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MATERNAL FRUSTRATIONS
OF SOME CHARACTERS IN WORKS
BY FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA

by

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B. A., University of Santo Tomás, 1951

Presented in partial
fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts

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1957

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INTRODUCTION

The renowned poet-dramatist, Federico García Lorca, was born on June 5, 1899, in Fuentevaqueros, a small village nestled in the picturesque Granadine valley, where he spent the first few years of his life. His father, Don Federico García Rodríguez, a thriving man of the soil, married Doña Vicenta Lorca, who was a school teacher. Federico was the firstborn of this marriage. There are numerous intimations in his youthful years that predict the immensity and greatness to which he would ascend as poet-dramatist. R. M. Nadal tells us¹ that Federico was not able to speak until three years of age, but that a year after his birth he was following the rhythm of song by clapping his hands. He was able to hum popular tunes when but two years old.

A serious illness, infantile paralysis, befell him in the first few months of his life, and this left its manifestations with him through life, betraying itself by an almost imperceptible swaying motion of the body. Yet this infirmity is of little importance as far as Federico the man is concerned; his joviality and good fellowship offset this defect. But in Federico the boy, it made him adopt a contemplative attitude which was to increase his

¹ F. García Lorca, Poems; with English translation by Stephen Spender and J. L. Gili; introduction by R. M. Nadal. (London: The Dolphin, 1939), p. vii.

capacity for imagination. He observed everything in the world around him, thus developing a loving perception of the diminutive in art and nature which is characteristic of Granada. The child fought against his limitations and partially conquered them. His inability to participate actively in the games of other boys gives us our first insight to his later development as poet-dramatist. For his theater actually begins as a small boy. His first toy was a small theater which he purchased with his own money, by breaking open his savings bank. The toy theater was purchased at La Estrella del Norte, on the Calle de los Reyes Católicos, in Granada. Federico had to improvise plays to use with the toy theater, since none came with it. He was attracted to games of the theater at this time, even more so than by the adult theater. One of his favorite pastimes was to simulate the character of priest at an improvised altar from which he would deliver impressive sermons to the household servants. He liked to play at theater and at marionettes, to dress up the maids and to make them go out into the street--sometimes grotesquely dressed, or dressed as great ladies--wearing his mother's or his Aunt Isabel's street clothes. These games were priceless to him and one of his most valued and beloved characters in his make-believe plays was Dolores, his brother's nurse, who became the model for the servant in Bodas de Sangre and in Doña

Rosita la Soltera, o el Lenguaje de las Flores. From her he heard his first folk tales at the fireside when his parents passed the evening at the theater. Make-believe disguises charmed Federico the boy. They were like an unbreakable spell for he began to transform the world of fiction and fantasy into a living reality and to identify himself with it. Later he saw life as a sort of dramatic game, played on a great theater of the world.²

It is rarely that the dualism of art and life has been integrated in a fashion so simple, so spontaneous, and at the same time, so intense. That all this was basic to Federico's mature work and that he was certain to gain clarity and stature as he assimilated the traditions of life and culture about him, could not be foreseen from his first literary activities.

When Federico was seven years old he was studying music in the Colegio de Padres Escolapios in Almería and from here he returned to Granada and continued his music in El Instituto in the University.

One cannot say what led to his prodigious reading of the nineteenth century Spanish Romantics: José Espronceda y Delgado, José Zorrilla y Morál, and Gustavo Adolfo

² Alfredo de la Guardia, Lorca: Persona y Creación (Buenos Aires: Editorial Schapire, 1952), p. 163.

Béquer; the Latin American Modernists: Rubén Darío, José Asunción Silva, and Amado Nervo; the Spanish contemporaries of Modernism of the Generation of '98: Juan Ramón Jiménez, Antonio and Manuel Machado y Ruiz; and especially the writings of the 16th century Luis de Argote y Góngora and, through translations, since he had no working knowledge of a language other than Spanish, the French Symbolists: Paul Verlaine and Maurice Maeterlinck. To these must be added, besides Victor Hugo, the plays of Henrik Ibsen, William Shakespeare and Aristophanes for his comedy Lysistrata.³

Federico briefly attended the Colegio del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús, in Granada. In 1919 he enrolled in the University of Granada to pursue studies leading to a degree in law. He was a poor student and apparently seemed to pass his time in a world entirely of his own fabrication. He withdrew from the university without taking his degree, but he did return later, in 1923, and was graduated in law. From his fifteenth to his eighteenth birthday, Federico was reading and writing feverishly, with the counsel of friends and teachers at the Colegio, in Granada. He had learned to play the guitar and piano with unusual facility. In fact, one day while Federico was playing some sonatas from Beethoven on the piano, Fernando de los Ríos, President of

³ Edwin Honig, García Lorca. (London: PL, Editions Poetry London, 1945), *passim*.

the Centro Artístico de Granada, was awed by what he thought to be an extraordinary talent. He became interested in the young boy and took it upon himself to guide his development. This proved to be a crucial moment for Federico; for the patron, de los Ríos, not only helped him to direct his early steps as a poet, but throughout Federico's life and career he often provided the incentive for certain decisions which had important and far-reaching consequences for his art. Fernando de los Ríos's daughter married the poet's brother, Francisco. The latter is now teaching at Columbia University and directs the summer session of Spanish studies at Middlebury College.

