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From *Dämonisch* to *Duende*

In 1930 in his essay "Teoría y juego del duende" García Lorca, whose work has become a byword for the daemonic, uses one of Goethe's definitions of dämonisch as a touchstone of his own theory of the highest artistic inspiration. Marie Lafranque, who has identified Lorca's source in one of Goethe's "Conversations with Eckermann" (March, 1931), evaluates this allusion, along with those to Nietzsche, as a revelation of "La lointaine origine romantique et germanique de sa conception."[1] Allen Josephs and Juan Caballero take exception to this view: "To us it does not appear to be a concept of either close or distant Romanticism but rather a clearly indigenous concept."[2] While they have made a major contribution to Lorcan scholarship by elucidating the Andalusian elements of Lorca's *duende*, they fail to take into account the quality's universal context through his allusions to Goethe's *dämonisch*. We submit that Lorca developed his unique thoery of *duende* through the close, not the distant, perusal of Goethe's *dämonisch*.

In the "Conversation with Eckermann" to which Lorca alludes Goethe describes *das Dämonische* as an overpowering force, external to his nature, but to which he nevertheless is subject: it defies rational analysis, manifests itself in a variety of ways in both the visible and the invisible realm, strenghtens man in his inborn drives, makes him self-confident to the point of rashness and manipulates his life arbitrarily, leading him on dangerous paths, now to success, now to disaster. Lorca combines this concept of *dämonisch* with the *duende* of Manuel Torres, exemplar of the folk-art of the Andalusian *cante jondo*, asserting that "estos sonidos negros son el misterio, las raíces que se clavan en el limo que todos concemos, que todos ignoramos, pero de donde nos llega lo que es sustancial en el arte. Sonidos negros dijo el hombre popular de España y coincidió con Goethe, que hace la definición del duende al hablar de Pagnini, diciendo: 'Poder misterioso que todos sienten y que ningún filósofo explica.' "[3] Lorca finds the source of the daemon in the blood . . . . the oldest culture, and finally the Earth Spirit itself.

The allusion to the Earth Spirit recalls Goethe's portrayal of the *Erdgeist* in *Faust I*. This paradoxical figure is the epitome of Goethe's daemonic interpretation of artistic genius,[4] which embraces contradictions like birth and death, production and destruction.

Destruction and death play an equally essential role in the theories of both Goethe and Lorca. The latter places the daemon on the borderline between life and death where miraculous works, "evasión real y poética

de este mundo" and the "comunicación con Dios por medio de los cinco sentidos"[5] are achieved. The *duende* makes man's evasion of his mortality possible, paradoxically, by heightening the awareness of it. Through an acute consciousness of death the artist goes beyond images, form and technique to render in the present instant the eternal cry of protest which affirms man's life, individuality and emotion before an impassive cosmos into which he must return. Thus Lorca describes a flamenco singer's daemonic performance before a gypsy audience "que no pedía formas, sino tuétano de formas" as a crucifixion. The singer had to abandon form and technique to enter, unaided, into open battle with her daemon: "¡Y cómo cantó! su voz ya no jugaba, su voz era un chorro de sangre digna por su dolor y su sinceridad, y se abría como una mano de diez dedos por los pies clavados, pero llenos de borrasca, de un Cristo de Juan de Juni."[6]

In the Storm and Stress years of his youth Goethe was too close to the daemon to reflect upon it with detachment. Nevertheless he had already experienced and portrayed the destructive aspect of the forces he called *däemonisch*. Unreasoning abandonment to the urgings of one's perception of individual destiny means self-destruction or the destruction of others. Goethe's own desertion of Friedrike Brion, in order to live out his own destiny, broke the young girl's heart, and Faust's daemonic love costs several lives. In *Götz* the daemonic Adelheid casts a spell over men and brings about their downfall.

Hartmann, who identifies the daemonic with the magic, productive power of nature, says "it is called the daemonic simply because adversity and death may accompany its energy drive. So Goethe's admiration for Napoleon and Byron includes their ruin as well as their achievements."[7]

The self-discipline and restraint which the court life at Weimar and his relationship with Charlotte von Stein imposed upon Goethe increased his awareness of the negative effects of the daemon. He overcame the Titanism of the Storm and Stress period. When his duties at court allowed him time to resume work on *Egmont,* he stressed the daemonic nature of the hero and in the finished work interpreted Egmont's somnambulic faith in his irrational urges as a cause of his death.

