wedding*, *Yerma*, and *The House of Bernarda Alba*. The groundbreaking poems of *Poet in New York* strike

most contemporary readers as obscure and intentionally difficult, as though written in a private language. But Lorca was writing about love, loss and isolation as a homosexual in the 1920s; he had to find ways to speak openly by speaking indirectly. One was to invoke myth. “Ana María Dalí [Salvador Dalí’s sister] has recalled nostalgically [...] Federico’s insistence that she should read Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (‘It’s all there!’ he exclaimed)” (Gibson 187). For him, the myths were more than stories—they offered glimpses of an alternative history, one in which homosexuality wasn’t systematically silenced and erased. *Poet in New York* offers glimpses of the man as perhaps he never was, but was always becoming. What we recognize most clearly, in the words of the poet Tracy K. Smith, is the “perilous yet necessary struggle to inhabit ourselves—our real selves, the ones we barely recognize—more completely.”

Lorca gave the name *duende* to the mysterious, animating spirit of a work of true art, a spirit born of struggle. In his most famous lecture, “Play and theory of the *Duende*” (first delivered in Buenos Aires in 1933), Lorca offers many examples of *duende* without ever actually defining it. He describes the singer Pastora Pavón singing one night in a tavern in Cádiz—a singer of “genius” who sang with great artistry but nevertheless failed to get any response from her audience, until she

...tossed off a big glass of firewater, and began to sing with a scorched throat, without voice, without breath or color, but with *duende*.

...[She] had to tear her voice because she knew she had an exquisite audience, one which demanded not forms but the marrow of forms, pure

music with a body so lean it could stay in the air. She had to rob herself of skill and security, send away her muse and become helpless, that her *duende* might come and deign to fight her hand to hand (*Deep Song* 45-46).

This is one aspect of *duende*—that the artist must relinquish control, and allow passion to overwhelm her if she is to achieve true expressive force. In its American incarnation, we hear *duende* most readily in jazz or blues, though Lorca asserts it can be found in every culture, in every art form. We have no word for it in English—the closest might be “soul,” though that fails to capture the “fight...hand to hand” so important to Lorca’s concept.

Lorca lifts the figure of the *duende* (literally, “demon”) from Andalusian folklore. The *duende* isn’t the evil demon of Christian tradition, but a pagan, human, earthly demon. Lorca pits him against the angel and the muse, who represent the traditional artistic approaches he wants to invert. The angel hands down ironclad norms of beauty, and the muse, exhausted poetic forms that amount to purely intellectual exercises—neither will admit the kind of radical innovation that Lorca craves. Instead, he says, we must “awaken the *duende* in the remotest mansions of the blood” (*Deep Song* 44). He invokes the image of blood again and again to portray the *duende* as human, alive, interior—the force that binds us, each to each. The *duende* is within. The struggle with the *duende* is a struggle both with the self and with death.

“Death,” for Lorca, encompasses the “living deaths” of upright members of the middle class whose oppressive values seemed, to him, unbearable. These were the

putrefactos (literally, “rotten” or “putrid” people) that he and Salvador Dalí mocked as students, whose dreaded indifference toward art, literature, and ideas Lorca called “the chair of the devil,” and whose deadly, provincial attitudes flourished in his native Granada—“home,” as he wrote, shortly before they murdered him, “to the worst bourgeoisie in Spain” (Gibson 439). When Lorca wrote, “A dead man in Spain is more alive as a dead man than anyplace else in the world” (*Deep Song* 47), he was not only commenting on the consciousness of death that infuses Spanish culture, he was making a social criticism. And at the same time, he was practicing the inversion, the irony, that he so delighted in.

Lorca stresses the fight with the *duende* as a kind of demonic possession, which he would also have seen in Freudian terms as engaging the subconscious (Freud’s works were translated into Spanish while he was studying at the *Residencia de estudiantes*, an experimental college in Madrid, and if he didn’t read them himself he certainly absorbed a great deal from his friend Dalí, who was then obsessed with them). Lorca makes clear, here and elsewhere, that true *duende* is a balance of passion, form, and beauty—though beauty concerns him least of all. The ancient tradition of *cante jondo*, or “deep song,” defines beauty as expressive power, and another tradition he drew on heavily—that of bullfighting—defines it as precision. Lorca’s *duende* unites these aesthetics. The artist must get as close as possible to death (facing not only his fear of actual death but of all the “living deaths” that oppress him) and then communicate that experience through his art.

In Edward Hirsch’s book, *the demon and the angel*, he writes “Lorca’s concept of *duende* fulfilled a deep personal need, because it provided a language for what I intuited

but could not name” (78). A work with *duende* finds language for the ineffable and communicates those discoveries. Perhaps this is why we so often describe the experience of art as spiritual. When we recognize our own mysteries articulated in another’s work, we feel a profound connection.

Lorca felt that connection reaching back across centuries when he listened to the great singers of *cante jondo*, or when he watched the best *toreros* of his generation create “pythagorean music” in the bull ring. He also felt it before the paintings of Zurbaran and El Greco and Goya and Velazquez, and when reading the poetry of Don Luis de Góngora, though perhaps not with the same intensity. Lorca trusted the “living body” to communicate *duende* more than any other medium, through “music, dance and spoken poetry...being forms that are born, die, and open their contours against an exact present” (*Deep Song* 47). He worried, always, that his poems would be “dead on the page” (qtd. in *New York* 289) and resisted publishing, preferring to recite his poems spontaneously, or to deliver them in the context of a lecture or talk where he could bring all his charm and charisma to bear. He spoke of his need to communicate with an audience, and believed a transcendent performance would allow the listener to experience the emotion and music of the poems without critical distance.

One can see in the lectures how playfully Lorca addresses the audience. He’s not merely presenting his work but educating his listeners about how to appreciate it, and he knows that he must first persuade them to open their minds. Lorca begins “Play and Theory of the *Duende*,” by reminiscing about how bored he was as a student in Madrid, attending “around one thousand lectures”: “...that is why I promise never to let the

terrible botfly of boredom into *this* room,” he says, “stringing your heads together on the fine thread of sleep and putting tiny pins and needles in your eyes” (*Deep Song* 42).

Does he smile, conspiratorially, as he says it? Or does he begin with a mocking seriousness, and then pause, letting his eyes roam the room to find the first person who will dare to laugh? He’s promising to entertain them, and soon they’ll be at ease, listening unselfconsciously to an entirely new language, and feeling they understand it:

As simply as possible, in the register of my poetic voice that has neither the glow of woodwinds nor bends of hemlocks, nor sheep who suddenly turn into knives of irony, I shall try to give you a simple lesson in the hidden spirit of disconsolate Spain. (*Deep Song* 42)

How charming, and disarming! In his introduction to *Poet in New York*, Christopher Maurer cites this passage as an example of how Lorca’s work sometimes is (in Auden’s words) “too dependent upon some private symbolism...to be altogether comprehensible to others” (xxi). But on stage, I believe Lorca could communicate the meaning of this passage clearly: Though he speaks in a lyrical, figurative language, he assures them he won’t use sophisticated tricks to play on their emotions or take them in. Instead, he promises to reveal and explain “a simple lesson.” To be dazzled by those images, and at the same time to understand intuitively what he meant—that small triumph would have relaxed his audience, making them more receptive to what he had to say, and more importantly, to *him*.