Federico early joined a literary group in Granada. He took a student tour through Spain in 1917, the year in which he published his first article: a tribute to Zorilla on the one-hundredth anniversary of his birth.

In the following year, 1918, as a result of this tour with Professor Berruete and his class in the Theory of Literature and Art, Federico wrote and published a small book, Impresiones y Paisajes (Impressions and Landscapes). Unfortunately this work is no longer in print and is practically unobtainable. The trip had a far-reaching importance to Federico, as he was made acutely aware of himself as a Spaniard.

Prompted by his friend Fernando de los Ríos, the

late Jurist and Spanish Ambassador to the United States, who discerned an unusual value in his poetry, Federico, taking with him several copies of Impresiones y Paisajes and a manuscript of poems, left the University of Granada in 1919 to go to the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid, where he studied intermittently until 1928. Between 1919 and 1928 the hot summer months were spent at his home in Granada. At the Residencia, which was the Spanish equivalent of English college life, the artistic and intellectual center of Spain had been formed. The Residencia was established as result of the educational reform movement of 1898. It offered training in liberal arts and science in the enlightened manner of the best European universities. Attendance at lectures was voluntary, examinations were grouped over wide intervals, and the student was given as broad and as personal a choice in his studies as he could desire. The best teachers and professors of modern Spain lectured here, including the philosopher educator, Francisco Giner de los Rfos, who headed the movement. If there ever existed a high incentive for formal study, it was here at the Residencia. Yet, sad to relate, Federico remained passive and averse to seizing what many young Spaniards would have considered a rare opportunity for intellectual growth. He seldom attended lectures, but coming under the spell of a new kind of life

with new friendships, he finally gave up the idea of taking a degree in Madrid.

There were other things in Madrid after the First World War to stir the imagination of a young man of twenty from the provinces, already conscious of his unusual talents and seemingly confident of his future achievements. What he shared with his generation was enthusiasm for the work of the already well-established poets like Juan Ramón Jiménez, Antonio and Manuel Machado, and novelists like Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Miguel Unamuno, and Azorín. They were admired by the enthusiasts of Modernism because they achieved originality without regard for applause from the Madrid middle class or concern for the shifting tides of the literary movements from the continent.

Meanwhile, basking in the light of appreciative comradeship at the Residencia, the young poet did little to suggest the arduous compulsions of a great talent in the making. While Federico found an encouraging audience who would listen to his poems and improvisations for hours at a time, he had no apparent desire for publication. As one contemporary of García Lorca put it:

. . . Muchos versos le vinieron a la boca. A la boca, porque el poeta los recitaba en voz alta, según los pensaba, según los componía, y a veces tardaba en trasladarlos al papel y mucho más en darlos a la imprenta. Por eso, en aquellos años, cuando no había publicado ningún libro y sólo muy escasos poemas en algunas revistas juveniles, García Lorca gozaba ya de

fama en los círculos literarios, donde pasaban sus versos de labio en labio, como si fueran una tradición.⁴

In 1920, his first play, El Maleficio de la Mariposa (The Witchery of the Butterfly), was staged by Martínez Sierra in Barcelona, but it was unfavorably received by the public. This book was followed in 1921 by a book of poems, Libro de Poemas (Book of Poems). Between 1921 and 1922 Federico assisted Juan Ramón Jiménez in the publication of Indice. The poet had already written his second book, Canciones (Songs), but it was not published until 1927. Besides his Canciones, he had also written Poema del Cante Jondo (Poem of the Deep Song), in 1921-1922, but had not published it until 1931. During a visit to his home in 1923, he produced the puppet play, La Niña Que Riega la Albahaca y el Príncipe Preguntón (The Girl Who Waters the Sweet Basil and the Inquisitive Prince). Federico used his artistic talents and designed the sets, and the musical commentary with compositions by Debussy, Ravel, Albéniz, and Pedrell was arranged by de Falla, who also accompanied on the piano. In 1923, while at Granada, he had begun to paint earnestly. His Romancero Gitano (Book of Gypsy Ballads), written between 1924 and 1927, was published in 1928. The Romancero Gitano is perhaps the most widely read

