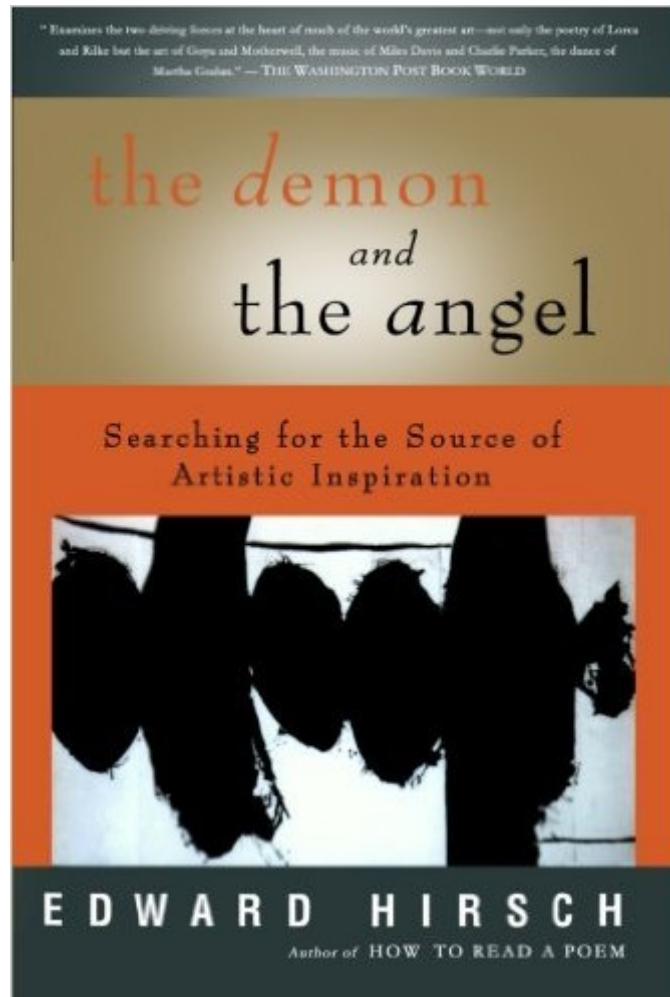


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The Demon And The Angel: Searching For The Source Of Artistic Inspiration



Synopsis

A work of art, whether a painting, a dance, a poem, or a jazz composition, can be admired in its own right. But how does the artist actually create his or her work? What is the source of an artist's inspiration? What is the force that impels the artist to set down a vision that becomes art? In this groundbreaking book, Edward Hirsch explores the concept of duende, that mysterious, highly potent power of creativity that results in a work of art. With examples ranging from Federico García Lorca's wrestling with darkness as he discovered the fountain of words within himself to Martha Graham's creation of her most emotional dances, from the canvases of Robert Motherwell to William Blake's celestial visions, Hirsch taps into the artistic imagination and explains, in terms illuminating and emotional, how different artists respond to the power and demonic energy of creative impulse.

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Customer Reviews

Flashes of inspiration, of originality, of that conjoining of synapses that transmit creativity to the mind/eye/hand/soul of the receiver and bring forth significant art have been assigned to a Muse, a connection with some other place, always undefineable until this eloquent little book by the intoxicatingly intelligent Edward Hirsch. As erudite as this well researched book is, it is more a companion to the learning eye and mind, much like his other forays into how to read poetry, etc. Using the centuries-old concept of the "daimon" or demon as best illustrated through Lorca's "duende", Hirsch spends the first half of his book drawing us into a familiarity and asks us to be vulnerable to the concept of a mysterious spirit that enters from the bowels of the earth the body of

the writer, poet, musician, composer, dancer, and induces creativity. His examples and quotations from a wide range of artists are convincing. And just when we feel sure that we understand the creative source, Hirsch takes us a step further and discusses the Rilke belief that inspiration comes down from the heavens as an angel to soar through the mind of the receptive artist and provides that out of body, inexplicable touch that we call creativity. With both sources - one emerging from the bowels of the earth as a dark demon and the other descending through the firmament to transiently rest inside the soul - Hirsch addresses just what is "creativity" and how we can better find it and embrace it. This small book speaks volumes to artists and readers alike. This is not a "self help" book, but rather a source of inspiration as powerful as any canvas or poem or symphony. Read and improve your connection with art.

Employing as touchstones Garcia Lorca's consideration of duende and Rilke's concept of the angel, Edward Hirsch constructs a convincingly argued, evocative "search for the source of artistic inspiration." In lucid, forceful prose Hirsch draws illustration for his argument not only from poetry (art in words) but from all the arts. His thought-provoking investigation deepens our understanding not only of the source of artistic inspiration but also of the interrelation of the arts and their common inspirational wellsprings. His illustrations and exemplifications range widely among virtually all modern artistic innovators. By coming at the question of inspiration through all the arts his discussion deepens and enriches the reader's understanding, leaving him or her enlightened and stimulated.

This book allegedly sets out to discover where inspiration for art comes from. In order to do this, the author focuses heavily on the work of Federico Garcia Lorca and his theories of Duende - a dark primal emotional state from which Lorca drew much inspiration. The back cover of the book gives a vast listing of other artists, authors and poets whose names are thrown out teasingly. Unfortunately, people like Hemingway, Plath, Blake and Rimbaud are only briefly touched upon in the book, while heavy emphasis is placed on Lorca's work. As much as I find the concepts of Duende fascinating, I would rather just read Lorca's books. 'Demon and the Angel' suffers from misrepresentation, and readers should be warned. This is not a search for artistic inspiration. A description that is far closer to the truth would be 'Investigating Lorca's Theories and their Relationships to Other Artists'. Still, it does prove a fascinating read, and the limited space all the other artists are given is still a decent sampling of their art. Pretentious at times, but still a fairly motivational book for writers and artists. Just be warned who the real star of the book is.

This is a wonderful introduction to Lorca's concept of the Duende, aimed at educating the Western mind to what the Spanish gypsies have always known.

I am teaching this book in my college intermediate poetry writing class. Wonderful thinking on inspiration, the artistic mind. Hirsch knows his stuff.

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