“The magical property of a poem is to remain possessed by *duende* that can baptize in dark water all who look at it,” Lorca wrote, “for with *duende* it is easier to love and understand, and one can be sure of being loved and understood. In poetry, this struggle for expression and the communication of expression is sometimes fatal” (*Deep Song* 50). He was, quite simply, afraid to leave the reader alone with his poems. His most popular book, *Gypsy Ballads*, had been badly misunderstood by the very *putrefactos* whose attitudes he challenged. They were delighted by his mastery of familiar romantic forms and his “authentic” depictions of Andalusía, and they managed to overlook untranslatable images or the clever ambiguities he built into seemingly narrative poems. It was all there to be read on multiple levels, but he ultimately regretted making that complexity too easy to ignore. I can’t go back to *Gypsy Ballads* now without remembering my first encounter with those poems in high school, literally translating line after inscrutable line and applying the “key” our teacher provided: “Green=sex, White=death,” and so on. Nearly everything on her list equaled death.

Hirsch quotes a 1949 letter in which Wallace Stevens attempts to explain the “angel of reality” in his poem, “Angel Surrounded by Paysans:” “The point of the poem is that there must be in the world around us things that solace us quite as fully as any heavenly visitation could” (154). Finding this is both an artistic and a spiritual quest, and the sacred nature of earthly things is key to Lorca’s concept of *duende*. It seems clear to me, then, that in seeking *duende*, the question one must ask is: what in the world solaces me?

Lorca looked to the lyric of *cante jondo*, which is spare and enigmatic, filled with animistic images from nature. The moon is a character, as is the sea, the mountain, the

stone, the bird—and any human figures tend to remain nameless. In these ancient poems, Lorca saw the seeds of a modern idiom. “All us poets who to some degree are concerned with pruning and caring for the overluxuriant lyric tree left to us by the Romantics and post-Romantics are astonished by these poems,” Lorca said (*Deep Song* 30). Speaking of his favorite form, the *siguiriya*, he noted that the lyrics “condense all the highest emotional moments in human life” and contain “simple, genuine mystery, clean and sound” (*Deep Song* 31).

Lorca’s shift to a more experimental style coincided not just with his estrangement from Dalí but also with the end of a wrenching love affair with a young sculptor, Emilio Aladrén Perojo. In a few of his surviving letters from the year in New York, Lorca alludes both to a deep depression and a period of tremendous creative output. He’d distanced himself from the sources of his heartbreak and from his fame in Spain after the success of *Gypsy Ballads*, which he felt acutely as a loss of privacy and the imposition of a public persona he didn’t recognize or want. In a 1934 interview published in the Argentine newspaper, *Crítica*, he described the first time posters went up around Madrid for one of his plays, and how horrified he was to see his name everywhere: “It was as though I had ceased being me. As though a second person were unfolding inside me. An enemy to stare at me from those posters and laugh at my timidity” (*Deep Song* 135). A letter written during the voyage to New York suggests this identity crisis had only worsened: “I look at myself in the narrow stateroom mirror and I don’t recognize myself. I appear to be another Federico...” (Harris 10).

II.

One needs to believe wholly in poetry, be in a state of spiritual and material grace, and reject the temptation to be understood. One must look through the eyes of a child and ask for the moon. One must ask for the moon and believe they can put it in one's hands.

—Federico García Lorca, “Imagination, Inspiration, and Evasion”

By the time Lorca reached New York, he was finished with emotion as constrained by the romantic imagination, aiming instead to give it full expressive force in a poetry filled with “fresh resonances that sing and collide disturbingly” (*Deep Song* 15). Here he could evoke his internal conflicts as *hecho poético*—poetic fact. Or as Lorca describes this “inaccessible poetic world”:

A flat surface, its nerve centers exposed, of horror and keen beauty, where a snow-white horse, half nickel and half smoke, falls suddenly injured, a swarm of furious bees at its eyes. (*Deep Song* 15)

Beginning with Lorca's New York poems, we can see the “pure music” he yearned after. In 1932, the Spanish literary historian and author Guillermo Diaz Plaja described Lorca's style as “*superrealismo personalísimo*” (extremely personal super-realism). “The words conserve all their plastic force,” he wrote, “chromatic, alive, and they suggest evident, immediate realities, dramatically and with very simple images” (qtd. in Harris 13, *my translation*). Diaz Plaja recognized as personal and real what many mistook for surreal. Lorca was writing his interior landscape, constructing his most private reality in language.

Images are the currency of Lorca's language. Maurer has observed that "[i]n *Poet in New York*, as in all Lorca's writing, abstract concepts and perceptions turn into astonishingly *tangible* poetic figures" (xxix). In reading the New York poems, I find that that I can't help but to visualize each image fully, probably because I have no shorthand or context for "the amputated tree that doesn't sing," or "the child with the blank face of an egg." Lorca compresses impression and emotion into word combinations that combust with an essential energy. In his guide to *Poet in New York*, Harris recognizes that paradox and conflict are at the heart of each image—he terms Lorca's method "destructive adjectivisation." Each image has some internal tension that animates it, a tension that cannot be resolved. This is ultimately what they evoke—not a single emotion, but emotions in conflict, an irresolvable duality.

Lorca's images are only loosely linked to any reality outside the world of the poem. It's usually a mistake to read them as symbols, even those that appear frequently; "The *duende* does not repeat himself, any more than do the forms of the sea during a squall" (*Deep Song* 51). In his dissertation, "Federico García Lorca and the Culture of Homosexuality," Angel Sahuquillo reads them as metonyms—referents between which there is a contiguity or association such that one may be substituted for the other. Unlike metaphor, metonym doesn't depend on shared characteristics or an implied comparison. Lorca's images often function metonymically and metaphorically at the same time.

Maurer claims that the poem, "Fable of Three Friends to be Sung in Rounds," is "too full of private allusions to hold much meaning for the reader" (*New York* xxvii), but he notes that Lorca's close friend Rafael Martínez Nadal "believes Lorca is remembering his love affair with Emilio Aladrén (Emilio) and adds coyly that he could identify the

other two ‘friends’ [Enrique and Lorenzo] without difficulty” (294). Maurer also calls the poem “a poetic ‘settling of accounts’ with two others who somehow took part” in their affair (*New York* xxvii).

Fable of Three Friends to Be Sung in Rounds

Enrique,
Emilio,
Lorenzo.
The three of them were frozen:
Enrique in the world of beds,
Emilio in the world of eyes and wounded hands,
Lorenzo in the world of roofless universities.

Lorenzo,
Emilio,
Enrique.
The three of them were burned:
Lorenzo in the world of leaves and billiard balls,
Emilio in the world of blood and white pins,
Enrique in the world of the dead and discarded newspapers.

Lorenzo,
Emilio,
Enrique.
The three of them were buried:
Lorenzo in Flora’s breast,
Emilio in the forgotten shot of gin,
Enrique in the ant, the sea, the empty eyes of the birds.

Lorenzo,
Emilio,
Enrique.
In my hands, the three of them were
three Chinese mountains,
three shadows of horses,
three snowy landscapes and a shelter of lilies
by the dovecotes where the moon lies flat beneath the rooster.

One
and one
and one.

The three of them were mummified
 with winter flies,
 with the inkwells that dogs piss and thistledown despises,
 with the breeze that chills every mother's heart,
 by Jupiter's white wreckage, where the drunks lunch on death.

Three
 and two
 and one.
 I saw them lose themselves, weeping and singing,
 in a hen's egg,
 in the night that showed its tobacco skeleton,
 in my sorrow, full of faces and piercing lunar shrapnel,
 in my joy of serrated wheels and whips,
 in my breast that is troubled with doves,
 in my deserted death with a lone mistaken passerby.