⁴ Alfredo de la Guardia, García Lorca: Persona y Creación. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Schapire, 1952), pp. 59-60. (Cf. APPENDIX for this and ensuing translations.)

book of Spanish poetry of this century. Meanwhile Federico shared actively in the works of his friends and fellow poets; and when, at the tercentenary of Góngora's death in 1927, a group of them inaugurated a series of lectures at the Residencia to reevaluate Spain's most difficult Golden Age poet, Federico contributed a paper on "La Imágen Poética de Don Luis de Góngora" (The Poetic Image of Don Luis de Góngora). Also in 1927, aided by Salvador Dalí, who designed the sets, Federico presented his first full-length play in Madrid, Mariana Pineda, a drama in which the individual rebels against political oppression. This play was published in 1928.

The chronology of Federico's written work seldom coincides with that of his published work. Before he left Spain for New York in 1929, he already had a considerable collection of manuscripts: some already published, like Canciones and Romancero Gitano; others not published until later, like Poema del Cante Jondo (1931); some not published until after his death, like the volume of early verse Primeras Canciones (First Songs) (1936), and the play Amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa en Su Jardín (Love of Don Perlimplín for Belisa in Their Garden) (1938); some published only in part after his death, like the book of Odas (Odes), and Suites; and the remainder still unpublished.

The circumstances directly preceding Federico's sudden decision to leave Spain have been described by Ángel del Río:

" . . . The causes are not clear, even to his closest friends. Martínez Nadal, his constant companion in these days (1929), tells us, 'As the months passed by and the popularity of the book (*Romancero*) increased, the poet felt the weight of his own work. This, along with other intimate reasons, made him pass through the only period of depression in his life. He grew sad, isolated himself, said nothing of his plans, and, stranger still, no longer recited his new poems.' . . . There was also, as Martínez Nadal suggests, some emotional disturbance of his intimate life, to which he would later refer sadly and obscurely. The crisis resolves itself in a desire for flight, and for the first time he desires to leave Spain."⁵

His destination was decided when he learned that his friend and former teacher, Fernando de los Ríos, was leaving for New York in the summer of 1929.

Upon his arrival he settled at Columbia University, in John Jay Hall. Here he soon won a small circle of close friends by creating a joyful atmosphere with his songs and improvised recitals. With his characteristic academic insouciance, he enrolled in several English courses, only to withdraw shortly thereafter because of his resulting impatience and because of a realization of his linguistic limitations. The few words and phrases which he learned, he pronounced very badly.

In the spring of 1930, Federico received an invita-

⁵ Edwin Honig, *García Lorca*. (London: PL, Editions Poetry London, 1945), pp. 20-21.

tion to lecture at the Institución Hispano-Cubana in Havana, beginning the next fall. He found a pleasant retreat where he could be alone, in the Catskill Mountains, west of the Hudson River in New York State. Here he passed the summer months writing poetry. It was here also that he wrote the pastoral poems which were later included in Poeta en Nueva York (Poet in New York).

In Havana he found the radiance of a transplanted Andalusia. A strong Hispanic feeling among the Cubans identified itself with an ancestry rooted in Spain. It was in Cuba that Federico wrote several scenes for his most frankly (surrealistic) dramatic works, Así Que Pasen Cinco Años (Thus Let Five Years Pass)⁶ and the little-known El Público (The Audience). He returned to Spain in 1930 with no apparent trace of his former depression. Instead, there was the consciousness of the new work which lay before him and the realization that at last he held in his hands the instruments for mature accomplishment. In the works which were to follow, there are many strong evidences of maturity. Quite evident are the uses of symbolism to which he often turns. His characters themselves are symbolical instruments for portraying ideas, places, and themes. Not all his characters are people for in Bodas de Sangre (Blood Wedding),

⁶ Author's own translation.

which was staged in 1933, we find an old Beggar Woman, who acts as a solo chorus, and knives which are used as symbols of death. There is an air of foreboding and impending tragedy in this work from the start, and the short, terse sentences rapidly build up the suspense. There is violence, simplicity, and primitiveness. In this same work he uses horses as symbols of death and to increase foreboding. The Woodcutters are connected with the forecasting of death and the moon lights up to make death possible. These, together with the old Beggar Woman, all contribute to the tragedy. Throughout his works there is evident fusion of reality and lyricism, which is surely of his own nature. Federico, in some instances, has taken his theme from actual incidents as the bases of his plays. A good example of this is in the play last mentioned, Bodas de Sangre. The basis was a real incident which had appeared in a Granada newspaper. Federico carried the clipping with him and thought about it, forgot it, then returned to it again. It was several years before it finally emerged from his pen. There is evident in this and his later works a well-defined aura of mystery and fantasy of the unreal world.