The most forceful depiction of the self-destruction of daemonic genius is *Tasso.* Unlike the hero of that play Goethe himself was able to master the problem of his own *Dämonie.* As Muschg expresses it, toward the end of his life Goethe "changed consciously from a daemonic poet to a poet of the daemonic."[8] Artistic expression enabled him to control his daemonic urge, to achive detachment and intellectual freedom. In *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (II, 7) he alludes to his tendency to transform all that delighted or pained or otherwise engaged him into a picture or a poem and thus to gain composure and objectivity.

Rupert Allen, in discussing Lorca's *duende,* attributes to it the same destructive elements which Goethe's *dämonisch* evokes. He emphasizes

the relationship of the vital force to death, saying it is "the incessant becoming that swallows up everything that makes it possible. It is both one's creator and his executioner. Man is the only living creature who can raise the Becoming into Consciousness, and by the same token he is the only living creature who can contemplate his ultimate end at the hands of the life force, and who can play with this force."[9]

Lorca did indeed, like Goethe, recognize the destructive side of the daemon in life. In his mature poetry and drama he presents the fatal consequences of daemonic compulsion as a condition of human existence. While Goethe embodies the *dämonisch* in geniuses like Tasso and heroes like Egmont, Lorca, deeply influenced by Freudian psychoanalytic theory, more directly relates the daemonic to the libidinal drive by concentrating on the conflict between sexual desire and societal restraint in ordinary mortals. The unleashing of sexual instinct leads to the ostracism of the bride and the death of Leonardo and the bridegroom in *Bodas de sangre* and to Adela's suicide in *La casa de Bernarda Alba*. The alternative is the sterile frustration which warps the lives of Doña Rosita, the youth in *Así que pasen cinco anos* and Bernarda Alba and her older daughters. Repression can lead to real death as well as to the symbolic death of lost vitality, as is evident in Yerma's murder of her husband Juan. Although the plays' tragic outcome depends to a degree upon the particularly strict proscriptions of Spanish society, Lorca develops the theme within a fatalistic, mythic framework.[10] Ultimately the plays are based on the conflict between man's infinite capacity for desire and his limited ability to achieve the desired objects.

Lorca, like Goethe, saw that the daemon could wreak havoc in his personal life. He nevertheless regarded it as the source of his vitality in art. As Goethe had done, he transformed his personal problems into great poetry and plays. As he explained to Sebastian Gasch, "mi estado es siempre alegre, y este soñar mío no tiene peligro en mí, que llevo defensas; es peligroso para el que se deje fascinar por los grandes espejos oscuros que la poesía y la locura ponen en el fondo de sus barrancos. Yo estoy y me siento con pies de plomo en arte. El abismo y el sueño los temo en la realidad de mi vida, en el amor, en el encuentro cotidiano con los demás. Eso sí que es terrible y fantástico."[11]

There is no external evidence of Lorca's direct knowledge of the *Urworte, Orphisch,* where Goethe interprets the daemon as man's potential, his individuality, his entelechy. However, Lorca does develop this concept as well as that of the close relationship between *dämonisch* and divine, which is postulated by Goethe. In his essay Lorca associates daemonic inspiration with the development of an individual style. His catalogue of writers dominated by the daemon includes the grave Jorge de Manrique, the stern Juan de Mena, the bitingly satirical Quevedo, the genial Cervantes and the passionate Carmelite mystics Santa Teresa de

Jesús and San Juan de la Cruz. In his descriptions of famous Spanish bullfighters Lorca makes explicit the alliance of daemon and style: "Lagartijo con su duende romano, Joselito con su duende judío, Belmonte con su duende barroco y Caganchoe con su duende gitano, enseñan, desde el crepúsculo del anillo, a poetas, pintores y músicos, cuatro grandes caminos de la tradición española."[12] Earlier he had pointed out that the daemon makes possible the discovery of "alguna cosa nueva que nada tenía que ver con lo anterior, que ponían sangre viva y ciencia sobre cuerpos vacíos de expresión."[13]

Lorca was as confident as Goethe that he himself possessed the gift of the daemon. In 1927 he rejoiced in a letter to Jorge Guillén: "A pesar de los envidiosos arietes que nos golpean, nosotros seguimos y seguiremos manteniendo nuestros puestos de capitanes de la nueva poesía de España. ¡Chócola! Tú y yo tenemos carácter, personalidad, algo inimitable que nos sale de dentro, un acento propio por la gracia de Dios."[14]

Eckermann reports (March, 1931) Goethe's alluding to the Greeks who called daemonic geniuses demi-gods. Muschg concludes that for Goethe the men who are *dämonisch* are gods, and he bases his conclusion on the passage in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* which says such men "can be overcome only by the universe itself when they do battle with it." Muschg speculates that this characteristic may be the source of "Nemo contra deum nisi deus ipse." The man who is *dämonisch* is a god who can be conquered only by a god.[15]

