

After *After Lorca*: Anamnesis and Magic between Jack Spicer and Federico García Lorca

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ABSTRACT

This essay will examine the work of Jack Spicer through the lens of Federico García Lorca's homages and his concept of the dark earth inspiration called *duende* to explore the bonds created through imagined lovers, mostly looking at works proposing relationship through affect, apostrophe, and homoerotics. Spicer communicated with García Lorca in his book *After Lorca*, which Spicer saw as a direct channeling of the poet and his magic-imbued poetics via translation. In Spicer's work, anamnesis and homage are attempts to unify the writer with the object of channeling—the "same-like" person with whom the author identifies. The act of imagining or channeling a similar writer into conversation provides a direct link to creativity for Spicer and others like him, who write in the vein of queer magic in order to create and perpetuate lineage and connection to the sexual world despite distances of time and space. Uncovering this perspective within the writings of García Lorca and Spicer allows a deeper and more empathetic rereading of both as queer poets and poets interested in writing-as-magic. This likewise encourages a deeper and fuller imitation of these writers by contemporary kin working into queer lineages.

Let's not be frivolous, let's
not pretend the two poets gave
each other wisdom or love or
even a good time, let's not
invent a dialogue of such eloquence

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that even the ants in your own
house won't forget it. The two
greatest poetic geniuses alive
meet, and what happens?

—Philip Levine, “On the Meeting of García Lorca and Hart Crane” (1994)

Let's not be frivolous,” writes Philip Levine as he describes the chance encounter of Federico García Lorca and Hart Crane in New York circa García Lorca's 1929 trip to the United States. The imagined romance of Crane and García Lorca has captivated many writers just as the closeted advances of a virile García Lorca have captivated most of his fans today. “And what happens?” What happens when imagined romance, instilled with fantastical notions of queerness or homosexuality, become legend, imbuing García Lorca in particular with a reified power for his loyal subjects? What happens when small chance encounters, the possibility of mind and body meetings, become heightened through poetry?

The frivolity of imagining the “good time” Levine avoids (yet in mentioning conjures up) perpetuates homoerotic fantasies about the two now-canonical writers, creating an imagined romance or sexual encounter that channels both into myth. Levine follows in a long tradition of calling into being a possible but little-documented relationship between the writers embedded in his poem. Levine's bringing these writers to mind through “the language of poetry” mirrors Jack Spicer's and Federico García Lorca's tactics of imagining their homoerotics through possible desired relationships and the technique of literary apostrophe. García Lorca, writing near the beginning of a queer renaissance, re-treaded the steps of many before him who wrote to imagined lovers in order to become part of the writerly “tribe,” a tribe beyond language, government, land, heritage, or blood that was based on the creation of family through connection. Channeling as imagined through apostrophe is one way in which poets like Walt Whitman, García Lorca, and devotees such as Spicer and Jerome Rothenberg became found family, tied to one another through imaginings and their own ideas of magical writing. Peter Gizzi writes, “as [Spicer's] last letter to Lorca suggests, the mingling of poets in the sheets of a book is the mingling of lovers” (Spicer 2008, xxiii).

This essay will examine techniques of anamnesis, the Platonic concept for the remembrance of a supposed previous existence, in the work of Jack Spicer and Federico García Lorca. Both poets conceptualized anamnetic techniques like

apostrophe and translation using ideas of magic, which for them was one way of establishing bonds between imagined lovers. Spicer communicated with García Lorca in his book *After Lorca*, which Spicer saw as a direct channeling of the poet and his poetics via translation. In Spicer's work, translation as one application of anamnesis attempts to unify Spicer with the writer he identifies as like him, García Lorca. Like translation, the act of imagining or channeling a similar writer into conversation using techniques of apostrophe provides a direct link to creativity for Spicer and others like him, who write with ideas of queer magic in order to create and perpetuate lineage and connection to the sexual world despite distances of time and space. Uncovering this perspective within the writings of García Lorca and Spicer allows a deeper and more empathetic rereading of both as queer poets and poets interested in writing-as-magic.

Throughout this essay, I will use two sets of terms, one for conceptualizations of anamnesis and one for its technical applications. Each of these sets of terms includes both borrowed words to describe the overarching goals of the poets and words specific to each poet, which they use themselves to describe their work. These terms will be the guiding categories for analysis and will be used as the framework of the essay itself.

The conceptual "anamnesis" will refer to the larger aim of the poets (to channel lineage holders); individual substyles of anamnesis specific to the poets include the Spanish imp and inspiration of *duende* as used by García Lorca, and magic as used by Spicer.

The technical applications of anamnesis will be referred to as "apostrophe," subelements of which include the ode and dedication. Each of these, though technically and formally different, addresses a lineage holder and can be grouped under apostrophe because of its calling another poet into the new poem.

Reading García Lorca as queer undoes years of the systematic erasure by conservative scholars of this part of his identity. Similarly, reading Spicer and García Lorca as queer persons working specifically with magic, poetic and real in this sense, justifies their intentions to write magic into their poetry through anamnesis rather than writing off the magical elements as coincidental, lesser, or superstitious barnacles on *otherwise* important poetry. This more honest way of reading encourages a deeper and fuller imitation of these writers by contemporary kin working into queer lineages.