I had killed the fifth moon,
 and the fans and applause were drinking water from the fountains.
 Warm milk inside the new mothers
 was stirring the roses with a long white sorrow.
 Enrique,
 Emilio,
 Lorenzo.
 Diana is hard, but sometimes her breasts are banked with clouds.
 The white stone can throb in deer blood
 and the deer can dream through the eyes of a horse.

When the pure shapes sank
 under the chirping of daisies,
 I knew they had murdered me.
 They combed the cafés, graveyards, and churches for me,
 pried open casks and cabinets,
 destroyed three skeletons in order to rip out their gold teeth.
 But they couldn't find me anymore.
 They couldn't?
 No, they couldn't find me.
 But they discovered the sixth moon had fled against the torrent,
 and the sea—suddenly!—remembered
 the names of all its drowned.

From the beginning, the poem repeats and doubles back on itself, and the direction in the title, "...to be Sung in Rounds," suggests that Lorca intends for us to read

with this circularity in mind. Maurer has written extensively on musical forms in Lorca's work, and in his Introduction to *Poet in New York*, he asserts that by this point in Lorca's development, "musical ideas had become *formative*, rather than merely decorative, elements in his writing" (xxxii). Gibson tells us that while Lorca was in Granada finishing *Blood Wedding* in the summer of 1932, "he listened over and over to gramophone records of the great *cante jondo* singer Tomás Pavón and of a Bach cantata, probably *Wachtet auf, ruft uns die Stimme* (BWV140)," (334). The following year, Lorca was in Buenos Aires directing his adaptation of a Golden Age play, when a theater critic observed (and a cast member later confirmed) that he "imposed on the actors a rigid timing to which they were quite unaccustomed" (Gibson 380). I imagine Lorca cuing the actors as if conducting a symphony. "*Symphonic*" was also a term he used to describe *Poet in New York*—"like the noise and complexity' of the city itself" (qtd., xxxii).

In the first three stanzas, Emilio, Enrique, and Lorenzo, "the three of them," are "frozen," "burned," and "buried," and in the fifth stanza, they're "mummified." It's tempting to read with the expectation of story, and to see a progression in the misfortunes that befall them, but it's also worth keeping the elasticity of Lorca's "deaths" in mind. One can hear the counterpoint between this litany of flat, indicative statements and the interruptions, beginning in the fourth stanza, by a speaker who calls attention to his own role ("In my hands, the three of them were / three Chinese mountains [...]") The speaker, who never identifies himself by name, interrupts to tell his own, more complete version of their history together, and his "I/my" statements highlight the fact that the three friends are spoken about, but don't speak for themselves. By the sixth stanza, the speaker's narrative has taken over the poem.

Lorca paints the three friends' "worlds" in images that are—for him—uncharacteristically static and devoid of emotional charge. Many of these images—"dead and discarded newspapers," "the forgotten shot of gin," "the empty eyes of the birds"—point to lives of deadened sensation and confinement, the living deaths of the *putrefactos*. In the first three stanzas, Lorca damps the language to turn our attention to the rhythmic cycles of repetition and mutation—the three names repeated in varying order (though "Emilio" falls always in the middle), the phrase "the three of them were," and their various ends. Harris has suggested it alludes to a child's ring game (27), and in the original Spanish, it does have that lilting, sing-song—even taunting—rhythm. But Lorca isn't evoking childhood here.

Sahuquillo points out that "[f]or centuries wounds and sex have mixed together in the human psyche, as Marie Delcourt reminds us in *Hermaphrodite*: 'Greek and Latin vocabularies in all their stages, from tragedy to farce, assimilate the sex act as a wound'" (334). There's no question that Lorca knew his mythology. Mythological references appear even in early work, such as *Poem of the Deep Song* (*Poema del cante jondo*), and we have Ana María Dalí's confirmation that Lorca read Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. She remembered him exclaiming, *It's all there!* Sahuquillo believes it was "all there" in Lorca's poems, for those who knew how to read them. He makes a good case for a shared vocabulary of mythological references and images that tie Lorca's work to that of Salvador Dalí, Luis Cernuda, Juan Gil-Albert and Emilio Prados, all Lorca's friends and/or lovers. And he suggests that these commonalities among their work amount to a submerged discourse about homosexuality, in a rhetoric marked by the linguistic subterfuge of an oppressed group.

Flora, in whose breast Lorenzo is “buried” (19), was the goddess married to Zephyrus the West Wind, who competed with Apollo for the attentions of the young Spartan prince, Hyacinth. Apollo is the classic *kouros*—a beautiful, beardless youth—known for his prominent pederastic affairs (including Hyacinth, Acantha and Cyparissus) as well as his liaisons with women. He appears often in Lorca’s poetry, so I read this as an oblique reference to him, and to jealousy. According to the myth, Apollo and Hyacinth were throwing a discus when Zephyrus, jealous and angry, blew it off course and it struck Hyacinth, killing him. Apollo created the hyacinth flower out of his spilled blood. In “Your Childhood in Menton,” the poem that follows “Fable of Three Friends to Be Sung in Rounds,” Lorca invokes Apollo to describe an ideal love between men: “What I gave you, Apollonian man, was the standard of love” (9).

In the fourth stanza, Lorca’s repetition of the number “three”: “three Chinese mountains, / three shadows of horses, / three snowy landscapes...” make clear that these lines refer directly to the three friends: Enrique, Emilio, and Lorenzo. “[T]hree Chinese mountains,” calls up a specific image of the iconic mist-shrouded monoliths found in Chinese landscape painting. The most celebrated examples were painted from an idealized “angle of totality” and often appear more vertical, more phallic, than a “realistic” depiction. The artists also paid careful attention to water and cloud, considered the “arteries” and “complexion” of the living mountain (Sullivan 155). The goddess Diana’s appearance in the seventh stanza: “her breasts...banked with clouds” echoes this image, and both contribute to the shades of white that progressively paint these relationships in a pure, classical, and therefore positive, light.

The proximity of “Lorenzo [buried] in Flora’s breast” to “three Chinese mountains” suggests not just jealousy but betrayal, specifically with a woman—Lorenzo is linked intimately with Flora, perhaps married, and we know from the fourth stanza that the speaker has been sexually involved with all three friends. Martínez Nadal has suggested that when Lorca left Spain, Emilio Aladrén was already seeing Eleanor Dove, the English woman he married two years later (Gibson 231). From this point on, it seems clear that the poem addresses this decision to marry, which is seen as a failure and essentially dishonest.

In both Lorca’s poetry and in his theatrical work, the horse represents “a vital force, a libidinal instinct, an uncontrollable urge, and the traditional phallic symbol” (qtd. in Sahuquillo 238, *my translation*), and Sahuquillo points out that horseback riding functions, in *Blood Wedding* and in other works, as “an instinctive and demonic [in the sense of the *duende*] alter ego of different poetic I’s,” (238). But the three friends haven’t entirely given over to these instincts—they aren’t horses or riders; they’re merely “shadows” and “snowy landscapes.” The prior litany of their “deaths” makes clear they’ll abandon both their instincts and the speaker. He describes their relationships with him as a refuge, but the images are strangely passive: “a shelter of lilies / by the dovecotes where the moon lies flat beneath the rooster” (29).

