

THE WHITE MAGIC OF MUSIC

Paco Mitchell

Your account of sobbing on the airplane, at 36,000 feet, was very touching, Russ. What a beautiful image! Your father held you in his arms when you were a babe, singing cowboy songs to your chubby self. Daddy's little baby-fat cherub! But why? Because that was his way of healing his stuttering-affliction. I imagine that your baby's utter innocence helped him *find his authentic voice*. Wow! Very moving. Your experience obviously touches on profound mysteries.

No sooner do I type those words than *yet another flamenco letra* comes to mind. This one belongs to the *palo* known as *nanas*, or flamenco lullabies. These are songs that mothers and fathers of Andalucía, grandmothers and fathers, or siblings and others, sing to little babies to rock and "lull" them to sleep. The poetic letras are simple, sometimes nonsensical, but always—to my ear—beautiful. I don't know how many *letras por nanas* exist, but it could easily be in the thousands. They are learned, improvised, and passed on in endless variety. Here is one *nana* that, for many reasons, I love. You can see how simple they are:

<i>Este niño chiquito</i>	This little baby
<i>No tiene cuna</i>	Does not have a cradle
<i>Su padre es carpintero</i>	His father is a carpenter
<i>Y le hará una.¹</i>	And will make him one.

At this level, it does not take an unusually powerful imagination to sense what deep bonding a parent and child must undergo during this most ancient, bedtime ritual—all the way back to the caves. I would even say, back to our "animal selves." Jung often spoke of "participation mystique," psychological moments where we lose track of our personal boundaries in certain kinds of experiences. One might say that we lose ourselves, then find ourselves, *in our love for the Other*. Babies may have names, but they don't have such "boundaries" yet. Thus, being open in special ways, they open us in special ways.

So, your father's love for you must have been a healing antidote for whatever ailed him. And forty-some years later, your airborne-tears suggest that his love found a place in you, perhaps like a holographic resonance.

¹ The singer here is Bernardo el de los lobitos. The guitarist is Perico el del lunar ("he of the little mole"); and the LP disk is from the Hispavox anthology, *Antología del Cante Flamenco y Cante Jondo*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MjYAmrFS6qs>

Flamenco and Fado . . .

You're right about the differences between *flamenco* and *fado*, Russ. But at the same time, there is a degree of correlation or resonance between the two, like a family resemblance. What do they have in common? What they share is the commonality of suffering, sadness, and pain.² So, musically and linguistically, we could say that flamenco and fado are close, just as Spain and Portugal are in close proximity, rubbing shoulders on cartographers' maps. One can feel that closeness at work in the flamenco name *soleá*, which, as I said before, derives from the Spanish word *soledad*: Solitude, loneliness, *soleá*.³ (In the Andalusian dialect, final consonants are not usually pronounced,⁴ including the "z" in Andaluz, as in "Andalu'.")

As a flamenco *aficionado*, I got accustomed to learning "incorrect" Spanish. Thus, after years of hard work learning "proper" Spanish in high school and college, it all went out the window! I had to *cultivate* the Andalu' accent, lest I sound too much like a freakish gringo among my Spanish gypsy flamenco friends.) *When in Rome . . .*

Anyway, similar *emotional overtones* reverberate as much through flamenco as in the Portuguese equivalent, *fado*, which means "fate." There is also a word in Portuguese that means virtually the same thing as the Spanish *soleá*. The word is *saudade*—a very *fadista* kind of word; it translates into English as "loneliness or longing." That's what *soleá* means. The flamenco forms or *palos* are more extensively developed than in fado.

You mentioned Mariza, Russ.

Well, she happens to be my favorite contemporary Portuguese *fado* singer today, and I had the privilege of attending a concert she gave in Santa Fe, NM, some years ago, with my partner, my son, and I. Since my partner had lived in Portugal for ten years before moving to Santa Fe, she spoke fluent Portuguese. And since I was a Romance Language Major in my university years, I was able to learn enough Portuguese from my partner, in our many conversations, that I could at least understand a surprising amount of spoken Portuguese—which sounds a lot like Russian!⁵ We were able to carry out entire conversations, in which she spoke Portuguese, I

² I know that these emotional states—suffering, sadness, and pain—are *universals*; but that does not mean that all cultures are equally hell-bent on cultivating them for their artistic merit—that is to say, the gold that they can yield.

³

⁴ An overview: The Andalusian accent is known for frequently dropping final consonants, particularly the letter "s" at the end of words, and often also the "d" sound within words, resulting in a smoother and more fluid pronunciation compared to other Spanish dialects; this is considered a defining characteristic of Andalusian Spanish.