Context: Queer Inspiration

Reviving the search for inspiration in the Romantic tradition served as a springboard for Spicer and others of the Berkeley Renaissance (the half-ironic, half-sincere name self-bestowed on the group), as well as for the surrealists and other

artists around Federico García Lorca (Spicer 2008, xiv). These artists showed renewed interest in conjuring and talking back to the poetic tradition as homosexuality and queerness in general became common language for poets.¹ Jerome Rothenberg (2014) writes that Romanticism became a “catalyst” for him and other writers in the 1970s and that the Romantic poets became “more like fellow poets with whom we could enter into a free and easy discourse” than distant pre-figured monoliths (1). Rothenberg (1993) also writes, “Lorca for me was the first poet to open my mind to . . . something possibly older and deeper that would surface for us later in America as well” (88). For Spicer, who named his birth year as 1946 when he met fellow gay poets Robin Blaser and Robert Duncan, the queer community of his day was as much part of his desired identity as was the poetic community of prior years (Spicer 2008, xiv). As Spicer’s biographer Peter Gizzi writes, “the correspondence between Keats’s negative capability, Rimbaud’s systematic derangement of the senses, Yeats’s vision, Rilke’s angelic orders, Lorca’s *duende*, Pound’s personae, Eliot’s sense of tradition, and Moore’s imaginary gardens can ‘build a whole new universe’” of poetic community (Spicer 2008, xxiii).

“There was in all of this a question of inventing and reinventing identity,” Rothenberg (2014) writes; the work of these poets was both original writing and entering into the “great assemblage” (both Rothenberg’s word and Spicer’s biographers’ word [Spicer 2008, xxii]), and being an “active anthologizer” as Ezra Pound put it (3–4). In response to the Romantic tradition, Jerome Rothenberg writes of Jeffrey Robinson’s recovery of the “fancy” from Samuel Taylor Coleridge alongside his own writing into García Lorca’s “*duende*,” juxtaposing the two as cognates of the same magical and creative force. This core inspiration, or the imagining of it through other writers’ concepts of inspiration, is channeled or translated to the present work and author.

Rothenberg (2014) describes translation from original source to new work as the “poetic act of witnessing, even of prophecy (itself an inheritance from Romanticism)—by the poet directly or with the poet as a conduit for others” (3). “Poet as conduit” for inherited wisdom and creativity from the original font is, in Rothenberg’s mind, inherited from the Romantic tradition as a freeing sense of inclusion in the broader narrative of poetry. Spicer too thought of translation as channeling and as a “haunting” by another voice (also in the vein of Ezra Pound) as part of the “chain of mediated discourses” that “define poetry as act and inspiration” (Katz 2007, 123).

1. For more on concepts of queer magic and writing, see Kenneth Anger and works inspired by Aleister Crowley.

García Lorca wrote directly into tradition as well, in particular Spain's formal poetic tradition.² A student of Spanish classics, García Lorca sought to bend formalism in discreet ways at first (through works like *Gypsy Ballads*, which used form as a launchpad) before proceeding to overtly experimental and homoerotic texts like "El público" ("The Public"). As Rothenberg (2014) writes, "in Lorca's case too the word in question went back to an earlier source," the imp or trickster *duende*, which became a liberatory chthonic power for the flamenco performer (2). *Duende* as an inspiring force related to the power of death rests on "ideas of possession" and, for Rothenberg and others in the San Francisco Renaissance, made García Lorca both a political and sexual martyr for the cause (Rothenberg 1993, 89). Spicer explained his poetics as "almost monkish practice of dictation," meaning that he did not consider his work to be solely or really his, but from outside sources (including García Lorca; Spicer 2008, xiii). According to Peter Gizzi, "This conceit [poetry by dictation] he borrowed from his poetic predecessor W. B. Yeats" (Spicer 2008, xvii). Serving as channels for older influences firmly situated Spicer and García Lorca in the poetic tradition, and as I will show, was their way into the queer tribe.

Concept: Anamnesis

Anamnesis Using Apostrophe

García Lorca and Spicer wrote to their imagined friends, lovers, and writers in order to reimagine their authorship as community-based and connected to the lineage of poets. As Jerome Rothenberg (1993) writes, "Lorca's glamor had similarly touched poets like Jack Spicer, Robert Duncan, Paul Blackburn, Amiri Baraka, Allen Ginsberg, Robert Creeley," and others (89). He continues, "Blackburn . . . defined our search as one for an 'American *duende*,'" which serves as the basis for investigation into magical writing (Rothenberg 1993, 89).

García Lorca and Spicer use literary apostrophe as a way of crafting anamnesis. Platonic anamnesis or "recollection" is gradual learning of the innate through remembering or recalling from before one was incarnate (Scott 1987, 346). Plato's is a theory of "forgotten knowledge" going hand in hand with the idea of the soul's existence before the body, as well as with his version of reincarnation (Scott 1987, 346, 348). This forgotten knowledge is not experiential or sensory but emerges from the soul without external input. This sort of knowledge "from before" parallels the channeling paradigms of writers like Spicer and

2. See García Lorca (1983, 162) for a letter on writing "like the old romantics."

García Lorca, who wrote through poetic ancestors often without having experienced their living presence.

I do not propose that the Platonic mechanism or idea of anamnesis is occurring within the work of these poets, but that their ideas of writing and poetic channeling parallel anamnesis and thus it is a useful concept with which to analyze their work. The idea of anamnesis is a more encompassing concept than channeling alone or another occult-seeming term (Spicer's "dictation" perhaps) because anamnesis challenges the epistemology of poetic composition in the way that these poets thought of it themselves. Anamnesis is also a useful metaphor for translation (the action by which one author's ideas come across through another author's words), which takes place in Spicer and arguably with García Lorca's usage of Whitman.

Stanley Lombardo (2000) speaks of anamnesis in translation similarly to Spicer, writing of anamnestic oneness as "the way of translation as art, a kind of anamnesis in which we remember our own voice as the poet's" (383). In another translation, Lombardo (2009) contends, "Insofar as it can be distinguished from meaning, style—and the spirit that informs it—is the deepest concern of the translator, whose great task, like Dante's and Virgil's before him, is *to hear his author's voice as his own*" (xxxviii, emphasis added). Anamnesis is a useful overarching term for these particular concepts of poetry and translation, both of which are present in the work of García Lorca and Spicer. The technical, applied aspects of anamnesis fall into the related category of poetic apostrophe.

