

Published in *Spanish Writers on Gay and Lesbian Themes. A Bio-Critical Sourcebook*, ed. David William Foster (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1999), pp. 74-78.

García Lorca, Federico (1898-1936). Usually known by his mother's surname, Lorca is the twentieth-century Spanish poet and playwright who wrote most directly on homosexuality. In his works, he explores themes of difference, isolation, and sexual desire. His execution in 1936 made him into an international figure and martyr.

LIFE. The charismatic Federico was sexually active and seducing his classmates as a young boy (Gibson, *Penón*). As an adult he was active in seeking liaisons with "trade"—heterosexual, lower-class males. We know of three adult relationships. Chronologically: he was intimate friend and very likely lover of Salvador Dalí, with whom he coincided in the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid for several years, and spent extended periods during summers. A [p. 75] bisexual American, Phillip Cummings, has spoken openly of their brief affair of 1929. Finally, a relationship of some duration was that with Emilio Aladrén, a primarily straight man who died during the Spanish Civil War. The relationship with Dalí ended unhappily, and an attack on Federico followed. This is the famous silent movie *The Andalusian Dog*—Lorca was Andalusian, and "dog" is an insult in Spanish—made by Dalí and his new collaborator, the future filmmaker Emilio Buñuel. The relationship with Aladrén was one-sided, and the source of much stress to Federico.

While his sexual orientation and activities were well known within literary and theatrical circles, he led what friends have called a "double life." Some have said that he was careful to exclude them from knowledge of his sexual orientation. His parents were mostly unaccepting, and relations sometimes strained.

Lorca never held a conventional job. His father supported him until, in his thirties, he began to earn sufficient royalties from his plays. His father also financed a trip to New York and Cuba in 1929-

30, the poetic outcome of which was the famous *Poet in New York*. From 1931 to 1933 the Spanish government funded Lorca to take classical theater to rural areas with a student theater troupe, *La Barraca*. In 1934, by then a major figure as a dramatist, he traveled to Argentina and Uruguay.

DEATH. The execution of Federico García Lorca in August of 1936 quickly became an international incident. A vast literature exists on it, similar to that on the death of John F. Kennedy. What scholars agree on, after much research, is that Lorca strangely left Madrid (where he would have been safe) for Granada just before the outbreak of the Civil War. He declined offers of hospitality and safe refuge outside Spain. In Granada, right-wing military forces captured and executed him, and threw his body into an unmarked grave.

However, scholars have not reached a consensus about the motives for the execution. The “official” view in Lorca scholarship, one that his family strongly endorsed, is that he was executed as a representative or ally of the Spanish left. A superficial glance at the circumstances of his execution suggests this: no one questions that it was right-wing rebels, anarchic and uncontrolled as they were at the time, that executed him. Also, he was clearly linked with the Spanish Republic during its first period, 1931-33. Lorca became, with his execution, the symbol of the Republic, Spain’s first democratic government ever, locus of culture, poetry, enlightenment: in short, all that most European intellectuals identified with. The tragedy that his execution represented hardened the resistance to the rebels. The publicity it generated also moved thousands of foreigners to come to Spain—Americans, at the risk of their citizenship—to help the Republic fight the Fascist forces of darkness. Ironically and tragically, the result was that the war was prolonged, without changing the outcome. The enlarged conflict also meant that the repression afterwards was even more severe.

From the beginning there have been protests against this interpretation. Leaving aside the complexities and contradictions of Lorca’s political views and friendships, which seem to have changed as the Civil War approached (Eisen[p. 76]berg, “Unanswered”), a topic

heard from the first is that his sexual orientation was an important factor in his execution. Public mention of this possibility brought outraged reactions, and sometimes public denunciation and harassment. The intensity of the response led the question of a sexual component in the execution to become taboo. To an extent it still is today. To question the political motivation for Lorca's execution, or to suggest that other factors were at least as important, is to undermine the rationale for the sacrifice of many lives in the Civil War. Significantly, the report of the official investigation conducted by General Franco in 1936 is not yet available to researchers.

One thread to these discussions is that a personal factor—an individual with a sexually-oriented grudge against Lorca—contributed to the execution. In those weeks of chaos, many were killed for personal reasons. The curious circumstances of Lorca's arrest (Eisenberg, "Unanswered") lend credence to this theory, but confirmation has not yet been available.