Lorca’s doves derive from (and invert) the Christian symbol of the Holy Spirit, and they appear throughout the New York poems, often mute or abused, as in “Cry to Rome (from the Tower of the Chrysler Building)”: “[...]where a man pisses on a dazzling dove / and spits pulverized coal / surrounded by thousands of hand bells” (12-14).

In “Fable of Three Friends to be Sung in Rounds,” the doves—embodying the spirit of homosexual love—are caged, both in dovecotes (29) and in the speaker’s breast, “troubled with doves” (46).

And what about the moon, “that lies flat beneath the rooster”? Lorca often alludes to the god Mercury, whose symbol—the rooster—stands for vigilance. Sahuquillo quotes J.E. Cirlot’s *Dictionary of Symbols* in pointing out that there are many “points of contact” between the metal mercury, which is “white and decidedly lunar,” and the god, who “possesses a double nature (chthonic and celestial god, hermaphrodite). Mercury (the metal) symbolizes the unconscious, with its fluid and dynamic character, essentially *duplex*...” (qtd. in Sahuquillo 154, *my translation*).

The moon, as a symbol or image, shares this duplicity. Sahuquillo reminds us that the moon is also called Diana, the hunter, and in Lorca’s poems is both “attractive and dangerous” (265). She’s also androgynous. According to Roman mythology, Diana is Apollo’s twin. If Apollo represents, for Lorca, the highest state of natural love between men, then it stands to reason that Diana—the virgin goddess, protector of chastity—represents the struggle to deny this urge.

In the fifth stanza, images of sterility bring out Lorca’s own conflicted feelings about following his instincts. He was an adherent of the belief, popular at the time, that because homosexuals could not procreate they were instead the creators of culture, but it didn’t diminish his regret over not having a child (Eisenberg “Lorca and Censorship”). The *vilano* that Maurer translates as “thistledown” is a burr or *pappus* (an ancient Greek word meaning bristle)—a seed that won’t attach or take root—and the “breeze that chills every mother’s heart” (36) carries on this sense of sterility. By the sixth stanza, Lorca is

overtly identifying himself with the speaker. Harris notes that “it is possible to calculate that the *Romancero gitano* [*Gypsy Ballads*] was Lorca’s fifth volume of verse” (28), and he reads the line “I had killed the fifth moon” (48) as a bullfighting metaphor. Lorca/the speaker sets the success of his creation alongside his regret:

I had killed the fifth moon,
and the fans and applause were drinking water from the fountains.
Warm milk inside the new mothers
was stirring the roses with a long white sorrow (48-51)

Sahuquillo has noted Lorca’s frequent use of “roses” to refer to homosexuals, and the “white sorrow” supports this reading.

“Jupiter’s white wreckage” (37) suggests the ruins of Greek culture, and of accepted, institutionalized homosexual love. Jupiter (or Zeus, in Greek mythology) interested Lorca because of his pederastic relationship with Ganymede. According to one myth, he fell in love with the youth on sight, and sent an eagle to kidnap him. When Ganymede’s grieving father protested, Jupiter/Zeus repaid him with two immortal horses.

Harris mentions a story told by Jorge Guillen, about taking a walk with Lorca and Guillen’s young son, Claudio:

As they passed the site of some demolished buildings on the outskirts of Valladolid, the three-year-old Claudio had declared: ‘Ahí meriendan los borrachos’ [That’s where the drunks eat lunch].

This image appears twice in the New York poems, in this poem and in “Cow” (93)—both times the drunks appear amidst “wreckage,” lurching on death. It’s not surprising that Lorca would be enchanted by the random utterance of a child, but that doesn’t explain what it meant to him. Still, the more I read Lorca, the more “points of contact” I encounter. I return again and again to the lectures transcribed in *Deep Song and Other Prose*. The hen’s egg where the three friends “lose themselves, weeping and singing” (41) is reminiscent of the small, safe places described in the cradle songs from Lorca’s 1928 lecture, “On Lullabies.” He mentions one in which “the mother goes on an adventure with her child”:

A la nana, niño mío, a la nanita y haremos en el campo una chocita y en ella nos meteremos.	Lullaby, my child, in the country we will build a tiny hut and live inside.
--	--

The two of them depart. Danger is near. We must make ourselves smaller, tiny, and the walls of the little hut will touch our skin. Outside they are waiting to hurt us. We must live in a tiny place. If we can, we will live inside an orange, you and me! Even better, inside a grape!

(Deep Song 16)

This is what I imagine Lorca heard in little Claudio’s phrase—the whimsical inventions of a child taming his own fears. *We must make ourselves smaller, tiny...* I hear in Lorca’s words his longing for a safe place, his longing for a time when he could believe such a place existed for him...*and the walls of the little hut will touch our skin.* When to be held was to feel safe.

Arturo Barea has noted that in *Gypsy Ballads*, Lorca's depictions of being stopped on the road at night by *Guardia Civil* struck a chord with his readers. Those who lived in the pueblos were well-acquainted with this paramilitary force, their persecution of the gypsies and general abuses of power. In the sixth stanza, "...my deserted death with a lone mistaken passerby" describes the actual death Lorca most feared. He felt he had many enemies, and his fear stemmed, no doubt, from feeling unprotected, but I can't decide how to read that line—whether he's afraid of being mistaken for someone else, or afraid that his murderer would be protected—that his death would be ruled a "mistake" and forgotten. In a sense, both came to pass. When anti-Republican rebels in Granada arrested and executed Lorca at the start of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, he was internationally famous. He was also beginning to write more overtly, and critically, about the treatment of homosexuals, and they viewed him not as a political threat (which is what they claimed) but a moral one. Although his murder touched off an international outcry, none of the officials involved were ever reprimanded.

The seventh stanza conflates two myths that Lorca would have known from *Metamorphoses*, and makes clear how heavily he drew on that work for this poem. In the first myth, Diana punished Aecton for seeing her naked by turning him into a stag, and he was torn apart by his own hunting dogs. The transformation, in Ovid's version, is not complete. Aecton still has the mind of a man, and only his inability to speak prevents him from making himself known to his huntsmen and hounds, none of whom recognize him. Lorca is stating a classical attitude toward homosexuality when he writes "The white stone can throb in deer blood, / and the deer can dream through the eyes of a horse" (56-57). In this view, the homosexual impulse (white stone) is pure and universal—the

difference between the deer and the horse is that one resists this impulse and the other embraces it. (In “Lorca and Censorship,” Eisenberg notes that Lorca makes reference to this belief again in “Ode to Walt Whitman”: “Man is able, if he wishes, to guide his desire / through a vein of coral or a nude as blue as the sky” (88-89), though his later works suggest he decided, finally, that “sexual desire is mysterious and uncontrollable.”) Here, the deer’s transformation is unnatural and incomplete—he’s not fully a man because he denies his desire for other men, and he is silenced by his fear of giving himself away. Only the horse speaks.

Lorca also refers, in the seventh stanza, to the Greek’s sacrifice of Iphigenia to Diana at Aulis:

[...]as Iphigenia stood, among her weeping attendants, before the altar, to surrender her innocent blood, the goddess was vanquished, and veiled their eyes in mist, and, in the midst of the rites and confusion of the sacrifice, and the cries of the suppliants, they say she substituted a hind for the Mycenaean girl (Ovid, Book XII:1-38).

Here again are the clouds that bank Diana’s breasts, and permit the speaker to substitute the three friends for himself. If we calculate *Gypsy Romances* as Lorca’s fifth book of poems, then *Poet in New York* is the “sixth moon,” which has “fled” (67). Both the strong emergence of the speaker’s solo voice in the last two stanzas, and his tale of search and pursuit make clear his meaning: he has escaped.