Spicer's "Oh, Lorca" and García Lorca's odes to Salvador Dalí, Walt Whitman, and other artists spoke directly to someone who was not present or was dead. Addressing a nonexistent or displaced person with apostrophe turns these poets' works into emotive connection-driving forces in order to channel the other writer into the new work. Apostrophe as one way of hearing the "author's voice as one's own" conjures the spirit of the original author into the present and into the kindred author's writing; poetry spans time and space to bring authors together. The work of the writer in this vein is to proceed as if one were a spiritual conduit struggling in relationship with the original author and channeling their energy.

Anamnesis and techniques such as apostrophe and dedication are inherently linked. Historically speaking, the dedication of a text is repaid, traditionally with coin but in the anamnestic sense with companionship (Genette 1997, 119). The naming of a benefactor through dedication can serve a prefatory function in anamnesis, establishing connection with a desired patron, poet, or author

function.³ In his *Paratexts*, Genette (1997) writes that texts “addressed to a specific addressee” such as odes of “amorous lyricism” become modes “in which the text and its dedication are inescapably consubstantial” (117). Genette describes “private” dedication as inscription of a work by one author to another person with whom the author shares a personal relationship, friendship, kinship, “or other” bond (131). Private and public dedications are not mutually exclusive, Genette writes, and may include when the relationship is public (a well-known writer), private (an imagined romantic partner or friend), or other (a dead writer channeled or somehow called into the work). In the cases of García Lorca and Spicer, these types of dedicatees may be combined in one. Further, Genette notes, posthumous dedication “allows the author to produce an intellectual lineage without consulting the precursor whose patronage he is bestowing upon himself,” as in the anamnesis of García Lorca with Whitman and Spicer with García Lorca (132). Both writers authored themselves into the function of famed “queer” writer by dedicating their work to an author with whom they felt queer kinship but whom they did not know, especially when their contemporaries may or may not have included them in the community at that time. García Lorca experienced rejection with Dalí and other friends in the aftermath of his relationship with the painter, and according to Spicer’s biographer, “Spicer was never fully embraced within either the official culture or counter-culture of his period” (Spicer 2008, xiii). Through anamnestic apostrophe, Spicer and García Lorca avoided rejection and feelings of isolation by intentionally inserting themselves into their own tribe, associating with high-profile writers to cement their connection to a community.

Individual Concepts of Anamnesis: Duende and Magic

García Lorca and Spicer wrote into anamnesis as a poetic vehicle transferred through the ages using their own ideas of poetry as magical writing. The term “magic” does not refer to literal spell-casting (at least, not in the sense that objects fly up when a poem is read to them) but to the real effects created by the potential energy of a poem—emotion, urgency, affect, imagining—in the reader and the writer. Meter, rhyme, and the power of poetic utterance were linked for these writers to creativity and expression using anamnesis. Both Spicer and García Lorca imagined channeling as a lineage-creating activity through concepts of magic.

3. By writing into the “author-function” of Foucault, I hope not to limit this text to his reading of authorship but to think of the author as a type of action, and the person as the placeholder for that action. Spicer, in particular, viewed authorship of a text as a shared activity; García Lorca’s letters and collaborations evince the same author-functionality.

García Lorca writes extensively and passionately on his concept of the magical *duende* in “Theory and Play of *Duende*,” a lecture first delivered in 1933 (Gibson 1989). His personal magic was this force, a concept he adapted from Spain’s trickster/artist/imp named *el duende*, a diabolical or demonic type of creature that climbs into the artist’s throat through the feet and the bones. The original idea of *duende* is linked to the folk arts of Spain, including flamenco and bullfighting, as well as to *Gitano* or “gypsy” peoples. Here is García Lorca’s adapted version: “‘All that has dark sounds has *duende*.’ And there is no greater truth. These dark sounds are the mystery, the roots that bind in slime all that we know, all that we are ignorant of, but from which the substance of art comes to us. Dark, black sounds spoken by the common man of Spain, which coincide with Goethe—who borrowed the definition of ‘*duende*’ from the music of Paganini—saying, ‘the mysterious potential that all feel and no philosopher explains’” (García Lorca 2016, 4). García Lorca contrasts the force of *duende* (which here is twice paralleled with inspiration from other artists) with classical notions of inspiration. “Angel and muse come from without: the angel from light, and the muse from bodies. . . . In contrast, *duende* awakens in the last habitation of the blood” (García Lorca 2016, 8). *Duende* is a force of lineage, of belonging and blood that comes forth in traditional arts and poetry through manifestations of community and identity. In their ideas of magic, this identity-forming power descends to Spicer, Rothenberg, and Allen Ginsberg,⁴ all of whom worked during the San Francisco Renaissance to form community identity.

