

and you did nothing but just stand there, gazing out  
at the bay where cross-shaped lights  
over the fishing boats blinked on and off.

## BEYOND LORCA

“A dead man in Spain is more alive as a dead man  
than anyplace else in the world,” Lorca said,  
and that “throughout the country everything  
finds its final, metallic value in death.”

It seems he became the astringent spirit of his words,  
the harsh incantatory trill of deep song, but I could  
only pretend I felt his words, much less, believed them  
until I lived in Spain thirty-six years after he was shot  
in the olive grove at Fuente Grande. I had been touring  
the Alhambra and Generalife in August, and had descended  
the exhaust-choked hill to the Hotel Washington Irving  
where lorries took the Cuesta de Gomerez trek in 1936  
with men trussed like pigs, to be shot in Granada cemetery.  
I walked along this treeless street under two o'clock sun,  
one of those almost shadeless afternoons made famous in  
the middle novels of Hemingway, with the heat knifing through  
awnings and shuttered windows, and everyone at siesta,  
napping at home or cooling off in sawdust-floored bars  
like La Pajarera, where thirsty, I dipped in for a beer.  
No one swapped more than puffs of words at this hour;  
there was the matching of dominoes, the pinging ricochet  
of pinball, the near passiveness of mass silent prayer.  
Behind me a gypsy girl, no taller than my waist, gyrated  
a red hula hoop chirping *Americano tonto*, so I walked out  
and sat in the shade of a wall edged with bottle shards.  
Across the street, a bombed-out stone building, a church,  
forsaken since the war, waded in dusty sunlight.  
An uncollared Doberman threaded between its torn iron grille  
and shattered entablature and hewn beams with the ease  
of familiarity, its tongue wagging, its ribs countable.

I chewed a toothpick while the dog squatted reflexively  
and let out a stream of piss over a skeletal windowframe,  
a stained glass of Christ with the halo still intact.  
Two blocks down, the Civil Guard, Franco's peace keepers,  
whistled down alleys and tested storefront locks as the sun  
flecked off their black patent leather caps, their spit-shined  
knee-high boots, the blue gun metal of their sub-machine guns.  
The street, otherwise abandoned, was even without cars  
and the lugubrious Spanish pop songs on radios duelling  
window to window. As the two Civil Guard neared the church—  
they must not have seen me across the way—I watched them  
almost pass but heard two metallic clicks—their safety locks  
switched off—and standing, I saw them aim their guns  
toward the church, squint through sights, and shoot  
such an interminable round of fire that it effaced  
the dog, obliterated it except for a black tuft  
of its hair which floated horribly up and away  
even in that seemingly windless day. The Civil Guard  
laughed together, looking at that single tuft of hair  
until they heard me say *Jesus Christ*, and eyed me keenly,  
brushed by their guns, and laughed again, walking off  
in unison, smoke rising neatly behind their shoulders.

### THE LAUGHTER OF BOYS

The laughter of boys lights up after school  
on the black asphalt parking lot  
near my apartment picture window.  
It is the cackle of a bonfire, but a fire  
that crackles over a stack of green logs,  
a sound that comes from so far in  
I can't remember when it left.  
And when I watch the boys  
flick lit matches at each other  
and dodge the bites of the yellow-blue flames  
that hiss out on the ground like innocence,