

## Duende

Love in Spanish is amor. Getting to the meaning of amor in Spanish is attempted below:

The Spanish poet and theater director, Federico Garcia Lorca, gave a lecture in 1933 in Buenos Aires titled “Juego y teoria del duende” (Play and Theory of the Duende) in which he addressed the fiery spirit behind what makes great performances stir the emotions.

“The duende, then, is a power, not a work. It is a struggle, not a thought. I have heard an old maestro of the guitar say, ‘The duende is not in the throat; the duende climbs up inside you, from the soles of the feet. It’s meaning is not a question of ability, but of true, living style, of blood, and of the most ancient cultures’ spontaneous creation...everything that has black sounds in it, has duende.”

That definition doesn’t quite work out completely, although Lorca does use terms in describing the qualities of duende. A meaning for the untranslatable usually ends up being borrowed from the original language and becoming a loan word.

The word “duende” often represents an emotion or response to a selected piece of art. Perhaps this is exactly what makes it so difficult to translate. **Can you ever really translate a feeling into words?**

How would you translate this beautiful, difficult concept into English?

### Duende (art)

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From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**Duende** is a difficult-to-define word used in the Spanish arts, including performing arts. From the [original meaning](#) (a fairy- or goblin-like creature in Spanish and Latin American mythology), the artistic and especially musical term was derived. "Tener duende" ("having duende") can be loosely translated as *having soul*, a heightened state of emotion, expression and [authenticity](#), often connected with [flamenco](#). <sup>[1]</sup>



### Origins of the term

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*El duende* is the spirit of evocation. It comes from inside as a physical/emotional response to music. It is what gives you chills, makes you smile or cry as a bodily reaction to an artistic performance that is particularly expressive. Folk music in general, especially flamenco, tends to embody an authenticity that comes from a people whose culture is enriched by diaspora and hardship; vox populi, the human

condition of joys and sorrows. Drawing on popular usage and Spanish folklore, Duende (art)

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[\[edit\]](#)Origins of the term

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*El duende* is the spirit of evocation. It comes from inside as a physical/emotional response to music. It is what gives you chills, makes you smile or cry as a bodily reaction to an artistic performance that is particularly expressive. Folk music in general, especially flamenco, tends to embody an authenticity that comes from a people whose culture is enriched by diaspora and hardship; vox populi, the human condition of joys and sorrows. Drawing on popular usage and Spanish folklore, [Federico García Lorca](#) first developed the aesthetics of Duende in a lecture he gave in [Buenos Aires](#) in 1933, "Juego y teoría del duende" ("Play and Theory of the Duende"). <sup>[2]</sup>

According to Christopher Maurer, editor of "In Search of Duende", at least four elements can be isolated in Lorca's vision of duende: irrationality, earthiness, a heightened awareness of death, and a dash of the diabolical. The duende is a demonic earth spirit who helps the artist see the limitations of intelligence, reminding him that "ants could eat him or that a great arsenic lobster could fall suddenly on his head"; who brings the artist face-to-face with death, and who helps him create and

communicate memorable, spine-chilling art. The duende is seen, in Lorca's lecture, as an alternative to style, to mere virtuosity, to God-given grace and charm (what Spaniards call "angel"), and to the classical, artistic norms dictated by the muse. Not that the artist simply surrenders to the duende; he or she has to battle it skillfully, "on the rim of the well", in "hand-to-hand combat". To a higher degree than the muse or the angel, the duende seizes not only the performer but also the audience, creating conditions where art can be understood spontaneously with little, if any, conscious effort. It is, in Lorca's words, "a sort of corkscrew that can get art into the sensibility of an audience... the very dearest thing that life can offer the intellectual." The critic Brook Zern has written, of a performance of someone with duende, "it dilates the mind's eye, so that the intensity becomes almost unendurable... There is a quality of first-timeness, of reality so heightened and exaggerated that it becomes unreal..."<sup>[3]</sup>

Lorca writes: "The duende, then, is a power, not a work. It is a struggle, not a thought. I have heard an old maestro of the guitar say, 'The duende is not in the throat; the duende climbs up inside you, from the soles of the feet.' This means it is not a question of ability, but of true, living style, of blood, of the most ancient culture, of spontaneous creation." He suggests, "...everything that has black sounds in it, has duende. [I.e. emotional 'darkness'] [...] This 'mysterious power which everyone senses and no philosopher explains' is, in sum, the spirit of the earth, the same duende that scorched the heart of Nietzsche, who searched in vain for its external forms on the Rialto Bridge and in the music of Bizet, without knowing that the duende he was pursuing had leaped straight from the Greek mysteries to the dancers of Cadiz or the beheaded, Dionysian scream of Silverio's *siguiriya*." [...] "The duende's arrival always means a radical change in forms. It brings to old planes unknown feelings of freshness, with the quality of something newly created, like a miracle, and it produces an almost religious enthusiasm." [...] "All arts are capable of *duende*, but where it finds greatest range, naturally, is in music, dance, and spoken poetry, for these arts require a living body to interpret them, being forms that are born, die, and open their contours against an exact present." <sup>[2]</sup>