Federico's characters are often emphasized in the female sex.

Most of his plays are named for the characters; the notable exception being Bodas de Sangre. One very notice-

able aspect of his characters is that they exhibit little or no development and no detailed portrayal.

The subject of his works, especially the dramatic productions, is love and sex in its most vagrant aspects. The theme of Yerma (1935) is the most primitive of all his works. It is sex focused in the frustrations of non-motherhood. Generally his plays escape the influence of the moderns and go back to Lope de Vega, Cervantes, Luis de Góngora, Tirso de Molina, Calderón de la Barca, even as far back as Juan del Encina and Gil Vicente. Perhaps he deals with infecundity in the idea of exploiting an old theme in an unusual manner. In Yerma there is something resembling the ancient Greek preoccupation with the idea of sexual gratification. His later repeated emphasis on the pathological can be comprehended when we observe that his primary intent was to portray life as he saw it.

His works are very Spanish, but point to Andalusia in preference to the rest of Spain. Federico wrote both prose and poetry, but poetic production predominates. In his dramas there is an interweaving of drama and poetry, youthful in force and brutality of expression and in delicacy of sentiment. Perceptible elements of folklore in his writings give us a more profound appreciation of his genius through an intensive and extensive investigation and analysis of the manifold intrinsic facets which his produc-

tions urge upon us. Only in such wise can a thorough and undivided appreciation ensue.

Throughout the last six years of his earthly existence, Federico, as playwright-director, was to dedicate himself almost entirely to the theater. When he returned to the land of his birth in 1930, his celebrated farce La Zapatera Prodigiosa (The Shoemaker's Wonderful Wife) was staged in Madrid. The following year Spain became a republic with the most democratic constitution in her history. Shortly thereafter Fernando de los Ríos was appointed Minister of Public Instruction and Fine Arts. In 1932 the new government sponsored the establishment of Las Misiones Pedagógicas (The Pedagogical Missions). Two theatrical groups were formed within the Misiones: La Barraca (The Barrack) with Federico and Eduardo Ugarte as co-directors, and Teatro del Pueblo (Village Theater) under the direction of Alejandro Casona. These two theatrical groups differed in that La Barraca visited the cities and military posts in the provinces, while Teatro del Pueblo visited the rural villages.

Federico was free now to lavish his rich imagination on a theater over whose functioning he had control in every detail. Accompanied by an enthusiastic group of young performers, he brought La Barraca to the people in every corner of Spain. He arranged the traditional ballads as

musical supplement for the plays of Lope de Vega, Cervantes, Calderón de la Barca, and other Golden Age dramatists. He also presented his own plays, and was stimulated to write new ones and to produce some of his others: Bodas de Sangre (Blood Wedding), Yerma (Barren One), and Doña Rosita la Soltera, o el Lenguaje de las Flores (Doña Rosita the Spinster, or the Language of the Flowers).

His fame radiated to other members of the Spanish family of nations, and in 1933 he was invited to Buenos Aires, where he remained from October 13, 1933 through March 24, 1934, to produce his own versions of the Golden Age dramas. Here he gave three lectures: El Duende de la Poesía (The Hobgoblin of Poetry), Lo Que Canta una Ciudad (What a City Sings), and Imaginación, Corporación y Evasión en la Poesía (Imagination, Corporation and Evasion in Poetry). He also presented Lope de Vega's play La Dama Boba (The Foolish Woman). Before his return to Spain he was acclaimed as an ambassador of Spanish letters.

Such fanfare did not overwhelm the spirit of one such as Federico. It seems to have elevated him for further accomplishment, which came in Madrid with the production of Yerma and Doña Rosita la Soltera, o el Lenguaje de las Flores in 1935. The same year, in New York, under the name of Bitter Oleander, an unsuccessful translation of Bodas de Sangre was staged. Of the critics who witnessed

this production, only Stark Young, writing in the New Republic, could see through the thick curtain of strained English idiom into something of the original's wild poetic beauty. Meanwhile, Federico was preparing another group of poems for publication. El Diván del Tamarit (The Diván of the Tamarit) and his Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías (Lament for Ignacio Sánchez Mejías) were being widely repeated throughout Spain and Latin America. By 1936, he had completed a new village folk tragedy, La Casa de Bernarda Alba (The House of Bernarda Alba), and was at work on still another, La Destrucción de Sodoma (The Destruction of Sodom) when news of the Moorish insurrection reached Madrid in July. Refusing invitations to come to Colombia and lecture, and to México, where Yerma was a brilliant success, and against the advice of his friends, Federico returned south that summer, as was his custom, to his home in Granada. He was preparing for publication a cycle of poems based on Arabic verse forms when the Spanish Civil War broke out, on July 18, 1936, just two days before he left Madrid for Granada. Federico, like everybody else, sensed the coming storm.