Jack Spicer’s concept of magic followed directly from his poetics and attempts at belonging in the queer tradition. In an unfinished circa 1958 “Plan for a Book on Tarot” that Spicer wrote with Robin Blaser and John Granger, the editor describes Spicer’s “lifetime work of translating the ‘invisible’ into the visible or the ‘unknown’ into the known” as laid out in 202 planned pages (Spicer et al. 1977, 28). The purpose of the book as Spicer stated it was to “explore the unexplored parascience” of fortune-telling and, as the editor of the volume in which the plan is published states, “to clarify the difficulty of all older Tarot explications that meaning is transcendent and absolutely other or God” (Spicer et al. 1977, 25, 28). To the contrary, Spicer claimed his concept of the tarot was based on his own years of practice and study with “carnival gypsies,”

4. Ginsberg could be the focus of an entirely different analysis on queer magic and anamnetic writing, as he directly calls to “write back to Whitman” and “put [his] queer shoulder” to the wheel in poetry against industry and capitalistic America; his “Wichita Vortex Sutra” is also considered to be a mantra against the Vietnam War. See Sanders (2000).

a link to García Lorca's *duende* with the gypsy flamenco that cannot be missed (26). Spicer used the tarot as an associative procedure, describing the magic of introspection as power the cards held when in conjunction with each other and with a reader. This, like meditation for Allen Ginsberg, was a poetically productive practice. Spicer writes against the purity of "something lost in the past, some greater knowledge, that it is up to us as we would reconstruct the text of Homer" and instead argues in favor of "the superiority of practice and observation to academic theory in magic" (26, 27).

Poetry and magic, for Spicer, were endeavors to be undertaken through practice and juxtaposition. In acknowledging the "legal, moral, and magical dangers of Tarot" practice, Spicer shows a belief in the real sway of the tarot, which he also says holds "no meaning" in one card by itself, but "only in relation to the cards around it and its position in the layout—exact analogy to words in a poem" (28, 27). Not only does Spicer write of the relationality of poetic utterances to one another rather than in a vacuum, he also calls magic and poetry into the same space as the tarot. "Poems should echo and reecho against each other," Spicer spoke as he introduced *After Lorca* (Katz 2007, 120). "Things fit together. We knew that—it is the principle of magic."

Applications: Apostrophe

Spicer's "Poetry as Magic": Anamnesis and Community

To further explore Spicer's concept of magic in poetry and to provide a first practical application, here is his 1956 "Poetry as Magic" workshop, which he organized in the Berkeley area just before writing the plan for the book on tarot (Spicer 2008, 99). The famous workshop, of which a qualifying questionnaire is extant, anticipates Spicer's *After Lorca* and shows his interest in the relational magic in poetic language. The questionnaire, five pages long, includes personal information as well as quiz-style sections on politics, religion, history, and poetry, ending with a "practice" section of fill-in-the-blank poems. "This questionnaire is in no sense designed to indicate whether you can write poetry," Spicer (2008) writes as preface, but is meant to tell him "which of you would most benefit" from the magic workshop (99). Spicer asks the respondent, "what is your favorite political song?" and to "write the funniest joke you know," but the majority of his questions are not poetry related (on the surface) (99–101). The historical questions are relatively difficult ("date the Battle of Waterloo") and seem entirely bereft of context and importance relative to a *normal* poetry workshop.

Spicer's potential respondents to this magic questionnaire are as much community members and imagined lovers as García Lorca. The questions are

meant to indicate which individuals would “benefit” from the proposed workshop, implying that Spicer hopes to form a relationship with each participant at least on the level of assuming them involved in the material. Questions such as “which poets would you first ask for contributions” to an imagined poetry magazine only add to Spicer’s knowledge of who that person is and what aesthetics they might value, not whether they want to learn about magic in poetry (Spicer 2008, 101). Participants ended up including friends like Helen Adam, Robert Duncan, Jack Gilbert, and George Stanley (Spicer 2008, xvii). The participation of Spicer’s community in the magic workshop shows that Spicer’s idea of magic and poetry, in this iteration and in the book on tarot, is inherently linked to community-forming and the passing of knowledge. Spicer eventually hoped to form a *kreis* or magic school of writing like that of Stefan George, a German poet and occultist writing during the 1860s (Spicer 2008, xviii).

The most interesting part of the questionnaire itself is the final three pages, in which Spicer (2008) asks the respondent to either “fill in the blanks” of three poems or to “invent a dream in which you appear as a poet” (102). Spicer’s request to dream as a poet puts the respondent in a headspace to think big, beyond their present (even if they *do* consider themselves a poet) and touches on poetry as a space of imagining the self as another self. This imagining of oneself communicating through another self, a self linked to creative energy, is tied directly to anamnesis as well as to Spicer’s own imagining of himself as speaking with or channeling García Lorca. Poetry is, in this questionnaire, community-oriented and lineage-based, in the quasi-Romantic tradition of the poet serving as a channel for inspiration.

Furthermore, poem 2 is recognizably a poem by García Lorca that ends up in Spicer’s *After Lorca* through translation. “In . . . endlessness / Snow, . . . salt / He lost his . . .” is translated as “In the white endlessness / Snow, seaweed, and salt / He lost his imagination” in *After Lorca* (Spicer 2008, 103, 109). The original poem, “Juan Ramón Jiménez” from García Lorca’s *Songs*, is dedicated to that prolific Andalusian poet García Lorca references in “Theory and Play of *Duende*” along with the *duende* itself (García Lorca 2002, 483).⁵ In this reference to García Lorca, Spicer incorporates García Lorca’s poem and *duende* allusions along with his own magical and poetic influences, assimilating all into one community matrix.

5. “When he sees Death come, the angel flies in slow circles and tiles with tears of ice and daffodils the elegy that we may see trembling in the hands of Keats or of Villasandino, and in those of Herrera, and in those of Bécquer, and in those of Juan Ramón Jiménez” (García Lorca 2016, 17).

Lorca's "Odas": Apostrophe as Ode

Federico García Lorca wrote odes as anamneses of imagined lovers in an identity-seeking quest to become part of the queer tribe. García Lorca's odes to Salvador Dalí and Walt Whitman represent induction attempts to the homosexual community through channeling, aligning García Lorca with writers, goals, and ideas that asserted his work as part of the interpersonal community of his own desired queer tribe.

