

Today

Today the census announces that it may have undercounted three million Hispanics. They drift now, invisible, move through the country, like an army of ghosts from some Spanish Valley Forge, some Spanish Three Mile Island floating free on a river, the snow coming down like ash from the sky on three million lost pup tents, three million small dreams lifting up through the canvas, floating downstream like a chemical cloud.

Thirty years ago today Yevtushenko read at Boston University, screaming Voznesensky's "Goya, Goya, Goya" at the top of his lungs, and we walked out that night turned to Russians for a time, an army of poets, abominable snowmen, our footprints little gulags, new Chernobyls in the snow. And I thought of Lorca and the Spanish Civil War, how the villagers about to be executed cried out to the firing squads to say Lorca was among them, that his life must be spared, but they shot him anyway along with the others, in the lamplight as bright as three million small candles, the way Goya had seen it a hundred years before. They tossed their bodies into ditches, too many to count, their blood running free like a chemical spill.

And today my young student rides around with her boyfriend, a Russian apparatchik she met at a rave, who drives with his friends to a bank down in Hartford, tells her to wait in the back of the car, then calmly comes running across the parking lot, tosses the moneybags on the seat by her schoolbag, and she thinks of her test on the periodic elements, and a mother in Russia who is crying for her son, who is lost in America, flying down a freeway, snow on the top of his car like an island, a Chiclet, pieces flying up, little countries in the air.

And today armies of fathers are flying down to Hilton Head,
their golf clubs like rifles, their bags filled with money,
while their wives sort through book piles stacked up like snowdrifts
at Costcos and Sam's Clubs and BJ's and Wal-Marts,
as if they were looking for their lost sons and daughters,
who roam now at college, who ramble down hallways,
who want their lost hearts to do something like social work,
do ecstasy instead, sleep through Spanish, and finance,
drift now like zombies, like chemical brothers, to grocery stores,
to float down the international aisles past pasta, past rice, past Ramen Pride,
past can after can lined up like firing squads crying Goya, Goya, Goya.