

Dreams and Duende: When Magic Finds Its Way

Jordi Borràs-García

V. told me her dream: she was walking down a long, narrow corridor with many closed doors. She stopped before one, pushed it open, and found a damp cellar where almost nothing could be seen. As she spoke, I noticed a tremor in her voice unlike her usual tone. The scene wasn't spectacular, yet something changed in the air—as if a current had passed through us.

At that moment, I found myself silent. My mind, of course, holds theories, maps, techniques. But sometimes those tools feel as clumsy as a dictionary in the middle of a poem. The dream is alive and asks for something else. It asks for silence. And risk. And a body willing to be pierced by what moves through it.

There are moments when logic must give way. It's not about understanding too much or drawing conclusions too soon. It's about being there, as if the dream were improvising in the room and the therapist had to follow the rhythm. What matters then is not to interpret, but to sustain the mystery.

I call it mystery because no word quite fits. Others might call it trance, magic, or presence.

Federico García Lorca, the great Andalusian poet, called it *duende*.

What Escapes

In its popular origin, a duende was that mischievous spirit who made noises in houses and moved things around. But in his 1933 lecture *Theory and Play of the Duende*, Lorca gave it a deeper meaning. True art, he said, doesn't come from the angel or the muse, but from the duende: a dark, earthy force that tears the artist from himself and connects him with the blood and with death.

Duende is not technique. It can appear in a cracked voice, a clumsy step, an imperfect chord. What matters is not perfection but raw truth. Duende cannot be controlled; it is invoked, awaited, welcomed.

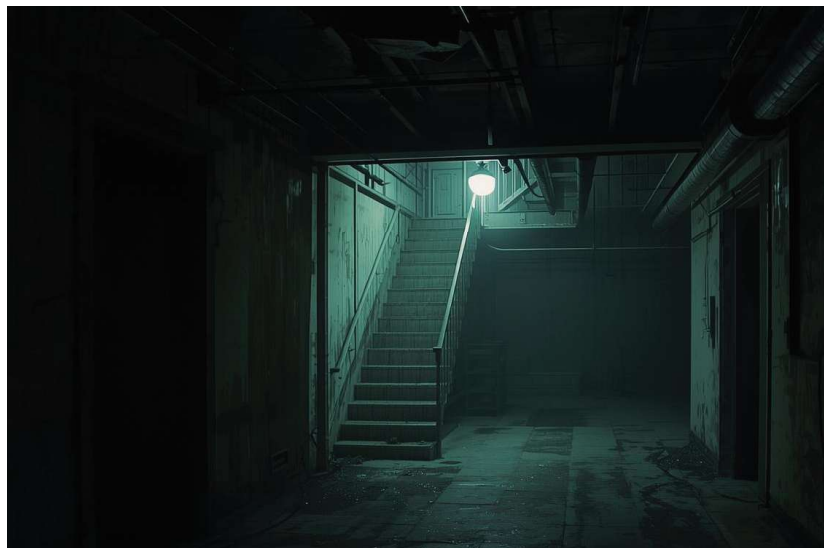
In therapy, it's the same. Duende doesn't arrive through correct application of a method. It comes when therapist and patient open to the unpredictable; when they make room for what escapes control.

Opening Cracks

Dreams are not equations. They don't obey linear logic but a grammar of images that always overflows us. Trying to fix them into a single meaning is to kill them.

Working with a dream is like standing before a half-open door: if you force it, it closes; if you wait, it may open a little more. What matters is the attitude. Holding the thread of the unknown without taming it too soon.

When a patient shares a dream, what matters is not only what they say but *how* they say it. A hesitation, a pause, a change in tone: that's where the living energy gathers.



One listens with the whole body, not just the mind. When we surrender to what wants to happen, something numinous may appear.

Staying in the Groove

Free jazz musicians use a revealing phrase: *to be in the groove*. It means that moment when improvisation flows on its own, without calculation. They don't quite know what they're doing, but they know not to interfere. If they do, the magic breaks.

Dreamwork follows that same rhythm. The patient improvises with their images; the therapist responds, follows, lets themselves be carried by an invisible current. Neither has control. The groove leads them.

In flamenco, we call it *duende*; in jazz, *groove*; in therapy, perhaps *dreamflow*. In all cases, it's about letting life speak through us.



The Visit of the Black Dog

C. told me she dreamed of an old train station. On the platform stood a black dog, staring at her. "It frightened me, but I couldn't look away," she said. And began to cry.

I could have associated the dog with many things: shadow, death, instinct. But I felt that if I rushed to explain it, I would ruin the intensity of the moment. So I said simply: "Stay with that gaze. Describe it now, as if the dog were here."



The room changed. C. lowered her voice, almost whispering: "It's as if it has always known me. As if it knows what I don't." Her crying deepened but became freer. In that instant, no manual applies. Only that energy in the air reminding us we are on sacred ground.

That place, to me, is the territory of *duende*.

Risk and Authenticity

Both flamenco and dreams demand risk. Lorca said *duende* "burns the blood like a tropic of glass." It's not comfortable, not soothing. Likewise, a true dream doesn't always console: sometimes it shakes, frightens, disarms.

But that's where authenticity lives. When a client dares to enter their dream undefended, and when the therapist dares to accompany them without the safety net of theory, something irreplaceable happens.

That tremor is the living matter of therapy, as it is of art.

The Consulting Tablao

I like to think of each dream session as small *tablao*. The patient arrives with a broken voice (the dream) and I accompany them like a careful guitarist. Sometimes the voice falters, sometimes the rhythm is lost. It doesn't matter. What matters is being available for that instant when everything lights up.

In a *tablao*, when *duende* appears, no one doubts it: goosebumps rise, silence fills the room. In therapy, when a dream truly touches us, the same happens. No explanation is needed; everyone feels it.

Invoking Duende in Dreams

Dreamwork, seen closely, is an art. Not only because it demands sensitivity, but because it involves invoking a force that cannot be forced. The therapist needs technique, yes; but also humility to accept that the essential often happens beyond what we know.

Lorca said *duende* “does not come unless it sees the possibility of death.” Dreams, in their own way, confront us with that same border: they pull us out of comfort and remind us that something vaster speaks through us.

Exploring dreams is not merely clinical practice. It's also aesthetic, existential, spiritual practice. It's invoking *duende* at the heart of the dream; letting life, in all its darkness and brilliance, speak through us.

And when it happens, no theory is needed. The charged silence that follows says it all.

Jordi Borràs-García, psychologist, has collaborated on film projects (most recently *Romería* by Carla Simón, presented at the Cannes International Film Festival), and in media as an advisor and communicator. He designed Spain's first training for psychologists and therapists, specialized in the therapeutic exploration of dreams and integrative professional clinical guidance.



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Annual Pledge Drive
Mid November 2025 -
January 31, 2026



LET'S TALK
DREAM RESEARCH
Saturday, February 21, 2026
starts at 12:00 ET
Antonio Zadra

Free Online Research Talk
with Antonio Zadra
February 21, 2026
(pre-registration required)



International Dream Conference
Ashland, Oregon
June 13-17, 2026

Links to information and online registration on the main IASD website: asdreams.org