[edit]Example of contemporary application of the term

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In March 2005 [Jan Zwicky](#) ([University of Victoria](#)) used the notion of *duende* in the context of [contemporary music](#) at a symposium organized by Continuum Contemporary Music & the Institute for Contemporary Culture at the [Royal Ontario Museum](#), an event televised by Big Ideas:

[The second way music can be new is] when it possesses *duende*: "black sounds", as Lorca called them, the dark counterpoise to [Apollo's](#) light, music in which we hear death sing.... *Duende* lives in blue notes, in the break in a singer's voice, in the scrape of resined horsehair hitting sheep gut We are more accustomed to its presence in jazz and the blues, and it is typically a feature of music in performance, or music in which performance and composition are not separate acts. But it is also audible in the work of classically oriented composers who are interested in the physical dimensions of sound, or in sound as a physical property of the world. Even if it is structurally amorphous or naïvely traditional, music whose newness lies in its *duende* will arrest our attention because of its insistence on honoring the death required to make the song: we sense the gleam of the knife, we smell the blood.... In reflecting on the key images of Western music's two-part invention - the *duende* of the tortoise and the radiance of Apollonian emotional geometry - we are reminded that originality is truly radical, that it comes from the root, from the mythic origins of the art.<sup>[4]</sup> (*note: in Greek myth Apollo kills a tortoise to [create the first lyre](#)*).

Australian music artist, [Nick Cave](#) discussed *duende* in his lecture pertaining to the nature of the love song (Vienna, 1999):

In his brilliant lecture entitled "The Theory and Function of Duende" [Federico García Lorca](#) attempts to shed some light on the eerie and inexplicable sadness that lives in the heart of certain works of art. "All that has dark sound has *duende*", he says, "that mysterious power that everyone feels but no philosopher can explain." In contemporary rock music, the area in which I operate, music seems less inclined to have its soul, restless and quivering, the sadness that Lorca talks about. Excitement, often; anger, sometimes: but true sadness, rarely, [Bob Dylan](#) has always had it. [Leonard Cohen](#) deals specifically in it. It pursues [Van Morrison](#) like a black dog and though he tries to he cannot escape it. [Tom Waits](#) and [Neil Young](#) can summon it. It haunts [Polly Harvey](#). My friends the [Dirty Three](#) have it by the bucket load. The band [Spiritualized](#) are excited by it. [Tindersticks](#) desperately want it, but all in all it would appear that *duende* is too fragile to survive the brutality of technology and the ever increasing acceleration of the music industry. Perhaps there is just no money in sadness, no dollars in *duende*. Sadness or *duende* needs space to breathe. Melancholy hates haste and floats in silence. It must be handled with care." All love songs must contain *duende*. For the love song is never truly happy. It must first embrace the potential for pain. Those songs that speak of love without having within in their lines an ache or a sigh are not love songs at all but rather Hate Songs disguised as love

songs, and are not to be trusted. These songs deny us our humanness and our God-given right to be sad and the air-waves are littered with them. The love song must resonate with the susurrations of sorrow, the tintinnabulation of grief. The writer who refuses to explore the darker regions of the heart will never be able to write convincingly about the wonder, the magic and the joy of love for just as goodness cannot be trusted unless it has breathed the same air as evil - the enduring metaphor of Christ crucified between two criminals comes to mind here - so within the fabric of the love song, within its melody, its lyric, one must sense an acknowledgement of its capacity for suffering.<sup>[5]</sup>

[[edit](#)]Sources

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- Hirsch, Edward (2003) *The Demon and the Angel: Searching for the Source of Artistic Inspiration*. Harcourt Brace International. ISBN 0156027445
- [Nick Cave's Love Song Lecture, October 21, 2000](#)
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## Game Theory & Elf

Federico García Lorca, Madrid, 1933

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since 1918, I entered the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid until 1928, when I left, finished my studies in Philosophy, I have heard in this fine hall, where he went to correct the frivolity of the old aristocracy French beach Spanish, nearly a thousand lectures.

Eager to air and sun, I so bored that I felt when leaving a light ash covered nearly ready to become irritated pepper.

No. I do not want to enter into the room that terrible drone of boredom threaded all the heads by a tenuous thread of sleep and placed in the eye of a tiny group of listeners pinpricks.

So simple, with the record in my poetic voice of timber has no lights, no corners of hemlock, and sheep are suddenly knives of irony, I'll see if I can give you a simple lesson on the hidden spirit of the sore Spain.

The one in the skin of a bull spread among Júcar Guadalete or Pisuerga Sil (I will not mention the waves flow with colored lion's mane waving the plate), as often hears it said: "This has much duende ". Manuel Torres, great artist of the Andalusian people, said one who sang: "You have a voice, you know the styles, but never succeed because you have no duende."

In Andalusia, the rock of Jaén and Cádiz conch, people speak constantly of duende and find out with flair as effective. The wonderful singer El Lebrijano, Debla creator, said: "The days that I sing with duende no one can with me," the old Gypsy dancer La Malena said a day listening Brailowsky touch a piece of Bach: "Ole! That has duende! "but was bored by Gluck and Brahms and Darius Milhaud. And Manuel Torres, the oldest man in the blood