As far as scanty reports make it possible to reconstruct the facts, this is what happened in Granada: the town and province were in the hands of the Falangist and kindred groups from the very first days of the rebellion

against the Republican Government. Federico found it necessary to go into hiding because he was, though unpolitical, known as the friend of left-wing intellectuals, an adversary of all forms of reaction, and through his work one of the people's party in the widest sense of the term, whether he liked it or not. A writer, Luis Rosales, who was a member of the Falange, and therefore seemed able to protect him, gave him refuge in his house. During an absence of this good friend, Federico was taken prisoner by an official or unofficial band of terrorists. The agonizing attempts of Luis Rosales to rescue him on the same fateful day proved futile. Apparently he was murdered with a group of Republican prisoners, by the Guardia Civil (a body of rural police in Spain), for, at dawn on August 19, 1936, he innocently shed his blood and received death's bright angel.

It took several weeks before the news of Federico's tragic departure reached the outside world. The new authorities ignored what had transpired, and preferred not to investigate. Nothing with any certainty is known of the beloved poet's last resting place. His death was effected by the rebel Junta of Burgos.

For his family, for his countless friends, for all the numberless who are interested in and fascinated by Spanish letters, the loss is irreparable. To the Omnip-

otent, to Whom there is no past nor future, no idea of time as comprehended by the finite, Who knows all the foibles and failings of man in the exercise of his free will, we present the question: Why was this evil permitted? We are consoled only in knowing that He could not permit it per se, but only per accidens.

The beloved poet's tragic end has enshrouded him in an atmosphere of legend. Both the life and work of this elegiac poet appear to be directed by a destiny which one might say he freely accepted, when at the age of nineteen, in the days of his youthful triumph in Granada, he wrote these pathetic lines:

. . . y mi sangre sobre el campo
sea rosado y dulce limo
donde claven sus azadas
los cansados campesinos.⁷

⁷ F. García Lorca, Poems; with English translation by Stephen Spender and J. L. Gili; selection and introduction by R. M. Nadal. (London: The Dolphin, 1939), p. xxviii.

The purpose in this study and examination is to investigate the maternal frustrations in the works of Federico García Lorca, to identify them as they exist among the diverse characters and to analyze these frustrations in terms of social, psychological, and pathological patterns of human behavior, and to point out those frustrations which conflict with what is accepted as being of normal behavior.

Since this study is concerned singularly with maternal frustrations of some of Lorca's characters, it will be evident that an understanding of the term frustration is in order. Frustration is defined as the experience that ensues when an organism meets a more or less insurmountable obstacle or obstruction in its route to the satisfaction of some vital need; in this study and analysis, the need is that of motherhood, primarily. In the main, frustration involves the existence of an active need. It is characterized by tension and the subjective dissatisfaction due to the absence of the end-situation necessary for quiescence. It is a need concerned with the reproduction of the organism and thus involves a certain degree of self-expansion, and, finally, it is a need in which expansion is carried to creative as well as procreative activity and involve symbolic as well as concrete biological behavior.

Frustration studies have gone astray in the failure

to realize that behavioral consequences of the adjustment are abnormal and not the adjustment or behavior in itself. Failure to make this distinction leads one either into the peculiar circular difficulty of defining frustration in terms of abnormal behavior and vice versa or into the vapid refusal to recognize abnormal behavior as such, on the statistical grounds that "everybody does it." On the other hand, if we make the distinction between the act or the process as abnormal and the abnormal consequences of the act, we are in a position to further comprehend our analysis of maternal frustrations as evident in Lorca's characters and to discover, through our own reasoning processes, possible causal factors.

Motherhood is seldom so highly prized as when it has been denied. The value of possessing one's own child increases with the realization that motherhood is unattainable. Frustration is caused by a barrier which blocks the way toward some goal. The value of motherhood and the irritating function of a barrier lie not in the objects or conditions so much as in the attitude of the person who is deprived of that which she thinks she wants.

In this study and analysis of Lorca's characters, as has been intimated, the primary interests will be centered on the divergent manners in which the desire for motherhood is expressed in his works, and the accompanying frustrations.

These desires will not be misconstrued and misinterpreted as sexual instincts. An instinct cannot be aroused. Instinct is an inborn characteristic. There are several classifications of instincts, but, as applied to our study, the area concerned will be that of sexual proclivities (mating and parenthood). The instinct theory rests on the concept of needs in the abstract, ultimate sense, i.e., what an individual must do to achieve specific ends; whereas another theory, the learning theory,⁸ involves the notion of needs as concretely and immediately felt, with habits developing because of these needs. The understanding of this study, then, requires both of these conceptions. Whatever the individual is or does at any particular time is determined by urges working through the existing structure of her personality in her environment.