García Lorca's "Ode to Walt Whitman" dates to his experimental work in New York City when he composed *Poet in New York* and began writing such plays as the fragmentary "El público" ("The Public") and the homoerotic "Así qué pasen cinco años" ("As Five Years Pass"). Walt Whitman's philosopher-priest work of *Leaves of Grass* inspired García Lorca to write to Whitman as a fellow "lover of man." With the ode's setting "Throughout the East River and the Bronx," García Lorca consciously associates the language of nature (leaves, shore, river) with Whitman while the derogatory language of New York and industry (miners, wheel, oil) is associated with the unsympathetic city (García Lorca 2018b, 1). This dichotomy persists throughout the poem as Whitman "dreamed of being a river and sleeping like a river" in a tranquil and loving manner while "agony, agony, dream, rot and dream" composes the way of the world (3, 5).

García Lorca places Whitman, the man with the "butterflying beard," alongside the "maricas" of New York City to create a contrast between different expressions of homoeroticism (García Lorca 2018b, 2–3). García Lorca's poem has been read as homophobic for its treatment of the "maricas," or effeminate gay men characterized as promiscuous. There is truth to this charge, and the list of "Fairies" and "Adelaidas" of different regions that begins the last quarter of the poem is difficult to read as sympathetic to homosexuals (6–7). The "faggots of all the world" are characterized as "slaves of woman" and "powder room bitches" in García Lorca's poem, but he also writes that the men of whom he speaks negatively contrast with homosexual-leaning men such as Whitman and García Lorca who express their love in more nuanced ways (6–7). After a fashion, by using the example of the maricas, García Lorca is sending shame down on wanton sociopolitically dangerous behavior.⁶

However, García Lorca's perspective on queer sex is more complex than shame alone. "Life," he writes, "is not noble, nor good, nor sacred" to the cruel

6. García Lorca's attitude toward homosexuality, particularly its social implications, was no doubt influenced by living during the Franco regime in which "subversives" such as left-wingers and homosexuals were arrested and often killed—like García Lorca himself was in the end.

world, and so García Lorca (the narrative “I” in the poem) doesn’t raise his voice “against the boy who dresses as a bride” “nor against the solitary men of clubs who drink with revolt the water of prostitution, nor against men . . . who love man and burn their lips in silence” (García Lorca 2018b, 5–6). The poet is somewhat sympathetic to these painful and subtle homosexual maneuvers because he grew up in a Catholic and highly conservative environment and was forced to hide his sexuality; even today, some in Spain ignore García Lorca’s homosexual side. García Lorca has “no mercy” for the dangerous maricas of New York, sending invectives against them to associate himself more fully with “beautiful Walt Whitman, asleep onshore of the Hudson” (7). There is nothing left for García Lorca and Whitman but to sleep and dream of the “coming of the kingdom of wheat,” a state of being in which love is love (7). By aligning himself with Whitman and against what García Lorca considers to be a problematic and dangerous mode of oversexual queerness, García Lorca’s good character is asserted in favor of a gentle and acceptable homosexuality.

An earlier ode to Salvador Dalí, written between 1925 and 1926, previewed the coming commitment García Lorca developed to subtly writing around and into queerness. García Lorca and Dalí met at the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid, where they became close friends with filmmaker Luis Buñuel and formed a tight group that was associated with the “Generation of ’27.”⁷ This generation, at the vanguard of writing and visual art, was known for experimenting with form and tradition using surrealist techniques.

García Lorca and Dalí shared more than a few tender moments in the years between 1920 and 1926 when the “Ode to Dalí” was finally published. During the summers of these years, García Lorca visited Cadaqués with the Dalí family and, according to rumor and one of Dalí’s more infamous quotes, “one day I gave in to his desires. . . . We tried it. It hurt me and we had to stop” (Sahuquillo 2007, 19). They shared a “very strong erotic passion,” according to Dalí (Sahuquillo 2007, 20), and so García Lorca’s ode is not only an “ode to friendship” as Ian Gibson (1989) puts it (161), but a paean to queer love and fire in the “astromical and tender” heart of Dalí (García Lorca 2018a, 3). García Lorca’s devotion to Dalí in his poem thus represents his desire to be included in the tribe of queer artists.

Among observations on Dalí’s painting methods and ideals that García Lorca seems to share, García Lorca’s ode repeatedly offers “boast” and “praise” not of

7. Biographical information on García Lorca may generally be culled from Ian Gibson’s (1989) comprehensive biography, *Federico García Lorca: A Life*.

Dalí's work in and of itself but of Dalí's "cravings for a limited eternity" in search of perfect expression (García Lorca 2018a, 2). García Lorca fittingly calls up the "eulogy" in reference to old or dead art from Dalí's youth, pitting it against Dalí's "fantasy" that "reaches as [his] hands reach," accomplishing whatever he puts work toward (García Lorca 2018a, 3). García Lorca writes in a seeming debt to Dalí's powers of expression in the third section of the poem; after Cadaqués appears "in the faith of water and hillock," Dalí's hands pool time in "numerical forms" "and expired Death takes shivering shelter in the fitted circle of the present moment" (García Lorca 2018a, 2). García Lorca's fear of death was well known, especially by his friends who watched or helped as he acted out his own death in bizarre rituals (Gibson 1989, 145–46). By writing Dalí's triumph over death, García Lorca seems to thank his friend and lover for putting his own fears to rest for the "present moment," the continuous eternity in Cadaqués preserved so long as the two are together (García Lorca 2018a, 3).

