

Article from the *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*, ed. Wayne Dynes (New York: Garland, 1990).

Note: no footnotes could be published with this encyclopedia article. The asterisk indicates a reference to another article in the *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*.

**Federico García Lorca** (1898–1936), poet and dramatist, Spain’s most famous author after Cervantes. Born in the southern province of Granada and influenced by the Andalusian revival of the early twentieth century, Lorca lived from the age of 20 in Madrid. In the famous “Residencia de Estudiantes” (\*Spain), he met and collaborated with such future celebrities as Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, with the latter of which he had an amorous relationship of several years’ duration.<sup>9</sup> After the end of the relationship, Dalí and Buñuel made the famous movie “The Andalusian Dog”; the title alludes to Lorca.

An emotional and literary crisis in 1928 led to an extended visit to New York and Cuba in 1929–30. With the birth of the liberal Spanish republic in 1931, Lorca moved from intellectual to mainstream circles. The government sponsored his traveling theater troupe, “La Barraca,” which took Spanish classics to isolated small towns. His own plays were produced with success, and he began to receive a significant income from royalties.

The revolt against the Spanish republic in 1936 brought Lorca’s assassination by a semi-official death squad. An extensive literature exists concerning the mechanics of and motives for his death, which immediately became an international incident and a symbol of Fascist stupidity and anti-intellectualism. Lorca’s leftist sympathies, friends, and relatives would be sufficient to explain his execution,

but much evidence suggests that his sexual orientation, activities, and writings were at least as important.

Lorca is an exceptional case of an author subject to self-censorship and, after his death, to deliberate manipulation and “cleansing” of his image by surviving family members. As a result his works and thought have been inaccurately discussed, and they remain imperfectly known and in some cases all but unknown. At the time of his death Lorca was best known for his *Gypsy Ballads*, still his most popular and accessible, yet somewhat unrepresentative book. Lesser-known volumes of poetry, and those dramas found unoffensive by his heirs, were published or reprinted in 1938. His central but difficult *Poet in New York*, incorporating an *Ode to Walt Whitman* privately published in 1933, first appeared in 1940; *The House of Bernarda Alba*, suppressed by his family, in 1945. In 1954 his family “rediscovered” the early but important drama *The Butterfly’s Evil Trick* (“butterfly” is a Spanish slang term for homosexual). Only in 1974 was the long-unavailable *Impressions and Landscapes* reprinted. The overtly pederastic and Pirandellian *The Public* was published from an incomplete draft MS, over his relatives’ opposition, in 1976; the final text is still unavailable. (The play was very well received when premiered in Spain in 1987; its title has been borrowed for a major Spanish theatrical magazine.) The *Sonnets of Dark Love* were withheld by his family and published clandestinely in 1983. Important juvenilia are only slowly being made available, and of his extensive correspondence only that part without reference to sexual themes has been published.

Lorca was given to discussing works in advance

of or during composition. Among those he mentioned are *The Destruction of Sodom*, in which frustration of homosexual desire causes incest, *The Blackball*, “the tragedy of a homosexual in conflict with society,” and *The Beautiful Beast*, a treatment of zoophilia. These exist only as tiny fragments or in the published recollections of his friends.

It is difficult and risky to outline Lorca’s thought without full access to his works, but it is known in part. Central to his writings is the power, universality, and goodness of the sexual and reproductive instinct and opposition to forces—especially the Catholic church—which repress and frustrate it. In his plays, many of which have female protagonists, he treats the frustrated desire for offspring; a long religious poem presents a beautiful crucified Christ as a figure of sexual liberation. A second current in his thought is the need for spiritual, cultural, and economic reform of Spanish and world society. Finally, there is the theme of isolation and melancholy. He explores poetically problems of self-acceptance and relating to a hostile world, the difficulty of transcending isolation through love, and a general existential and irresolvable anguish.

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