

Under these circumstances, the question of the South's inherent character (and its continuation) seems less a matter of sectional separateness than of the southernization of the country at large. Now that cotton is no longer king, the South's major export is "culture"—music and language, black as well as "redneck." A kind of country talk has invaded the national media. In politics, by waving the Stars and Stripes, not the old "Bloody Shirt," Ronald Reagan and George Bush sound more southern than earlier heirs of Lincoln's mantle. Southern-born black leaders like Jesse Jackson and Andrew Young have a national, not solely regional, impact.

Despite all these changes—and partly because of them—the supposed advent of a "New New South" has been too loudly proclaimed. The bedrock of the southern temperament has included and today still includes these unhappy signs: continued insensitivity about matters of race and sex; undue leniency in criminal justice toward "justifiable homicide" and contrasting severity about "wrongdoers who threaten the moral values, beliefs, and social mores of the general public"; "schizoid" attitudes toward alcohol, as David Courtwright calls drinking in the Bible Belt. Forty percent of all adult southern males own guns, records Fred Hawley, some "16 percentage points higher than in non-southern areas." Atlanta, Houston, Tuscaloosa, Richmond, and the South as a whole have had greater rates of homicide per 100,000 than Colombia to the south and New York City to the north.

Of course a brighter side exists as well.

Southern politeness and unwillingness to hurt others' feelings, at least when unprovoked, are not mere trappings of an obsolete gentility. Charles Wilson notes that "Southerners have traditionally equated manners with morals, so that unmannerly behavior has been viewed as immoral behavior." Common gestures, language, and tacit understandings have sometimes helped whites and blacks to achieve an accord that northerners might envy. Among southern blacks and whites there is, as Frederick Douglass once said, "a rigid enforcement of the law of respect for elders," an etiquette (if it survives) that will become ever more pertinent as the American populace ages. Even newcomers quickly learn to be southerners in spirit if not in accent. Like the natives, they are entangled in the web of place and persistent custom. Southern values, especially those surrounding family life, are at times the exemplary exception in a nation of growing homogenization.

In light of these factors, editors Wilson and Ferris offer stunning testimony to regional vitality. One need not be a conservative to appreciate Melvin Bradford's notion that "a culture is made up of a set of habits or modes of conduct, 'of chairs and tables, songs and tales,' and also of familiar sights and sounds and smells, and finally of manners." The South will continue to change, even drastically. Somehow, though, it promises to remain the South, for better or worse.

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Portrait of the Poet as an Andalusian Dog

FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA: A Life. By Ian Gibson. Pantheon. 551 pp. \$29.95

Reading this life of the Spanish poet and playwright Federico García Lorca (1898–1936) was for me a nostalgic adventure. As a sophomore about half a century

ago, with my Hispanophilia freshly kindled by a stay in Cuba, I had as my Spanish professor the brilliant Don Augusto Centeno, who had been a classmate of Lorca's as well as Luis Buñuel's at the University of Madrid. His descriptions of Lorca's poetry indelibly stamped my sensibility. Lorca's

poem on Cuba evoked the myths of the island I had recently visited and caught with syncopated musical precision the "*ritmo de semillas secas*," the dry chatter of the maracas.

When the full moon comes
I'll go to Santiago de Cuba,
I'll go to Santiago
in a coach of black water . . .
Oh Cuba! Oh rhythm of the dry seeds!
(*Oh Cuba! Oh ritmo de semillas secas!*)

At the time I speak of, Lorca's work had scarcely found a coterie in America. Today, Lorca is more translated than any other Spanish writer, including Cervantes. But 50 years ago, Lorca had barely begun his journey to becoming, in the world's eyes, Spain's most popular poet and playwright—a reputation that gradually solidified despite his being as often assailed as championed by other writers.

Jorge Luis Borges, for example, abhorred Lorca's poetry and dismissed him as a professional Andalusian with a "gift for gab." Borges charged that Lorca was idolized only because "he had the good luck to be executed." Their one conversation together broke off when Lorca suggested that Mickey Mouse exemplified the



tragedy of American life.

