



Lorca, Neruda, Jimenez

Lyrical Spanish poetry, hovering duende

Federico Garcia Lorca – the somber, impassioned, elusive, captivating, lyrical poet and playwright – personified the spirit of duende. We pursue that elusive quality, dear to the heart of Spanish artists, in the current Witches Almanac, 2010-2011. As for the poet haunted by a sense of doom, he did become victim of violent death. At age thirty-eight Federico Garcia Lorca was shot by the Fascists in the early stages of the Spanish Civil War. Better than defining duende – to read any Lorca work or that of his two great contemporaries in the Spanish language, Pablo Neruda and Juan Ramón Jiménez.

The Gypsy and the Wind

Playing her parchment moon
Precosia comes
along a watery path of laurels and crystal lights.
The starless silence, fleeing
from her rhythmic tambourine,
falls where the sea whips and sings,
his night filled with silvery swarms.
High atop the mountain peaks
the sentinels are weeping;
they guard the tall white towers
of the English consulate.
And gypsies of the water
for their pleasure erect
little castles of conch shells
and arbors of greening pine.

Playing her parchment moon
Precosia comes.
The wind sees her and rises,
the wind that never slumbers.
Naked Saint Christopher swells,
watching the girl as he plays
with tongues of celestial bells
on an invisible bagpipe.

Gypsy, let me lift your skirt
and have a look at you.
Open in my ancient fingers
the blue rose of your womb.

Precosia throws the tambourine
and runs away in terror.
But the virile wind pursues her
with his breathing and burning sword.

The sea darkens and roars,
while the olive trees turn pale.
The flutes of darkness sound,
and a muted gong of the snow.

Precosia, run, Precosia!
Or the green wind will catch you!
Precosia, run, Precosia!
And look how fast he comes!
A satyr of low-born stars
with their long and glistening tongues.

Precosia, filled with fear,
now makes her way to that house
beyond the tall green pines
where the English consul lives.

Alarmed by the anguished cries,
three riflemen come running,
their black capes tightly drawn,
and berets down over their brow.

The Englishman gives the gypsy
a glass of tepid milk
and a shot of Holland gin
which Precosia does not drink.

And while she tells them, weeping,
of her strange adventure,
the wind furiously gnashes
against the slate roof tiles.

– Federico Garcia Lorca

Sonnet of the Sweet Complaint

Never let me lose the marvel
of your statue-like eyes, or the accent
the solitary rose of your breath
places on my cheek at night.

I am afraid of being, on this shore,
a branchless trunk, and what I most regret
is having no flower, pulp, or clay
for the worm of my despair.

If you are my hidden treasure,
if you are my cross, my dampened pain,
if I am a dog, and you alone my master,

never let me lose what I have gained,
and adorn the branches of your river
with leaves of my estranged Autumn.

– *Federico Garcia Lorca*



Fare Well

If I die,
leave the balcony open.

The little boy is eating oranges.
(From my balcony I can see him.)

The reaper is harvesting the wheat.
(From my balcony I can hear him.)

If I die,
leave the balcony open!

– *Federico Garcia Lorca*



XVII (I do not love you...)

I do not love you as if you were salt-rose, or topaz,
or the arrow of carnations the fire shoots off.
I love you as certain dark things are to be loved,
in secret, between the shadow and the soul.

I love you as the plant that never blooms
but carries in itself the light of hidden flowers;
thanks to your love a certain solid fragrance,
risen from the earth, lives darkly in my body.

I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where.
I love you straightforwardly, without complexities or pride;
so I love you because I know no other way

than this: where I does not exist, nor you,
so close that your hand on my chest is my hand,
so close that your eyes close as I fall asleep.

– *Pablo Neruda*



Who knows what is going on

Who knows what is going on on the other side of each hour?

How many times the sunrise was
there, behind a mountain!

How many times the brilliant cloud piling up far off
was already a golden body full of thunder!

This rose was poison.

That sword gave life.

I was thinking of a flowery meadow
at the end of a road,
and found myself in the slough.

I was thinking of the greatness of what was human,
and found myself in the divine.

– *Juan Ramòn Jimènez*



I am not I

I am this one
walking beside me whom I do not see,
whom at times I manage to visit,
and whom at other times I forget;
the one who remains silent while I talk,
the one who forgives, sweet, when I hate,
the one who takes a walk when I am indoors,
the one who will remain standing when I die.

– *Juan Ramòn Jimènez*