⁵ My partner and I had five language dictionaries in every main room of our house—Spanish, French, Portuguese, Italian, and German!

replied in Spanish, and we could understand one another. But, for all my interest and experience in performing and accompanying flamenco over the years, that one Mariza concert was the most beautiful, live-music performance I've ever seen or heard.

By the way, learning Latin-based languages was not something I set out to master as a child. I fell into it, so to speak, on my first day of classes in high school, as soon as I opened the door to my after-lunch Spanish class. As it turned out, Spanish was the foundation and gateway for practically everything I subsequently learned in high school and university. During those many years of language study, I came across the dictum: "Whoever possesses another language, possesses another soul." I have learned the truth of that saying. With Spanish and French, then, plus a little bit of Italian, Portuguese and German under my belt, in varying degrees, I am grateful for the soulful feeling of inner amplitude those "other" languages have afforded me. And, as you know, of course, decades of pursuing word-etymologies have also deepened my love of language, one word at a time.

The Monochord Dream . . .

These kinds of images, emotions, and experiences are now bringing to mind a dream that I had around half a century ago. The dream has *something* to do with your moving story about those, although I don't pretend to "understand" with any certainty just what the connection is.

In the dream:

I am walking down the corridor of an art school. To each side are rooms, and in each room a different art-form is being practiced. I am looking for the activity that suits me as the best, i.e., the most authentic. The way I do this is by plucking a string that is stretched between my sternum and my pubic arch. I walk slowly, plucking, then listening for any resonance from any of the rooms. It is only when I reach the end of the long corridor that I hear the resonating sound. Inside the room there is a "drawing class," where I engage in an arm-wrestling contest with a young male stranger.

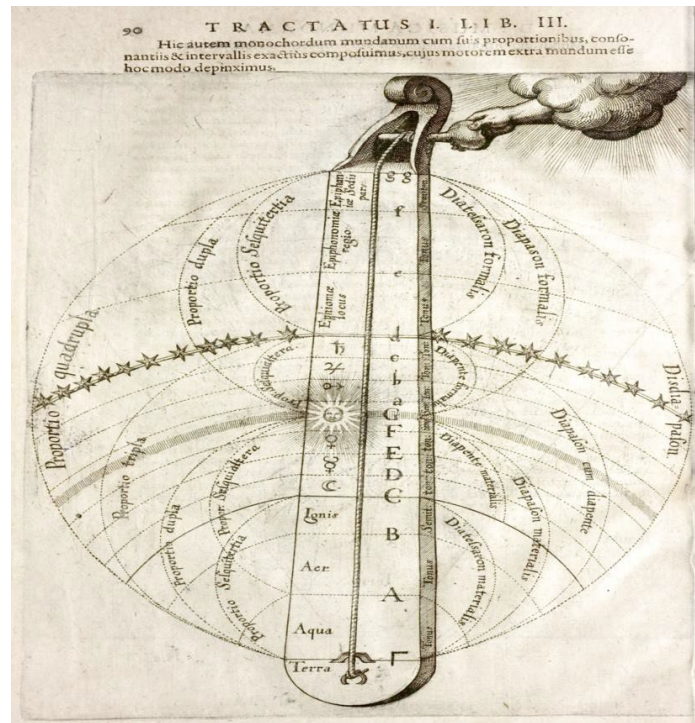
I refer to this as the "the Monochord Dream," for obvious reasons. At the time I recorded the dream, I had not yet read Jung's work, and knew nothing of his alchemical works. I recorded that dream *well before* making the decision to record ALL of my dreams, so I knew nothing about alchemy at the time. But this one too seemed to follow Jung's indication that "the dream is its own interpretation," so, no mental gymnastics were required—it just made sense to me. Today, it seems clear that this simple dream can be read for its alchemical insights. When I first saw a copy of the 1618 drawing of the Monochord by the alchemist Robert Fludd, I knew immediately that the alchemist's beautiful drawing pertained directly to my earlier dream.⁷

If alchemical motifs could be appearing so clearly in the dream, but without any prior "knowledge" on my part, didn't that indicate something about the nature of alchemy in its

⁷ <https://magictransistor.tumblr.com/post/63534891765/in-1618-robert-fludd-devised-a-mundane-monochor>

interactions with the natural psyche? Didn't that suggest that alchemy had something to do with the structure and dynamics of the psyche? Isn't that pretty much what Jung discovered after such heroic and self-sacrificing investigations? And if this level of alchemical complexity informed the human psyche as far back as the Paleolithic, didn't that suggest that alchemical processes were to some extent inherent in the cosmos?