In *Metamorphoses*, Ovid follows this myth with a discussion of “The House of Rumour,” in which we find many echoes and parallel images—three worlds, a mountain, repeating voices and the rhythm of the sea, all of which suggest that “Fable of Three Friends to be Sung in Rounds” is a poem about gossip:

There is a place at the centre of the World, between the zones of earth, sea, and sky, at the boundary of the three worlds. From here, whatever exists is seen, however far away, and every voice reaches listening ears.

Rumour lives there, choosing a house for herself on a high mountain summit, adding innumerable entrances, a thousand openings, and no doors to bar the threshold. It is open night and day: and is all of sounding bronze. All rustles with noise, echoes voices, and repeats what is heard. There is no peace within: no silence anywhere. Yet there is no clamour, only the subdued murmur of voices, like the waves of the sea, if you hear them far off, or like the sound of distant thunder when Jupiter makes the dark clouds rumble (Ovid, Book XII:39-63).

It’s hard to imagine a better characterization of gossip than: “[P]ure shapes sank / under the chirping of daisies” (58-59). Lorca precisely captures the devastating and shallow nature of the rumors that drove him from Madrid, repeating them only in his own terms, and repeating precisely what he would have us remember.

“[A]nd the sea—suddenly!—remembered / the names of all its drowned” (68-69).

Harris reads the last line as a reference to the Day of Judgment (“And the sea gave up the

dead in it [...] and all were judged by what they had done.” Revelation 20:13). The echo is there, but Lorca isn’t waiting around for heavenly retribution—he has another moral in mind for this fable. Years before he wrote *Poet in New York*, Lorca wrote to his friend Melchor Fernández Almagro: “Facing the sea I forget my sex.” (Sahuquillo 16) The sea, like the moon, exhibits androgyny—it’s a broad image that encompasses sexuality in all its forms. The last line of the poem takes us full circle, back to the beginning, to those initial, repeating stanzas. Now every voice reaches our listening ears, and the fable enacts its moral. We’re in the house of rumor, interpreting and imagining with the rest:

Crowds fill the hallways: a fickle populace comes and goes, and, mingling truth randomly with fiction, a thousand rumours wander, and confused words circulate. Of these, some fill idle ears with chatter, others carry tales, and the author adds something new to what is heard (Ovid, Book XII: 39-63).

The *duende* of Lorca’s poems is in their capacity to reward every reading with fresh impressions. We’ll always feel drawn to interpret, but much of the pleasure is in merely circling, savoring. Image and music are sensual, physical pleasures, reminiscent of childhood habits: fingering the satin edge of a blanket, or sucking a silver spoon for the mineral tang of its metal. It doesn’t “mean” so much as it simply is. And yet, when I feel the poem deeply, emotionally, whose emotion do I feel? It seems that most of what we glean from these poems is a state of mind. We enter the mind of the poet, writing,

and the poem becomes a reflection of a particular history, not of events but of “how life felt.”

How did Lorca expect us to read them? In his lecture, “On Lullabies,” he demonstrates the importance of ambiguity:

A la nana, nana, nana,	Lullaby, lullaby
A la nanita de aquel	of that man who led
Que llevó el caballo al agua	his horse to the water
Y lo dejó sin beber.	and left him without drink.

In his adaptation of this song for *Blood Wedding*, the horse doesn’t want to drink, but we’re still forced to ask *why?* And this is precisely the entrée Lorca wants—that *why?* is a “little initiation into poetic adventure, the child’s first steps through the world of intellectual representation” (*Deep Song* 14).

Something is always missing, either lost or erased from the text. Unexplained elements in the lullabies may be accidents of history, but they’re deliberate in Lorca’s poems. The experience Lorca is trying to initiate in the poem is absorbed and insular, a private communication. It forces us to ask why, and to look to our own reading for answers; that is, to look for answers in the world we’ve constructed from the images he gives us:

In this type of song the child recognizes the character and sketches his profile according to his own visual experience... He is forced to be spectator and creator at the same time. (*Deep Song* 15)

The process he describes is at work in both reading and writing, though it begins in pre-literacy. By necessity, a child plays, explores, constructs worlds and systems without much in the way of language or reference points outside her own consciousness. In doing so, she expands her world and her understanding of it, while at the same time creating alternative worlds:

[The child] discovers mysterious relations between things and objects that Minerva will never be able to decipher. With a button, a spool of thread, a feather, and the five fingers of his hand, the child builds a difficult world full of fresh resonances that sing and collide disturbingly, and happiness that need not be analyzed. The child understands much more than we think he does. He is in an inaccessible poetic world that neither rhetoric nor the pandering imagination nor fantasy can penetrate. (*Deep Song* 15)

On the surface, Lorca's images often looked surreal. But he was no surrealist. In the lecture, "Imagination, Inspiration, and Evasion," (first delivered in 1928, the year before he went to New York), he set himself apart from those poets of his generation whose "evasion by means of dream or the subconscious is, although very pure, not very clear" (Lorca, *Sebastian's Arrows* 160). He was after something far more directed than one could achieve through automatism; he wasn't interested in what his dreams would tell him, but in creating the dream, again and again. For Lorca, the "happiness that need not be analyzed" stems from this creative act, not from the poetic world itself, which is far more complex than our efforts to characterize it.

In “Imagination, Inspiration, and Evasion,” Lorca set out his definitions of *imaginative* poetry—in which metaphor is bounded by human logic and reason—and his aesthetic ideal, *inspired* poetry. Inspired poetry, according to Lorca, is based not on traditional metaphor but on the *hecho poético* (poetic fact). An *hecho poético* is more than a surprising, unreal, or surreal image; it’s one that “seems as inexplicable as a miracle, for it is devoid of any analogical meaning.” The inspired poem is subject only to poetic logic. In Lorca’s words, it “evades reality” (*New York* xix).

What inspired Lorca was a reality he had never encountered, where he could speak openly and risk nothing. And so he created it. He clothed himself in *huecos*—the voids or hollows, emptied spaces that riddle his poems. In *Poet in New York*, Christopher Maurer calls them “one of the most frequent, most untranslatable images” (xxix). Lorca’s *huecos* speak to a culture and a history that is still being hidden, erased or destroyed—like the ancient Greek and Roman myths, rewritten in the nineteenth century to eliminate any reference to homosexuality, and still being “recovered” in Lorca’s time. But the significance of the *huecos* derives not just from what they represent—but from what they are. Openings.

III.

The *duende*'s arrival always means a radical change in forms.
 —Federico Garcia Lorca, "Play and Theory of the *Duende*"

In an article from *The Grey City Journal* dated February 16, 1979, Norman Maclean addresses a question he's often been asked on a recent "talking tour" for his book, *A River Runs Through It*: why he started to write stories after the age of 70.

...it was ultimately an attempt to put the pieces of myself together. We talk as if the problem of identity were a problem of youth, but the question of who we are is always with us and if anything gets worse. The world seems always to be breaking us into pieces, and we keep always yearning, if I may use a theological phrase, for some sort of unity of the soul (7).

"An attempt to put the pieces of myself together," is the clearest description I've found of the project of memoir, though as Lorca's work continually reminds me, it's by no means limited to memoir. As writers, we're always coming to terms with ourselves in one way or another. The point isn't to resolve all our contradictions and inconsistencies and unanswerable questions. Our struggle with the *duende* is our struggle to speak in the presence of that which compels us to silence: Fear, shame, the risks of exposing oneself or another. Form arises organically from these oppositional forces at work.