The Chilean poet, Pablo Neruda, was, by contrast, an ardent admirer. In his *Memoirs*, Neruda sketched a portrait of Lorca based on their months together in Buenos Aires and Madrid—a portrait which is now amplified in Ian Gibson's pages. Neruda said that he had never seen such grace and genius, a heart so winged or a waterfall so clear.

Open-hearted and comical, worldly and superstitious, torn between spirituality and irrepressible carnal appetites, Lorca felt himself to be a living embodiment of *duende*. The notion of *duende* is, in fact, essential to understanding Lorca. According to one traditional Spanish usage, *duende* connoted a poltergeist-like spirit, but to Lorca it represented Dionysian inspiration sprung from anguish, mystery, and death. To most of those who knew him, Lorca appeared to be the supreme embodiment of *duende*. To them, his talent seemed inexhaustible, his expressiveness total: He excelled as poet, playwright, singer, musician, artist, actor, theater director. "Of Arabic-Andalusian roots," Neruda wrote, "he brightened and perfumed like jasmine the stage set of a Spain that, alas, is gone forever."

Yet even for Neruda, Lorca half remained an actor in that Andalusian pageant invented by French writers of the 19th century, a pageant performed to the gallicized gypsy tempos and ominous motifs of Bizet's *Carmen*. But Lorca was more than an actor, and one virtue of Ian Gibson's biography is that it digs beyond the surface brilliance of the Lorca legend into the life itself.

Lorca is forever associated with the backward Spanish region of his childhood, Andalusia. Andalusia gave Lorca the gift of a living language, vivid and colloquial. (Without self-consciousness, Lorca's cousin could tell him to "put the eggs in when the water begins to laugh.") But Gibson shows how Lorca meshed local inspiration with the encroaching modern world. Indeed, in his first successful book, *Gypsy Ballads* (1928), he scarcely mentions the visible Andalusia; his verse is

anti-folkloric and anti-flamenco, eschewing the bullfighter's suit of lights or three-cornered hat. What figures in the *Ballads* is an invisible land where gypsies, horses, archangels, planets, rivers, smugglers, and naked children all coexist. The province of Andalusia and its city of Granada, populated with impoverished peasants and misfits, and once with Jews (from whom Lorca claimed partial descent), Moors, and gypsies, have known a history of conquest and anguish that Lorca felt to be his own story. History may pass, but for Lorca the doom and foreboding remain.

Lorca was born in the tiny village of Fuente Vaqueros in that critical year, 1898, when Spain lost the remaining vestiges of its empire—the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Cuba. Spain's loss was, for the infant Lorca, a double blessing. First, his father, Federico García Rodríguez, who had owned plantations in Cuba, now amassed an even greater fortune planting sugar on his vast estates near Granada. His mother, a former village schoolteacher of humble background, dominated the family: To her Lorca attributes his intelligence, to his father, his feelings. (In Spain, practicality was considered a feminine virtue, while the soul was seen as masculine.) Although Lorca called the Andalusian middle class the worst in Spain, his family's wealth gave him lifelong financial independence—a boon to any artist.

Spain's territorial losses had a large effect on the country, particularly on its intellectual life: Relieved of the burdens of empire, Spain's leading thinkers and artists began to respond to fresh impulses. And this was, for Lorca, the second blessing. In 1919, knowing the bird must escape its cage, Lorca left Andalusia and made his way to Madrid—no longer a backwater of Europe but in full artistic flowering. Spain's leading visual artists—Pablo Picasso, Juan Miró, Salvador Dalí, Juan Gris, Luis Buñuel—had won or were winning international recognition. The national constellation of poets that Lorca joined in Madrid—Alberti, Jiménez, Jorge Guillén, Aleixandre, Salinas—were all as-

tute observers of the modern scene. At the Residencia de Estudiantes, Lorca became close friends with Dalí and Buñuel. (Later, when their relations soured, Lorca suspected Buñuel of satirizing him in his surrealist film *Un chien andalou* of 1928. Lorca commented to a friend, "Buñuel has made a tiny little shit of a film called *An Andalusian Dog*—and I'm the Dog.")