This may not seem like a "convincing argument" to someone who has not experienced such autonomous phenomena; but to someone for whom the experiences are commonly repeated, the arguments are given with the experiences.



Medicine for Our Dire Straits

Russell Lockhart

Paco, your foray into the white magic of music has prompted a flood of possible lines of response. Your drawing attention to the state of participation mystique that was present when my father was singing to me as a baby helps deepen that experience even now as aged as I am. Describing it as an energy field takes it out of the realm of ego consciousness and emphasizes the mutuality of energy fields, that is, both parties are affected. My father's stuttering was abated and healed. But what happened to me, the baby? I was too young to remember this experience. Yet, the psyche remembered it.

To me, this suggests that the psyche's memory processes are deeper and perhaps more profound than the memory processes of consciousness. And this implies that the psyche's memory is ineluctably involved in dreams. Ego consciousness remembers a dream, but the psyche's memory processes must be involved in creating the dream.

Remembering that memory itself is related to the Muses, suggests that dreams

inherently are created through the various “arts” of the Muses. Where music is involved, the Muse Euterpe is involved. One of her appellations is “the giver of delight.” I’m now thinking that as I heard my father belting out those cowboy vocals, I experienced Euterpe’s delight and it stayed with me. That is certainly what I felt when my dad told me about his singing to me as a way to treat his stuttering.

The core of what you are articulating in your discernments is the nature of The Other and I believe that the deep point you are making is that music has a way of by-passing the rigidities and limitations of ego consciousness and creating an invitational atmosphere for the participation of the Other. It is the very abstractness of music that is responsible for this, an abstraction beyond words, beyond language, beyond conscious restraints. It is what Kandinsky meant when he said he wanted his art to be like the abstract of music and in doing this, he helped give birth to modern art.

What you say about flamenco and fado gives witness to this in the sense that the music and the singing give voice to the unsayable. Rationality fails to reach deep enough. But music “gets through” and brings forth something from the Other in response.

I like what you say about dreams as gifts. I now experience this strongly with every dream. This attitude I believe is helpful in developing the right attitude toward the Other. The idea of dreams as gifts helps the ego to welcome the dream (no matter the content or appearance) and to treat the dream with the proper respect. This also helps one to realize that a dream is not one’s property. I’m reminded of how the Puritans treated the gift of the peace pipe from the Indians. They mounted the [peace pipe on the mantel or the wall. When the Indians saw this, they took it back. They became known as “Indian givers.” We think of this as pejorative. But what was happening was the need for the Indians to correct something deeply wrong that the Puritans did not understand. That the peace pipe must be circulated just as blood needs to circulate. That is what made for community, that is what animated the soul. Community means “to gift together.” Dreams as gifts suggest to me that, like the peace pipe, dreams need to be circulated, and that is a missing ingredient in today’s lack of community. I’m reminded here of our entering the age of Aquarius, and how, as a human sign, the water-bearer may bring something from the deep well (dreams) and bring it forth to share gift-like with others. This would be the sense of an Aquarian community.

Your reference to the idea that the dream is its own interpretation suggests that dreams do not need interpretation as much as they need attention to what the dream hints at in terms of *what one is to do*. This is always something ego consciousness finds puzzling. So, when your dream pictures you looking for the “room of resonance” for making art, you end up in a center room, but arm-wrestling a young man. There is no way your ego consciousness would have come up with the arm-wrestling image. That is the gift of the dream. And it pictures what you must do to make art.

And how does one do that? You are not going to wrestle anyone literally. So, you must do it imaginatively. This is where the ego consciousness comes to play an important part. It must undertake the “work” of what the dream suggests. So, the ego must open itself, not to its own agenda, but to what the dream proposes as the necessary task—as irrational as that may seem to the ego.

In a sense, this is what the camel herders do, no matter how irrational it may be, they know the medicine that the music of the chants can play in forestalling tragedy. This way with the animal psyche is no doubt ancient, no doubt prehistoric, and no doubt almost totally lost to the Western mind. It is a loss we need to recover, and I believe one way of doing so is to relate to our dreams as gifts and to find ways of acting on their hints.

The hand in Flood’s drawing can only be the hand of the Other. We do not know what the Other is, but the drawing suggests, and our experience tells us, that we know that it exists. But our ego consciousness can be drawn away from this in its preoccupation with the outer world to an extreme degree and to our utter detriment.

So, the answer to your question Paco, are your reflections obsolete for our times, is a resounding NO. You are picturing what is necessary medicine for our dire straits.