"A River Runs Through It" is an early example of the form where the *duende* is most active today: contemporary nonfiction. These works may be categorized as

“memoir,” “personal essay,” “lyric essay,” “creative nonfiction” or simply “nonfiction,” but what they have in common are extreme innovations of form that retain the marks of struggle. These forms are by necessity fluid and unique responses to issues beyond the artist’s control. The writing arises out of that which impedes it, so the form “solves” the inability to write, but the conflict remains at the heart of the piece. Often, the form makes it possible to withhold information and create areas of privacy within the narrative which the form both illuminates and “protects.”

“The bullfighter who scares the audience with his bravery is not bullfighting, but has ridiculously lowered himself to doing what anyone can do— gambling with his life. But the torero who is bitten by *duende* gives a lesson in pythagorean music and makes us forget he is always tossing his heart over the bull’s horns (*Deep Song* 51).

Let us agree that the tell-all memoir gambles with a life. Works with *duende* engage in precise forms of play to preserve the mystery that defines us. In *Halls of Fame*, John D’Agata’s essays function as elaborate puzzles. Each is a meditation on what we save, collect, and build museums around—monuments to our arbitrary and often wrong-headed decisions about what matters. In the essays, elements of form are left to the reader to untangle, and in the process the reader uncovers patterns and points of contact that point to deeper truths.

In “Round Trip,” D’Agata’s account of a bus tour to the Hoover Dam, he uses circular imagery to emphasize how a futuristic vision of progress slips free of its

historical context: the mandatory round trip, the tour guide's sentences doubling back on themselves, "shielding our tour from any time—from all time—in which this vacuous progression cannot fit, because its round body is nowhere near the right shape for the boxy border of dates" (8). He suggests that the dam, a contemporary of the comic book superheroes who came into being between the World Wars, offers the same, comforting "tales of an ideal Tomorrow" (9). In the photos of the curvy machine age equipment, he sees an: "architecture of resistance: round, sleek, something the old clunky world slipped off" (9).

The repetition of the number seven turns the conceit of the "Seven Wonders of the World" on its head. D'Agata works through a variety of "Seventh Wonder" lists—those of the ancient Greeks, the Church, the American Society of Civil Engineers, fellow tourists and members of his family—which highlights how they reveal more about their makers than their purported subject, and begins to engage us by raising questions the essay won't answer. (D'Agata's mother, for example, includes "Cannabis" on her list [15].) He fails to convince the man at the American Society of Civil Engineers' that he wants a copy of the 1944 list, instead of the latest and most "modern" version, though excerpts from that 1944 list are sprinkled throughout the essay, and form their own little disquisition on the misappropriation of "wonder."

Isaac, D'Agata's 12-year-old seatmate on the bus, expresses actual wonder in recounting his favorite computer game, which finds its echo in D'Agata's recollections of his old classics tutor, who lacked "education" but nevertheless had "curiosity" and "a knack, which was his lure, for both the mundane and fantastic" (21). This is a pointed recollection:

One year, an old man on our street told my mother that he had once been a college professor, a master of Latin and Greek. Within days I was studying classics with him. I had just turned eight (20).

His mother's misguided ambitions too closely parallel those of Isaac's overbearing mother, whose insistence that "he grow up cultured" (3) seemed merely ironic at first; its echo, now, is chilling. D'Agata's sympathy toward Isaac takes on a new dimension, and the depiction of D'Agata's brother, who "says that living by the ['Best of'] list is like living in a perfect world" (18), is more fraught, suggesting damaging family pressures that haven't quite come into focus yet.

The seventh, and last, section of the essay refuses to end definitively, instead spinning out into more lists of sevens ("continents, days per week, Deadly Sins [...]") (22). We never reach the dam, but we know we're headed to the place where the mundane and fantastic intersect, where D'Agata attempts to save what's difficult, painful, and too complex to classify and slot away. His elaborately structured essays are dotted with spare, oblique references to his parents' divorce, his experiences being raised by a single, perhaps unstable, mother, and his own relationships with men whom he doesn't name or describe in any detail. Fragments of personal history gradually accumulate, illuminating each other and the essays they inform. In "Hall of Fame of You / Athens, Greece," D'Agata discusses the 1983 discrediting of a Greek *kouros* statue at the Getty Museum side-by-side with an account of traveling in Greece and being coerced by an older man. He attempts then and now—in the "now" of the essay—to break down

metaphor (“love”) into its particulars, “things I need to know”: “Are you planning to stroll around the deck with me? / Are we planning to share this bed?” His feelings about the affair seem decidedly mixed, and it ends inconclusively: “I thought all I had to do was write. I thought something was supposed to happen” (84).

When D’Agata is speaking directly to a lover or partner, the “you” is intimate and he makes no effort to include the reader. The personal history that erupts periodically in these essays leaves us with an incomplete narrative but a strong impression of the emotion massed behind them. The work’s formal puzzles offer some relief from facing that material head-on—as much, it seems, for the author as for the reader—and this point of contact affords the communication, the empathy, that Lorca was after in his own work. Our transformation from spectator to participant lets us experience the complex emotion of the piece in that ambiguous space the *duende* demands.

In *Brown: The Last Discovery of America*, Richard Rodriguez doesn’t permit himself to use the word “construct” until the last chapter of the book, but he undertakes to create a history of himself from the “isolation” of race. A self-described “queer Indian Catholic,” he’s very clear on his motive for exploring brown. “I write about race in America,” he says, “in hopes of undermining notions of race in America” (xi). In exploring the historical meanings of brown—beginning with “impurity”—Rodriguez examines the power of language to set boundaries, and to make real categories and hierarchies that have no precedent. He reinterprets the civil rights movement and affirmative action as personal history—or rather he makes that history personal, using the lense of his own experience to examine how class issues and economic disparity were redefined in terms of race, and how new generations came to accept arbitrary

classifications such as “Hispanic” and “Latino,” embracing identities that were imposed on them by legislation.

In recounting his own history, Rodriguez uses linguistic play to unmake the categories and assumptions that he’s struggled with all his life. He looks hard at former selves and his former guises: the scholarship boy who made A’s at school, the young man who wore his ill-fitting black suit like a badge of ambition, the “minority” college student. He examines his current life: He doesn’t dissemble either about his origins or his current success—the expensive suits and hotels, speaker’s fees and the San Francisco Victorian that constitute his version of “making it”—but he wrestles them away from seemingly “objective” terms that never fit. Like Lorca, he’s given up trying to learn how to blend in, and has instead learned how to make himself more precisely visible. Rodriguez inverts the meanings of “brown,” and expands the word until it encompasses all *his* worlds.

The power of his strategies is in their play. He calls attention to derogatory characterizations by rewriting them in respectful terms (“...Tonto had no vocabulary but gravitas,” p. 5). Quoting Tonto would call up the usual caricature; but he says *gravitas*, *emotional reserve*, and pushes the reader to refocus on a more complex character.

When he addresses the reader directly, the “you” shifts—sometimes including, sometimes excluding the reader—so we’re forced to think about that each time it comes up. In the first chapter alone, “you” addresses the reader, Rodriguez’s vision of an old black woman, and the host of a radio program where he is a guest. Even when he addresses the reader, he makes surprising assumptions: “You are probably too young to remember” (21) or “I assume you know more about butterflies than I do” (189). The

reader is constantly forced to question whether she's included or excluded, and who she's perceived to be. She's forced to share that particular sense of dislocation that Rodriguez feels in a culture where he is simultaneously at home and an outsider.