Lorca, who did not wish to be confronted with politics, did face the problem of sex with the greatest frankness. Sexual customs have in every nation their definite characteristics, traditions, and rituals, even though the sexual problems are universal and non-national. In every nation there exists a cultured, sophisticated minority which shares its rules of behavior and its con-

⁸ Joseph McVicker Hunt, ed., Personality and the Behavior Disorders (New York: The Ronald Press Company, Inc., 1945), pp. 72-73.

scious ideals with similar minorities of other nations within the same sphere of civilization; and there exists the great mass of people who follow their national customs, their unwritten but inviolable sexual code.

Lorca felt and expressed the problem of sex as it had been shaped and transformed by the complex conventions of his people. He felt the emotions at the root of the Spanish sexual code so deeply that in his art he magnified them until traditional values stood out with penetrating significance.

The strength of Lorca's folk dramas lies precisely in his use of woman as a bearer of passion and earthly reality. With him it is not simply an accidental choice. The Virgin prevailing in all early Spanish church art was the symbol of earthly fecundity as well as the Mother of Divine Mercy. Spanish women saints were known to suffer magnificent and terrible martyrdom. The character of the dueña, the woman chaperone, early became a convention in the Spanish theater. And she, as the repository of good earthy frankness, knew the world's tricks and provided the audience with an example of the protective motherly domination it sought in woman. The Don Juan legend has been a popular and recurrent theme in Spanish literature because it reaffirms the generously fertile nature of woman as distinct from the abstract and essentially barren lover who

finds no permanence except in the arms of death. Some Spaniards have been somewhat contemptuous of this philanthropic Don Juan, who instead of conquering women should have been directing his talents to more noble causes for the glory of Spain.

Lorca's heroines are modern versions of the warm matriarchal type found in Spanish literature. They are islands which the world cannot touch with its soiled and makeshift sea of logic. They threaten to disrupt the man-made machinery of social law. When they lose the sense of integration in life which is necessary to them, the world seems to come apart. Thus it is as martyrs of frustration, from the heroine of Mariana Pineda, who dies on the gallows, to the suicide of the youngest daughter in La Casa de Bernarda Alba (The House of Bernarda Alba), that Lorca's women uphold the insistent theme of his tragedies.

Lorca's three folk tragedies, Bodas de Sangre (Blood Wedding), Yerma (Barren One), and La Casa de Bernarda Alba (The House of Bernarda Alba), show these types and the problems behind them with the greatest of dramatic force. However, we are not to assume that these problems are non-existent in Lorca's other dramatic works as we shall see in Doña Rosita la Soltera, o el Lenguaje de las Flores (Doña Rosita the Spinster, or the Language of the Flowers) and La Zapatera Prodigiosa (The Shoemaker's Wonderful Wife).

Lorca's best description of motherhood is contained in his poetic description in Adán (Adam).⁹

Árbol de sangre moja la mañana
por donde gime la recién parida.
Su voz deja cristales en la herida
y un gráfico hueso en la ventana.

Mientras la luz que viene fija y gana
blancas metas de fábula que olvida
el tumulto de venas en la huída
hacia el turbio frescor de la manzana.

Adán sueña en la fiebre de la arcilla
un niño que se acerca galopando
por el doble latir de su mejilla.

Pero otro Adán oscuro está soñando
neutra luna de piedra sin semilla
donde el niño de luz se irá quemando.

Bodas de Sangre has a simple pattern of love, honor, and vengeance, with death ever lurking in the background. The frustrations in this folk tragedy are evident when the sex appetite becomes so possessive, and not moderated by reason, that it triumphs over the mind. Seemingly uncontrollable impulses are converted to irreparable acts. This folk tragedy is a slough of malignance.

The only son of a widow, whose husband and first-born son were killed by the men of a neighboring family, is courting the daughter of a widower, a well-to-do farmer like himself. A marriage is arranged in which the Father's

⁹ Federico García Lorca, *Obras Completas*, recopiladas por Guillermo de Torre. Eight volumes. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, S. A., 1952), volume II, p. 149.

greed for more land and the Mother's wish to bury the memory of bloodshed and see new life created have as much a part as the son's plan. The girl, however, has for some time been in love with the son of the man who had killed her betrothed's father and brother. Neither of the young men wants to carry on the family feud which is ever present in the mind of the Mother. The girl has been fighting against her emotions and contemplates fulfilling her intentions, but she must subject herself to reason.

