

Paul E. Nelson: *Lorca Variations* is a book of yours that was created after you were not able to publish those translations of the Suites, as you had expected. Maybe you can tell us about that experience, and more importantly, about the process of writing the *Lorca Variations*.

Jerome Rothenberg: The experience was simply that I had been commissioned to do the complete Suites of Lorca by Farrar Straus, a big publisher in New York, and it was to be part of a large collected poems of Lorca in English. The biggest English language version of Lorca yet published. But my understanding was that I would also be permitted prior to that publication, to publish my translations as a separate volume. And I thought of this as my return to Lorca and a kind homage to a poet who had been important to me at the beginning of my career as a maker of poetry.

Well, publication plans changed for Farrar Straus and they rushed a big book into publication and suddenly I found that, I was included as part of this large volume, but without a separate publication as homage. And I felt very badly about that, but then figured I had *other* means for carrying through on paying my respects to Federico and so I entered into a process of writing in which I went back to a number of the poems in Suites, and with each poem I *extracted* all of the *English* nouns. In other words, this is my translation, and although it's Lorca's poems to start with, the words are words of *our* language or words that I selected as the poet translator. And I set the words up in columns and moved among the columns, picking out the words, all of the nouns in the Lorca poems, and sometimes in a very systematic way, sometimes in a very *free* way. But in each poem to have all of Lorca's nouns attended to. And poems emerged that on the one hand were very different, and on the other hand, were clearly Lorca. It was a step for me beyond translation. It's not paraphrased. It's really a way of creating new poems based on the gathering of words from the other poet and the result was a book of 33 poems plus one – 34 poems I called *The Lorca Variations*.