Rodriguez is looking for a third option, just as Lorca was—some opening in the language that might admit all the pieces of his mixed, brown self. “Might not the vanishing point allow for another, an inverted version, an opposite vertical angle? If lines of perspective cross at that point, might they not continue after that point to open up again?” (184). Like Lorca, he looks to Whitman:

“Whitman's advantage was that—prohibited from admitting the specific—he learned to speak of the many. Or. In order to disguise his love of the singular Other, he had to compose an anthem to an entire nation. Of every hue and cast am I, he sang, while the heterosexual nation tore itself asunder as blue or gray” (223).

As in D'Agata's work, Rodriguez' control of information is his authority—we recognize these choices as deliberate, so we're forced to respect them, to respect that privacy. In the final chapter, he expresses pain and anger that he can't protect his relationship with his partner, or gain its acceptance either within his church or the society in which we live. He does protect it, in a sense, by refusing us the details. And by naming his partner in the dedication, which is at once as public and as private as a marriage ceremony, and which deliberately echoes a line from the narrative so there is no mistaking who Jimmy is.

Norman Maclean's *A River Runs Through It* chronicles a quest which is personal and artistic, and spiritual. In invoking the theological, he suggests that while "yearning" is unavoidable, "unity of the soul" is unattainable, at least in this lifetime. We yearn for it because we must, and like the unanswerable questions he poses, it spurs us on. In *A River Runs Through It*, Maclean's questions serve two purposes. Within the story—within the moment of the story—they're real questions Norman asks himself as he searches for a way to help solve his brother's very real problems. Within the whole of the narrative, they're questions of conscience, objects of meditation that bring some wisdom—even some comfort—but rarely answers. Maclean says his father, a Presbyterian minister and a lover of poetry, taught him to write: "saying what you have to say and then getting out of your own way" ("Professor and author Norman Maclean on writing" 7) and his clarity throughout is a testament to that aesthetic. It's a very different mode than Lorca wrote in, but there are similarities. Both write from their reading lives as part of their lived experience, and the depth of meaning in their prose owes a great deal to that synthesis.

Maclean's language is deceptively simple, and belies a lifetime of reading and teaching poetry. He blends the earthy prose and ironic humor of the Western story-telling tradition with the lyrical, and so manages to speak on several levels at once. His use of Western terms (like 3-7-77 for rotgut whisky) and diction ("Have a snort"), his lovingly detailed geographical descriptions of western Montana early in the 20th century, and his lovingly precise technical descriptions of the finer points of fly fishing, all serve to ground the story in a specific time and place. The more lyrical elements allow this

story to transcend what would otherwise be the limitations of its form, and to speak metaphorically—even metaphysically—at the same time:

Poets talk about ‘spots of time,’ but it is really fishermen who experience eternity compressed into a moment. No one can tell what a spot of time is until suddenly the whole world is a fish and the fish is gone. I shall remember that son of a bitch forever (44).

It’s all there: the big, philosophical concerns (“eternity”) and the immediate, concrete problems (“the fish is gone”), high diction (“I shall”) and low (“son of a bitch”). It’s exhilarating to watch him balance all these elements so effortlessly, and the unexpected juxtapositions charge his prose with humor. As readers, we’re happy to drift along in the company of this narrator and this voice, even through lengthy digressions and hard questions. The pace is also important here: Maclean’s desire to linger and the detail that he lavishes on every description make the reader want to linger as well. He constantly reminds us—even as he’s introducing us to this wild beautiful place, and the people we soon begin to know and love well—that the landscape is changed beyond recognition, and his family are long dead. This, too, is a balancing act. Humor undercuts nostalgia just enough that the story doesn’t become maudlin, but what’s left infuses even the most humorous passages with a gravity and emotional weight they wouldn’t otherwise have.

Two key conversations anchor the middle portion of the story, and lay the groundwork for his father's powerful concluding words, and his own. Here, Paul tells Norman that they should try to help his brother-in-law, Neal:

“How?” I asked.

“By taking him fishing with us.”

“I've just told you,” I said, “he doesn't like to fish.”

“Maybe so, my brother replied, “but maybe what he likes is somebody trying to help him.”

I still do not understand my brother. He himself always turned aside any offer of help, but in some complicated way he was surely talking about himself when he was talking about Neal needing help[...]. We both looked clumsy—I in trying to offer him help, and he in trying to thank me for it.

(47)

Later, his father questions him about what they can do to help Paul:

“Do you think you help him?” he asked me.

“I try to,” I said. “My trouble is I don't know him. In fact, one of my troubles is that I don't even know whether he needs help. I don't know.

That's my trouble.” (81-82)

His strong desire to answer the questions he raises led Maclean to fictionalize this memoir. Toward the end of *A River Runs Through It*, Maclean tells us—in a conversation between Norman and his father—why this is a novella, but also that it is a memoir, as well:

“You like to tell true stories, don’t you?” he asked, and I answered, “Yes, I like to tell stories that are true.”

Then he asked, “After you have finished your true stories sometime, why don’t you make up a story and the people to go with it?”

Only then will you understand what happened and why. It is those we live with and love and should know who elude us.”

This gap between “true stories” and “stories that are true” is a space just wide enough for the *duende* to slip in. Maclean is using fiction to create a dream of his life, that it might show him a clearer reflection of himself, if not some explanation. But memory, it seems to me, is already that kind of dream. And the language of memory, like the language of dreams, is lyric. It belongs to a realm that is associative in its logic, where meaning turns on image and sensation undigested by the rational mind. It goes deep into that private self, to a part of the psyche that is not fully knowable but at least as fundamental as what we call “reality,” and at least as true as what we call “fact.” In this

realm we have to read as intuitively as we write, for only the “poetic facts” of our lives will tell us who we are.

Even in fiction—where Maclean can channel all the voices in his head through other characters, let them speak for him, and make them in a way more knowable—there’s a point beyond which he can’t go if the story is to “put the pieces of [him]self together.” His questions *are* his story. The questions that drive each of us are uniquely our own, and to explain them away is merely to efface who we are. Instead, we look to the language, as he does. We translate our longing to lyric and create a sense of wholeness through image and form. We find, in the “strange, invented qualities” of each other’s work the comforting sense that although each of us has our solitary struggle, we do not struggle alone.

Albert Goldbarth writes from a reading life and an imaginative life that ranges far beyond his own lived experience, so what often feels like memoir is also infused with a sense of *Zeitgeist*. Not just History—dates and events—nor the purely personal, interior life, but a fusion, a kind of core sample of atmosphere: how it felt to be alive in a particular time and place. He absorbs all the voices he encounters in other people, pop culture, and his copious research on history, science, art, other civilizations—then filters everything through his own imagination and enormous empathy. He writes his own story into every story, and the result is as ephemeral, as fictional, and as true as the collective memory of an age. In this way, he is—as we all are—himself and worlds, himself and “A Kosmos” (to quote him quoting Whitman), himself and infinity. In “Farder to Reache,” Goldbarth suggests that “Perhaps infinity isn’t discovered along a timeline of gathering progress, but by a certain sensibility, no matter when it lives” (*Many Circles*,

124). That's *duende*. In exploring this sensibility, he feels an affinity with other minds through time, whom he knows through their writings, their ideas, the fact that they're also reaching, questioning, trying to understand "...the possibility of hidden patterns, patterns that, if unearthed and understood, would somehow explain us—our lives—to ourselves." Or to restore Sven Birkerts' actual words to that quotation, that "would somehow explain me—my life—to myself" (21). Birkerts is talking about memoir as an individual project, and Goldbarth undertakes the same project, with the same concerns, but not for himself alone. Infinity is, after all, a continuum and a kind of whole—the whole of time and space—where if you look hard enough, all people, things, and events eventually connect.