Lorca follows Goethe in attributing a quasi-divine nature to the daemon. Although he at first distinguishes the mystic's inspiration from the poet's, in the course of the essay the two merge, and he cites Santa Teresa and San Juan de la Cruz as examples of daemonic inspiration. It was not her angel, but her daemon, who pierced Santa Teresa's heart "queriendo matarla por haberle quitado su último secreto, el puente sutil que une los cinco sentidos con ese centro en carne viva, en nube viva, del Amor libertado del Tiempo."[16]

In his only play dealing with an heroic figure Lorca makes Mariana Pineda the recipient of an identical daemonic-mystical illumination. Choosing death over the betrayal of the Andalusian freedom fighters, Mariana discovers that she is not sacrificing her life for personal love of the unworthy rebel leader but for the liberty of her own soul:

> Ahora sé lo que dicen el ruiseñor y el árbol.
> El hombre es un cautivo y no puede librarse.
> ¡Libertad de lo alto! Libertad verdadera
> enciende para mí tus estrallas distantes.[17]

Love or desire, freed from a specific object and existing outside time, is the agent of that insight: "¡Amor, amor, amor, y eternas soledades!"[18]

Although Goethe would designate as *dämonisch* any great man who

follows the dark urgings of his being, he focuses attention particularly upon the arts. He is reported to have said to Eckermann (March, 1930) that poetry contains something *dämonisch*, something subconscious, beyond the grasp of reason. Among the arts music is especially conducive to *Dämonie* for its effect defies rational analysis.

Lorca uses Goethe's praise of Paganini's daemonic power as his point of departure in demonstrating the individual and communal aspects of the daemonic. He points out that it is not the excellence of the artist's materials, his themes and forms, but rather his ability to reawaken the metaphysical anguish from which the forms spring through his unique expression. Since the artist most fully realizes his function of cultural hierophant in the immediate presence of his public, Lorca identifies the performing arts —music, dance and oral poetry— as the most receptive to daemonic inspiration. He extends unique authority to gypsy artists in the province of the daemon in his use of the Andalusian term for the quality, namely *duende,* and in his assertion that the daemon is most evident in the bullfight and in flamenco dance and song. However, he sees the daemon in the acting of the Italian Elenore Duse as well as in the singing of Pastora Pavón, in Rimbaud's poetry as well as in Cagancho's capework.

In summary, evidence seems convincing that in framing his unique theory of the daemon, Lorca was inspired by Goethe. Our view is based principally upon Lorca's and Goethe's expressed commitment to transform personal problems into great poetry and drama, their insight into the threatening, destructive side of the daemon and its close relationship to death, the god-like force of *dämonisch/duende* and its vivid expression in art, particularly music.

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NOTES

[1] Marie Laffranque, *Les idées esthétiques de Federico García Lorca* (Paris: Centre de Recherches Hispaniques, 1967), p. 252, n. 192. Udo Rukser does not discuss Goethe's influence on García Lorca in *Goethe in der hispanischen Welt* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1958).

[2] Allen Josephs and Juan Caballero, *Poema del Cante Jondo/Romancero gitano*, 2nd ed. (Madrid: Ediciones Catedra, S.A., 1978), p.28. Josephs in "Lorca and Duende: Toward a Dionysian Concept of Art," *García Lorca Review*, 7, No. 2 (Fall, 1979) links Lorca to "Dante,

Goethe, Nietzsche, Blake, Yeats and Eliot," p. 64, but he does not analyze Goethe's specific influence on Lorca.

[3] *Obras completas de Federico García Lorca*, 4th ed., ed. Artu ı del Hoyo (Madried: Aguilar, 1980), p. 37.

[4] Mcf. Walter Muschg, *Goethes Glaube an das Damonische* (Stuttgart: Matzler, 1958), p. 12.

[5] OC 41.

[6] OC 40.

[7] Geoffrey H. Hartmann, *The Fate of Reading* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 195.

[8] Muschg, *Glaube*, p. 15.

[9] Rupert C. Allen *Psyche and Symbol in the Theater of Federico García Lorca* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974), p. 111.

[10] David Y. Loughran, "Imagery of Nature and Its Function in Lorca's Poetic Drama: 'Reyerta' and *Bodas de Sangre*," *The World of Nature in the Works of Federico Garcia Lorca*, ed. Joseph W. Zdenek (Rockhill, S.C.: Winthrop Studies on Major Modern Writers, 1980), p. 60.

[11] OC 1622.

[12] OC 46.

[13] OC 42.

[14] OC 1591.

[15] cf. Muschg, *Glaube*, pp. 15 f.

[16] OC 45.

[17] OC 800.

[18] OC 801.