García Lorca's reference to death parallels his concept of *duende*, a power over death; as he writes in "Theory and Play of *Duende*," "in all countries death is an end. It arrives and the curtains run. In Spain, no. In Spain, they rise" (García Lorca 2016, 13). *Duende* as death becomes the power that Dalí is able to "order" in the ode, that "light they [the artists] fear" that is not a bacchanal as the muse would be nor seems angelic (García Lorca 2018a, 2). *Duende* is the "force without order that the curved water" of Cadaqués takes where Dalí stands "facing the sea" to paint—water that holds ancient Spanish wisdom and power (García Lorca 2018a, 2–4). In García Lorca's poem to a friend, he immortalizes his passion for Dalí, the connection of the pair to death and *duende*, as well as his own desire to fit into the "common thought" and shared passion of his relationship forever: "But before everything I sing a common thought that unites in us in the dark and golden hours. The light that blinds our eyes is not 'Art.' It is first love, in friendship or joust" (García Lorca 2018a, 4). This "common thought" is within both García Lorca and Dalí in Cadaqués—not an artistic ideology or bond through art-making, but love above all else, whether for good or ill.

García Lorca and Dalí began to fall apart, and Dalí moved closer to Luis Buñuel in the years after Cadaqués. García Lorca's romance with Dalí hit a rocky turn, and the pair dissolved into squabbles and bickering in their artwork and correspondence, with Dalí famously mocking García Lorca's effeminacy in his surrealist film *Un Chien Andalou*. García Lorca kept in touch with Ana Maria Dalí, Salvador's sister. "I think of Cadaqués," García Lorca wrote to Ana Maria in May 1925; "to me it is a landscape both eternal and present, but perfect . . . my memory sits in an armchair" (García Lorca 1983, 59). García Lorca writes his

memory into the scene over a lengthy paragraph, ending it with Salvador drawing and buzzing “like a big golden bee” as he sang (García Lorca 1983, 59). According to older scholarship, García Lorca supposedly wrote these letters as courtship of Ana Maria, but it is conceivable that though his sisters “constantly” asked García Lorca what she was like, García Lorca was remaining close to Ana Maria to remain close to Salvador (García Lorca 1983, 60). The language García Lorca uses, romancing the aqueduct sky of Cadaqués and the silvery fish (García Lorca 1983, 59), recalls the fishermen who “sleep, dreamless, on the sand” in the ode to Dalí so closely that it seems difficult to separate his imagery of Cadaqués with Ana Maria from that with Salvador (García Lorca 2018a, 2). “How wonderful Cadaqués is!” García Lorca exclaims as time and again he sends his “regards to Salvador” or asks how he is doing or requests another drawing (García Lorca 1983, 65). Rereading the ode and his letters as queer anamnesis of an imagined lover, we begin to see that García Lorca never forgot the wonder of his ode’s setting like that of a dream in his own dreamlike homoerotic space (García Lorca 1983, 113).

Spicer’s *After Lorca*: Apostrophe as Translation and Dedication

Jack Spicer was not worried about uncloseting himself like García Lorca was (at least, as García Lorca was at first), but though he lived in the accepting community of the San Francisco Renaissance, Spicer found true companionship with others of his day more difficult than imagining a lover or kindred writer in another time. The risk of a living writing partner is more than that of a magical forebear, and so Spicer searched for García Lorca in order to author a correspondence with himself and a new self that embodied aspects of both Jack and Federico.

Jack Spicer wrote to García Lorca and, as a queer man, sought to call García Lorca’s *duende* into his own writing through experimentation with anamnesis. *After Lorca*, published in 1957 by Spicer’s imprint White Rabbit Press, came of this experimentation—a poetic text that mixes translation, anamnesis, and epistolary correspondence with the dead poet García Lorca.⁸

García Lorca had become an icon, largely owing to his untimely death via assassination, but also for Spicer because of his representation of the queer culture of the Generation of ’27. The brief romances of Dalí and García Lorca must

8. In a similarly inspired text that could be explored with anamnesis, Rothenberg wrote that his *Lorca Variations* “both are & aren’t mine, both are & aren’t Lorca”: “[García Lorca] has stood with certain others as a guide and constant fellow traveler.” (Rothenberg 1993, 90).

have been symbolic of initiation into the queer writer coven for Spicer; his letters to García Lorca are reauthorings or reframings of García Lorca and of Spicer as friends and lovers. The author-god García Lorca is in *After Lorca* not just the author-function but a paragon of magic and homosexuality to be channeled through anamnesis. In this text, García Lorca and Spicer “happened to be buried in the same grave” and are meant to be given the same emphasis and power as authors throughout (Spicer 2008, 108).

Spicer goes so far as to open *After Lorca* with an introduction written by García Lorca from beyond the grave. García Lorca/Spicer is decidedly “unsympathetic” to Spicer’s imitative style, writing “it must be made clear at the start that these poems are not translations” (Spicer 2008, 107). The sarcasm in this introduction predisposes the reader to question the concept of translation and to imagine what the source material for each piece (a “fanciful imitation” according to this García Lorca / Spicer) might be (Spicer 2008, 107). According to Daniel Katz (2007), Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* shared a similar idea of translation as “relationship” between author and reader or between two ends of anamnesis, just as García Lorca and Spicer shared (130). Metacognition about reading is Spicer’s invitation to imagine García Lorca as in conversation with the reader and the text, not just a distant reified object.