NOVIA: Ya sé que estoy loca y sé que tengo el pecho podrido de aguantar, y aquí estoy quieta por oírlo, por verlo menear los brazos.¹⁰

Neither he nor the girl can bear the idea that she should deliver herself to another; they elope after her wedding day. There is only one thing to be done. The Mother knows now that she has lost her one and only hope for grandchildren and that she will lose her only remaining son, but she sends him in pursuit of the couple, because the murderer of her hope must be killed--the blood of the son of her husband's murderer must be shed. As obsessed as this mother is with the idea of her son's being married and providing her with grandchildren, this senseless feud is rekindled at her insistence. She knows that he will not return alive. The son obeys his mother and goes

¹⁰ Obras Completas, I, 73.

in pursuit of the two lovers, Leonardo and the bride. The two men finally meet, a bitter fight ensues, and they kill each other.

From the very outset of the play there is a cloud of doom and black foreboding lurking in the background, which is symbolized by knives and death.

NOVIO: Déjalo. Comeré uvas. Dáme la navaja.

MADRE: ¿Para qué?

NOVIO: Para cortarlas.

MADRE: (entre dientes y buscándola) La navaja, la navaja . . . Malditas sean todas y el bribón que las inventó.

NOVIO: Vamos a otro asunto.

MADRE: Y las escopetas y las pistolas y el cuchillo más pequeño, y hasta las azadas y los bieldos de la era.

NOVIO: Bueno.

MADRE: Todo lo que puede cortar el cuerpo de un hombre. Un hombre hermoso, con su flor en la boca, que sale a las viñas o va a sus olivos propios, porque son de él, heredados . . .

NOVIO: Calle usted.

MADRE: . . . y ese hombre no vuelve. O si vuelve es para ponerle una palma encima o un plato de sal gorda para que no se hinche. No sé cómo te atreves a llevar una navaja en tu cuerpo, ni cómo yo dejo a la serpiente dentro del arcón.¹¹

The Mother is the incarnation of the tragedy in that she is possessed with maternal frustrations, not only for children of her own, but for grandchildren through her only son; her other son is dead as is her husband. This one is all that she has left in the world. She is a strong woman who enjoyed life with her husband and regrets

¹¹ Obras Completas, I, 26-27.

that he did not live longer to give her more sons.

Sí, sí, y a ver si me alegras con seis nietos, o los que te dé la gana, ya que tu padre no tuvo lugar de hacérmelos a mí.¹²

She has become dominated by the fear of the extinction of her blood--fear of death, not so much for herself as for the seed--and by an anxiety to see her physical existence continued, perpetuated by her son's children. This constant fear fills her with a sense of doom. Her constant thought of knives is used in the play as a sinister symbol representative of death and foreboding.

Vecinas, con un cuchillo,
con un cuchillito,
en un día señalado, entre las dos y las tres,
se mataron los dos hombres del amor.
Con un cuchillo,
con un cuchillito
que apenas cabe en la mano,
pero que penetra fino
por las carnes asombradas,
y que se para en el sitio
donde tiembla enmarañada
la oscura raíz del grito.¹³

Centuries of Moorish and Catholic training, centuries of a medieval social order in which women were valued only for the sons they produced, created this attitude. Lorca's creation, the Mother, who likes to see men lusty and virile because that means more sons, is deeply convinced that procreation and fertility are the objects

¹² Obras Completas, I, 32.

¹³ Obras Completas, I, 137.

of married sexual love. Her son must marry to furnish her with many grandchildren.

The Mother glories and gloats in man's procreative strength.

Tu padre sí que me llevaba. Eso es buena casta. Sangre. Tu abuelo dejó un hijo en cada esquina. Eso me gusta. Los hombres, hombres; el trigo, trigo.¹⁴

This moral conviction that men and women must be fertile and that the man and husband is master because he is the instrument of fertility has the deepest possible psychological and social roots. The Mother in Bodas de Sangre admits no justification for the betrayal of the law of purity. Contemptuously she says of the girl who followed after her beloved:

Al agua se tiran las honradas, las limpias; ¡ésa, no! Pero ya es mujer de mi hijo. . . .¹⁵

This perception is accepted by the girl herself. She realizes that she has done wrong in following the man. She knew that her passion and frustration made her want to be with him. She had accepted the law that the honor of the family and her own honor would be safe only if her virginity were left intact for her husband to convert to maternity. But strong and overpowering emotions were too much for her to grapple with and her act terminated in

¹⁴ Obras Completas, I, 28.

¹⁵ Obras Completas, I, 105.

tragedy. She does not feel in her mind that the responsibility was entirely her own.