In Madrid, Lorca experienced and welcomed as liberating forces first cubism, then surrealism—the first as release from literal representation, the second as immersion in the subconscious. Without surrendering totally to these movements, Lorca learned to expunge romantic sensibility, to shun verbal exuberance, and to fix on the irreducible poetic image. (Most of Lorca's fellow artists, like Buñuel, would later flee Spain and Franco, to renovate the intellectual life in Spanish America—a token recompense for the ravages of Spanish conquest.) Although innumerable studies have analyzed the Spanish Civil War, few make so clear as Gibson does what a brilliant cultural renaissance perished during the conflict.

Lorca made his only trip to a non-Hispanic country, the United States, in 1929–30. Titles of his poems in *Poet in New York* (1938) are evocative: "Poems of Solitude in Columbia University," "Landscape of the Crowd that Vomits (Coney Island Nightfall)," "Landscape of the Crowd that Urinates (Battery Place Nocturne)," "Murder (Two Voices at Daybreak on Riverside Drive)." But save for a drinking bout with Hart Crane and some sailors, and reading Eliot's "Waste Land" in translation, Lorca had little interest in, and few meetings with, American writers. (Eliot, Lorca wrote, squeezes the city like a lemon "to extract from it wounded rats, wet hats and river shadows.") His principal contact with Americans was with Harlem blacks, whose music he associated with the Andalusian *cante jondo* and whose predicament he saw as an exacerbated form of the gypsies'. For Lorca, New York was not a "new" experience but a translation into modern, universal terms of what he already knew. His odes to Walt Whitman and

to a mythical "King of Harlem" and his play *The Public* all exemplify this expanded cognizance. They universalize the themes of *Blood Wedding*, *Yerma*, and *The House of Bernarda Alba*—plays in which a Sophoclean fate works through the "Spanish" ideas of honor, class, and family—plays that were about to bring their author international recognition.

New York was immediately followed by three months of deliverance in "Andalusian" Cuba. Then came the brief halcyon years of applauded production and performance in republican Spain and triumphal visits to Argentina and Uruguay. But fascism soon closed in, and Lorca, in seeming compliance with the death obsession

that marked his life and writings, was among the first to be immolated. In 1936, at the age 38, Lorca was killed by the *Falangistes*, anti-Republicans who hated him for his spoofs of tradition and his disrespect for authority. Lorca's was a needless death, and what was lost is underscored by recalling that Lorca's youthful friends, Dali and Buñuel, were alive and working into the 1980s. No one speaks with more authority on this grievous matter than Ian Gibson, whose previous book on the poet is *The Assassination of Federico García Lorca*.

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How Different is Germany?

A GERMAN IDENTITY, 1770–1990. By Harold James. Routledge. 240 pp. \$25

The "German question" is with us again—more so, it seems, with each passing day.

The looming possibility of German reunification has sparked a controversy within West Germany both among political parties and in the press. More recently, in East Germany, we have witnessed the collapse of the old government leadership and the spectacle of East Germans freely crossing the once-impregnable Berlin Wall. These developments—as well as shifts in East-West relations—speak louder than mere words that reunification is very much an "open question." One recent poll found that 73 percent of East Germans and 79 percent of West Germans favored a single state.

But if the issue of German reunification stirs passions inside Germany, it frequently triggers panic abroad. For whenever Germany has been united and strong in the past—as in 1871, 1914, and 1939—war has never been far away. Today's situation, however, appears significantly different: West Germany has known a stable demo-

cratic government for 45 years, and territorial conquest hardly seems desirable, much less feasible. With the borders between the two sectors open, many political analysts are now anticipating that Germany will be reunited in a few years. But others with longer memories fear there is something singular about the nation that makes reunification far less attractive.

This question of Germany's singularity is the subject of Harold James's new book: an investigation of "German identity" for the past 200 years. It is to the credit of James, a professor of history at Princeton, that he casts new light on this much-debated subject. As an economic historian, he provides an intriguing thesis, namely, that German unity has always rested on the promise of economic growth, and that this peculiarity has made Germany uniquely volatile since the founding of the Second Reich in 1871.

James argues that German sovereignty was always fragile because it had only an economic, and not a historical or a geographical, basis on which to build a modern national identity. France and England have rested on the same core of recognizable territory for centuries—centuries