Spicer’s application of translation and anamnesis in *After Lorca* may be described as poetry by substitution. In translating García Lorca’s poetry, Spicer replaces words and phrases at will, not using similar or equivalent words between English and Spanish but substituting ideas entirely, often from García Lorca’s essay on *duende*. This substitutional translation practice reinforces the idea of anamnesis because it combines the original author’s ideas given through words with new ideas written by the channeling author. For instance, Spicer’s “Ballad of the Little Girl Who Invented the Universe” recalls “Little Girl Drowned in the Well” from García Lorca’s *Poet in New York*, but is not a translation of that poem. Spicer’s poem is more nearly a palimpsest of quotations from poems throughout *Poet in New York* based on the formula of “Theory and Play of *Duende*,” which writes of the “bull skin stretched” (García Lorca 2016, 3) just as Spicer (2008) writes of “between the jasmine and the bull” (110). Spicer also writes “Theory and Play” into “The Ballad of Escape,” referencing “something recently born” (García Lorca’s final line “the constant baptism of things recently created . . .” [García Lorca 2016, 22]) as a method to recall the “skulls of horses” or death (Spicer 2008, 146). The free language play of Spicer’s poetry creatively steals vocabulary from García Lorca in the way Jerome Rothenberg (1993) describes as a search for García Lorca’s “deep image” (88).

The deep image refers to the channeling of García Lorca's *duende*, that magic which creates poetry. "Words are what sticks to the real," Spicer (2008) writes, and the real can be found in both Spain and the United States (123). In Spicer's mind and delivered through heightened language, "a really perfect poem (no one yet has written one) could be perfectly translated by a person who did not know one word of the language it was written in" (122). The perfect poem conveys pure significance, the pure and deep image that Rothenberg and Spicer hunted for in García Lorca, rather than conveying language or untranslatable "meaning." Pure emotion or pure object/image, in García Lorca's work, was a channel open to magical *duende*. "The poem is a collage of the real," Spicer writes, "that tree you saw in Spain is a tree I could never have seen in California . . . but the answer is this—every place and every time has a real object to *correspond* with your real object—that lemon may become this lemon" (133, emphasis preserved). There is no essential division between the magics of Spain and America, as both exist in the continuous present of poetry, corresponding through anamnesis.

"These letters are to be as temporary as our poetry is to be permanent," Spicer (2008) writes (110). Spicer describes the apostrophe tradition as "generations of different poets in different countries patiently telling the same story, writing the same poem" as a way of joining the great conversation (110–11). Spicer equates this poeticization of anamnesis to "bits of magic" in the "patchwork" of history and poetry (110). Conveying the immediacy of objects gives the poet life: "the poet, for that instant, ceases to be a dead man" (150). Death for Spicer, as for García Lorca, is the constant present of the poem that unites poets over the course of time: "[These letters] *correspond* with something . . . that you have written . . . and, in turn, some future poet will write something which *corresponds* to them. That is how we dead men write to each other" (Spicer 2008, 134). Community is thus established through communion, the magic of apostrophe and anamnesis between like poets.

Every poem in *After Lorca* is dedicated in some fashion, directly connecting community with the fabric of the writing. Some dedications are to Spicer's friends and lovers, including Don Allen, John Barrow, and Joe Dunn; others are to Spicer himself or to "The Big Cat Up There" in sarcastic Spicer fashion (Spicer 2008, 142). Spicer (2008) explains in one letter that the poems must have an "audience," the "friends" who will read and give the poem life beyond Spicer himself (139). In order to enliven the works channeled from García Lorca, Spicer gifts them to others through dedication, creating a nest of odes to García Lorca, himself, his friends and lovers, and the poetic tradition of community. Spicer

includes translations, such as “Buster Keaton’s Ride,” and “sequel translations” like “Buster Keaton Rides Again.” Spicer writes himself (with alcohol creeping in “wearing the disguise of a cockroach”) into this sequel in the way he imagines García Lorca to have written himself as Buster Keaton struggling against the lights of Philadelphia (144). *After Lorca* ties García Lorca and Spicer together through anamnesis; in this way, all of Spicer’s work is some variety of magical translation, from language to person and back again.

Conclusion: Imagining Community with Queer Magic

Communion manifests in *After Lorca* as homoerotic love and passion in the vein of García Lorca’s homosexuality in “Ode to Walt Whitman”—subtle love and passion rather than promiscuity. García Lorca’s “Ode to Walt Whitman” serves as a fulcrum for *After Lorca*’s queer agenda, both as a translation by Spicer and as reference to homosexual lineage. Spicer’s translation is decidedly more contemporary than others, using phrases such as “opening their flies” and “the cocksuckers, Walt Whitman, were counting on you” (Spicer 2008, 130, 128). By invoking terminology of the time, Spicer hoped to bring across the queer desires and meanings of García Lorca’s original, to lead words “across time not preserved against it,” and to join the queer conversation (122). Spicer references the language of García Lorca’s “Ode to Walt Whitman” throughout *After Lorca*, writing that after the transfer of the immediate, Spicer “will again become your special comrade,” the word “comrade” being García Lorca’s “camarado” (150).

Whitman, for Spicer, reached for “a world without magic and without god,” in which “he never heard spirits” and “had no need of death” (Spicer 2008, 55). Spicer’s Whitman imagined a world in which queers were accepted and did not need to refer back in isolation to others who were already gone. The real world was antithetical to Whitman’s “Calamus” poems; “Calamus cannot exist in the presence of cruelty,” Spicer writes, and thus Whitman is like García Lorca in that he is the “impossible shadow” in the desert, crying out for queer inclusion. Whitman’s homoerotic poetry is a “fairy story” that Spicer’s world could not reconcile with, but which represented his own desires for queerness and acceptance (Spicer 2008, 55–56).