Even without a personal element, just being an unrepentant and uncloseted homosexual was reason enough. As in Nazi Germany, the right wing wanted to cleanse the country of elements they believed undesirable, including homosexuals. In contrast with Germany, however, the topic has not yet been studied in Spain. As the libertarian Spanish Republic progressed, Lorca became more open about treating homosexuality and sexual freedom in his works. He was publicly identified as a sexual dissident after the production in 1935 of his play *Yerma*, whose lead is a childless woman. The female lead in this and most other plays of his was Margarita Xirgu, herself a Lesbian whose orientation was well known in theatrical circles.

Many knew of Lorca's authorship of other works on sexual themes. His "Ode to Walt Whitman," a critique of homosexuals, appeared in a small private edition in Mexico in 1933. He frequently read unpublished works to his friends. The topic of "The House of Bernarda Alba," with an all-female cast, is the tragic consequences of the repression of sexuality. Lorca wrote an "Ode to Salvador Dalí," and an "Ode to the Holy Sacrament of the Altar," in the latter of which a beautiful crucified Christ is a figure of sexual liberation, and fellatio an act of worship.

Lorca's play *El público* (*The Public*, 1930), the full text of which is still unavailable, includes an open treatment of pederastic love. The *Sonetos del amor oscuro* (*Sonnets of Dark Love*), whose revised text is also missing, is a Petrarchan sonnet sequence on male love. It has been called some of the most beautiful poetry in the language. The composition of these works is itself a validation of love between men.

When one is reading such works to groups, as Lorca was, the news of them will circulate orally. Considering his daring—some would say reckless—treatment of taboo topics, one can understand why a member of the team that arrested him would say “He has done more damage with his pen than others with their guns” (Gibson, *Death*, 99). [p. 77]

CENSORSHIP AND MANIPULATION AFTER HIS DEATH.

A variety of factors—withholding of key documents and texts, reluctance by friends to speak candidly, and mystification—have long impeded our knowledge of the sexual side of Lorca's life and thought. As a result, all but the most recent editions of his “complete” works are not only incomplete, but conceal this fact from readers. Two generations of Lorca scholarship have been based on these incomplete editions. Sometimes scholarship has been manipulated or self-censored in order to get permission to use Lorca's texts. For example, the editors of his collected works were unable to refer to the works not included.

While the censorship in Spain from 1939 until the mid-70's has played a role, those most responsible for this state of affairs have been Lorca's family. As he died with neither will nor children, his parents and later his siblings had full control of his intellectual property. They prevented publication of a series of works, such as *The House of Bernarda Alba* and *El público* (Eisenberg, “Nuevos”). With the *Sonetos del amor oscuro*, Lorca's heirs denied their existence altogether. Even that this manipulation took place is still not admitted.

Access to unpublished material, and permission to edit and publish, were granted or withheld according to the scholar's position on Lorca's sexuality. Following the heirs' model, or cowed by them,

few of his friends have given full and uncensored accounts of the Federico they knew. Another consequence is that, the topic being off-limits for legitimate scholars, Lorca's homosexuality surfaced in the work of disreputable scholars, such as the pseudonymous Jean-Louis Schonberg. This further muddied the waters.

The situation has been much alleviated in recent years, as public opinion has brought pressure on the family, and Federico's parents and siblings have died. *The House of Bernarda Alba*, *The Public*, and the *Sonnets of Dark Love* have all been published, though the best manuscripts of the two latter are unavailable or possibly lost. Still, the damage to two generations of Lorca readers and scholars has been done, and people who could have illuminated important aspects of Federico's life have carried their knowledge to the grave.

Any edition of Lorca's works up to the mid 1980's, or anything written about him during this period, needs to be used with caution. The reader needs to keep in mind that the scholar may not have known that the editions of Lorca's "complete works" were incomplete. Even if this were known, the scholar may not have had access to important texts, or may have been permitted access only on condition of self-censorship.

WORKS. Throughout Lorca's works there run the themes of the search for connection and intimacy, the search for acceptance, and the essential goodness, power, and mystery of the sexual drive. With these are two related themes. The first is the evil of the sex-hostile Spanish Catholic church—separated from Christ's teachings, according to Lorca. Finally, Lorca celebrates Andalusian culture. The Arabic civilization of al-Andalus was a pleasure-loving and tolerant culture, destroyed by the conquering Christian civilization of the North. Its final capital was Lorca's city, Granada.

Lorca's works reveal the melancholy, isolated, childless man that some of his close friends also saw beneath the surface of charm and humor. Federico was unable to find and maintain the intimacy he sought. [p. 78]

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