This may be one reason Goldbarth is so unconcerned about how to label his creations, and why the only "truth" that really matters to him is emotional, what resonates in the reading. "I don't care how much of a poem is autobiographically true; I care that the poem is so well written that it becomes true for the time I spend in its aura," he says (Interview, *Missouri Review*, p.64). In writing essays that incorporate historical "fact," this is more problematic than in poems, and questions of assumption, bias, invention, and misinterpretation invariably come up. Goldbarth blurs the borders of genre to discourage them, ending the collection—and its extensive research bibliography—with this Yiddish proverb: "Don't ask questions—it's a story" (*Many Circles* 310).

Here is a story: Last fall I spent a week in Madrid. I had Lorca on my mind, but I didn't go looking for the *Residencia* or any of his old haunts. Instead, I bought tickets for a flamenco-ballet performance I'd seen advertised. The great *bailaora* Eva Yerbabuena had choreographed the "memories and experiences" of four Spanish poets—Miguel

Hernandez, Vicente Aleixandre, Blas de Otero, and Federico García Lorca. She called it “For Four Voices.”

It was a personal, impressionistic take on their lives and work, and since I knew very little of the first three poets I was mostly preoccupied with the dancing, which was very good. By the time the fourth act arrived, I’d lost track of where we were in the program and when they danced “Murder,” from *Poet in New York*, I didn’t realize what it was. But Yerbabuena danced the last piece in a man’s suit, and acted out a shooting and death which referred—too literally, I thought—to the execution of Lorca. In the *Final Silence*, as it was termed in the program, the other dancers gathered around her fallen body face down in a pile of autumn leaves, and the darkened theater suddenly filled with the sound of children’s voices. Four children recited lines not in unison but in a kind of uneven chorus, their earnest voices overlapping, and gaps in between, electric silences in which the air crackled with the hum of the PA system and no one breathed.

I wish I could tell you what they said—if it was a poem or poems they spoke. I heard death in it; and if the words were Lorca’s then perhaps the poet was imagining his own death, as he so often did. But the children spoke without a trace of fear or melancholy, which made their youth all the more palpable. They spoke as though they had seen all the rest of their lives down to the smallest detail and now recounted it, like a dream, or a game. They spoke with that innocence Lorca yearned after, and tried always to recapture in his writing. In that moment, I felt I understood Lorca’s most private griefs, though I admit the music of those four childish voices so arrested me that I forgot to listen to the words.

WORKS CITED

- “Apollo.” *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. 17 Jan. 2007. Wikimedia Foundation. 17 Jan. 2007. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Apollo&oldid=101352968>>.
- Barea, Arturo. *Lorca: The Poet and His People*. Trans. Ilsa Barea. New York: Grove Press Inc., 1949.
- Birkerts, Sven. “Then, Again,” *Poets & Writers* May/June 2005: 21-26.
- D’Agata, John. *Halls of Fame*. Saint Paul: Graywolf Press, 2001.
- “Diana.” *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. 15 Jan. 2007. Wikimedia Foundation. 17 Jan. 2007. <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Diana_%28mythology%29&oldid=100765146>.
- Eisenberg, Daniel. “Lorca and Censorship: The Gay Artist Made Heterosexual.” 13 Dec. 2002. Daniel Eisenberg. 16 Oct. 2006. <http://users.ipfw.edu/jehle/DEISENBE/Lorca/Lorca_and_Censorship__The_Gay_Artist_Made_Heterosexual.htm>.
- Gibson, Ian. *Federico García Lorca: A Life*. Boston: Faber and Faber, 1989.
- Goldbarth, Albert. *Many Circles: New and Selected Essays*. Saint Paul: Graywolf Press, 2001.
- Harris, Derek. *Federico García Lorca: Poeta en Nueva York*. Critical Guides to Spanish Texts 24. London: Grant & Cutler Ltd., 1978.
- Hirsch, Edward. *the demon and the angel: Searching for the Source of Artistic Inspiration*. San Diego: Harcourt, Inc., 2002.
- Holy Bible*. Cleveland: William Collins & World Publishing Co., Inc., 1952.

- García Lorca, Federico. *Deep Song and Other Prose*. Ed. and Trans. Christopher Maurer. New York: Marion Boyers, 1980.
- . *Poet in New York*. Ed. Christopher Maurer. Trans. Greg Simon and Steven F. White. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998.
- Hughes, Ted. *Tales from Ovid*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997.
- Maclean, Norman. "Professor and author Norman Maclean on writing: 'It should be beautiful and graceful, and you'd better be proud of it.'" *The Grey City Journal: The arts and criticism supplement to The Chicago Maroon* 16 Feb. 1979: 7-9.
- . *A River Runs Through It and Other Stories*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976.
- Sebastian's Arrows: Letters and Mementos of Salvador Dalí and Federico García Lorca*. Ed. and Trans. Christopher Maurer. Chicago: Swan Isle Press, 2004.
- Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Trans. Anthony S. Kline. The University of Virginia Electronic Text Center: 15 Jan. 2007. <<http://etext.virginia.edu/latin/ovid/trans/Metamorph12.htm>>.
- Ovid. *Metamorphoses: The Arthur Golding Translation 1567*. Trans. Arthur Golding. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965.
- Rodriguez, Richard. *Brown: The Last Discovery of America*. New York: Penguin Books, 2002.
- Smith, Tracy K. "Survival in Two Worlds at Once: Federico García Lorca and *Duende*." 2007. The Academy of American Poets. 04 Jan. 2007. <<http://www.poets.org/printmedia.php/prmMediaID/5898>>

Sahuquillo, Angel. “Federico García Lorca y la Cultura de la Homosexualidad: Lorca, Dalí, Cernuda, Gil-Albert, Prados y la voz silenciada del amor homosexual.” Diss. Stockholm University, 1986.

Sullivan, Michael. *The Arts of China*. Berkeley: University of California Press: 1984.

“Zephyrus.” *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. 14 Jan. 2007. Wikimedia Foundation. 17 Jan. 2007. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Anemoi&oldid=100723486>>.

"Mysterious Mysteries" is the 1st segment in the 15th episode of the first season of Invader Zim. It first premiered on March 22, 2002, on Nickelodeon. SPOILER WARNING OF DOOM: This section or article may contain spoilers! When Mysterious Mysteries of Strange Mystery is having trouble in ratings due to a lack of stories, the Anchor of the show decides to take drastic measures, finally requesting one of Dib's files to be on the show. The file in question happens to be a video which Dib took of Zim and... Coin / Money magic. The Visible Chinese Coin Mystery System. This product was successfully added to cart! View Shopping Cart. Return to Shopping Proceed to Checkout. The Visible Chinese Coin Mystery System. SKU: abk69745081 - In Stock. USD\$1.85. A Visible Mystery. By roXan101. Watch. 14 Favourites. 3 Comments. 191 Views. nyeeee it was kinda requested and got bored so i did this ~ PYRO MANIA HHHH with shmores ;w