García Lorca saw the inspirational and magical force of *duende* in community in America. North America was García Lorca’s alternative space, a space of sexual paradise where he experimented beyond the page (Gibson 1989, 282). Spicer too explored sexually during the period of writing *After Lorca* and ruminating on magical influence. For both poets, magic was a tangible communal

effect of poetry and not an esoteric idea. “All arts, and even all countries, have the capacity for *duende*, for angel, and for muse,” García Lorca writes (García Lorca 2016, 13). In New York, García Lorca’s observations of Harlem artists, namely people of color, convinced him of the presence of the inspiration.⁹ García Lorca delivered his address on *duende* for the first time in Havana, Cuba.¹⁰ In the essay, García Lorca delivers a lengthy digression on the singer Pastora Pavón who channels the *duende* through her throat as an expression beyond the normalcy of “song.”¹¹ This moment importantly occurs in the presence of others listening, reinforcing García Lorca’s notion of *duende* in community.

Spicer worked to channel García Lorca in order to channel García Lorca’s magical *duende*. In *After Lorca*, Spicer (2008) wrote directly into García Lorca’s “Theory and Play of *Duende*” in his poem “Song of Two Windows,” which reads “The voice of a single girl. She holds cold fire like a glass. Each thing she watches Has become double” (148). This direct recall of the story of La Niña de los Peines, who “drank with a gulp a great glass of cazalla like fire, and sat to sing without voice, without breath, without nuance, with the throat burning, but . . .

9. García Lorca’s racially charged undertones in writing of the “Blacks of Harlem” as his gypsy-like source of *duende* in America are well documented and explored elsewhere. For a representative text by García Lorca, see “The King of Harlem” (García Lorca 2002, 651–59).

10. “Composed and delivered by García Lorca during his stay in Havana en route from the United States; subsequently repeated in Buenos Aires (1934)” (García Lorca 1955, 154).

11. Extracted from translation by the author (García Lorca 2016, 13):

One time, the Andalusian “singer” Pastora Pavón—the Niña de los Peines, a somber Hispanic genius, equivalent in imagination to Goya or to Rafael el Gallo—sang in a small tavern in Cádiz. She sang with her voice in darkness; her voice as molten tin; her voice covered in moss; and entangled in horse-hair; or dipped in chamomile; or as lost as jarales, dark and exceedingly distant. But it was useless.

Those listening were completely silent.

. . . .

Pastora Pavón stopped singing in the middle of the silence. Alone, and with sarcasm, a little man like that little ballerina man that shoots out from bottles of brandy, said with a small voice, “Long live Paris!,” which is like saying: “Here faculty is not important to us, nor technique, nor mastery. Another thing is important.”

Then La Niña de los Peines got up like one crazed, truncated like a Medieval cry, and drank with a gulp a great glass of cazalla like fire, and sat to sing without voice, without breath, without nuance, with the throat burning, but . . . with *duende*. She was tearing to kill all the staging of the song to leave space for a *duende* furious and scorching, friend of laden winds of sand, that made the listeners tear their suits with the same rhythm as in the black Antillean rite, worshippers clustered before the image of Saint Barbara.

La Niña de los Peines had to tear her voice because she knew that she was performing for exquisite people that would not ask for forms, forms without marrow, pure music with a succinct body able to hang in the air. She had to become faculty-less and security-less; it’s said she had to kick out her muse and become helpless, that *duende* came to grips with her. And how she sang! At that moment, her voice did not play; her voice was a jet of dignified blood through her pain and her body, without truth, and she opened like hands of ten fingers with the feet nailed but full of storms, like a Christ by Juan de Juni.

She brought from *duende* a radical change within herself, in all her forms within old planes, of fresh sensations, totally unedited, with the heat of the rose recently created; miraculous, that brought about an equally fervent enthusiasm.

with *duende*” ties Spicer to García Lorca through *duende* as magic (García Lorca 2016, 10).

Spicer’s desire to write magically, to cast a spell on the reader and on the world, represented a deep desire to create shared text. This text was shared between mentor and protégé, ancestor and currently living, across time and space and with the immediate community through dedications. Spicer made a queer communal magic with *duende*; this was his way of acknowledging forebears and poetics as a lineage as well as a chain of like individuals. García Lorca / Spicer as the author of *After Lorca*’s introduction gives Spicer power but not of this plane: “[García Lorca’s] position offers unique connections to the underworld for an orphic poet, and he provides both the perfect vehicle for unrequited love and the perfect emblem of literary inheritance and tradition” (Spicer 2008, xxii).

In the light of the San Francisco Renaissance as well as of today, reading García Lorca as a poet in search of queer community and magical writing is productive and necessary. García Lorca is becoming a more and more popular dramatist and poet in America who deserves inclusion within the queer community, and using more holistic interpretations of García Lorca that incorporate his identity allows us to celebrate his story truthfully. Spicer, too, may be reread using the close lens of anamnesis rather than a distant focus on his at times sardonic and critical perspective. These poets were not only brilliant language workers but community weavers who saw the homosexual and queer people of their time as interconnected to those of all other times, in the same struggle for representation and acceptance.

“This is the last letter,” Spicer (2008) writes to García Lorca (153). “You return, a disembodied but contagious spirit, to the printed page,” no more angels, ghosts, or even shadows (153). Spicer continues, “the poems are there, the memory not of a vision but a kind of casual friendship with an undramatic ghost who occasionally looked through my eyes and whispered to me—” a friend and a lover (153). García Lorca’s conviction, shared by Spicer, that lineage is channeled through anamnesis led both writers to their version of magic and queered writing; the desired or imagined personal relationship authors the kindred ancestor into being in community through the shared force of poetic magic. This anamnesis, created through emotional paths to lineage, defines the work of these writers and provides a pathway for those who would write in their footsteps in order to inscribe themselves into the queer magical lineage. As Spicer predicts, “Saying goodbye to a ghost is more final than saying goodbye to a lover. Even the dead return, but a ghost, once loved, departing will never reappear. Love, Jack” (153).

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