¡Porque yo me fuí con el otro, me fuí! (Con angustia) Tú también te hubieras ido. Yo era una mujer quemada, llena de llagas por dentro y por fuera, y tu hijo era un poquito de agua de la que yo esperaba hijos, tierra, salud; pero el otro era un río oscuro, lleno de ramas, que acercaba a mí el rumor de sus juncos y su cantar entre dientes. Y yo corría con tu hijo que era un niño de agua fría y el otro me mandaba cientos de pájaros que me impedían el andar y que dejaban escarcha sobre mis heridas de pobre mujer marchita, de muchacha acariciada por el fuego. Yo no quería, ¡óyelo bien!, yo no quería. ¡Tu hijo era mi fin y yo no lo he engañado, pero el brazo del otro me arrastró como un golpe de mar, como la cabezada de un mulo, y me hubiera arrastrado siempre, siempre, aunque hubiera sido vieja y todos los hijos de tu hijo me hubiesen agarrado de los cabellos!16

This argument is used to justify her crime to the Mother after the bodies have been carried back to the village. She justifies her crime, not by love alone but by the other man's erotic attraction. Fiercely she defends her honor, and willingly stands prepared to pass through an ordeal of fire to prove it.

The lyrical language is the poet's, but the images originate in the speech which is used by the people of the Andalusian countryside in inflamed emotional moments, describing their passions and half-comprehended thoughts in ageless, occult metaphors, as though they were in magic formulas.

16 Obras Completas, I, 134.

The frustrations of the servant are clearly seen as we are intermittently lulled through two acts by their talk of motherhood and of the warmth of a man's body. The servant, though elderly, still dreams of men in her frustrated world. We observe the bride, in the entrance hall of her house, dressed in ruffled white petticoats full of lace and embroidered bands, with sleeveless white bodices. The servant is combing the bride's hair and we listen to them talking.

CRIADA: ¡Dichosa tú que vas a abrazar a un hombre, que lo vas a besar, que vas a sentir su peso!

NOVIA: Calla.

CRIADA: Y lo mejor es cuando te despiertes y lo sientas al lado y que él te roza los hombros con su aliento, como con una plumilla de ruiseñor.

NOVIA: ¿Te quieres callar?

CRIADA: ¡Pero niña! ¿Una boda, qué es? Una boda es esto y nada más. ¿Son los dulces? ¿Son los ramos de flores? No. Es una cama relumbrante y un hombre y una mujer.

NOVIA: No se debe decir.

CRIADA: Eso es otra cosa. ¡Pero es bien alegre!

NOVIA: O bien amargo.

CRIADA: Al azahar te lo voy a poner desde aquí hasta aquí, de modo que la corona luzca sobre el peinado. (Le prueba el ramo de azahar.)¹⁷

We see, now, after having observed the frustrations

¹⁷ Obras Completas, I, 64-65.

of some of the characters in Bodas de Sangre, that the assumption these women make is that sex provides their one greatest fulfillment in life. Sexual maladjustments of one sort or another are confusing and irksome to Lorca's characters. Much of their trouble apparently stems from their contradictions of expectations for pleasant experience in sex with the inaccuracy of their knowledge about it. The problem of the characters is not wholly a matter of knowledge and intent. It could be greatly complicated, especially by the bridegroom and the bride, in that both would bring to the marriage numerous and significant unconscious needs and wants. At best they would perceive themselves dimly, with distortions and mirages common. But the illusion might persist that the frustrated bride would really know herself, her needs, her desires, and also those of the mate. There could possibly be such a painful discovery as a lack of sexual response on the part of the woman or the man, the insatiability of the husband, and jealousies with or without cause.

In Lorca's Yerma, which may be translated as the Barren One, the whole theme revolves around the principal character, Yerma, in whom the mental pangs of unrealized motherhood recur.

Los blancos montes que hay en tu pecho.
¡Que se agiten las ramas al sol
y salten las fuentes alrededor!

Te diré, niño mío, que sí,
 tronchada y rota soy para ti.
 ¡Cómo me duele esta cintura
 donde tendrás primera cuna!
 ¿Cuándo, mi niño, vas a venir?¹⁸

To be the mother of a son is her one burning obsession. She is taunted by mental images that she may grow aged and wither away without ever having her own son to fondle and caress. It is not important to her even if her son might grow into young manhood hating her, dragging her through the streets of her village by the hair of the head, so long as he be her son, her own flesh and blood. The child of another woman cannot be a substitute for the son she craves.

The child dressed in white, who is led by the shepherd as the drama unfolds, is symbolical of Yerma's unborn son: the son wants to be born but cannot be because the seed is not fertile. Each year she and her husband, Juan, are getting older, but still he has not presented her with a son. She is the woman who is infecund, not through any physical or biological defect of her own, but because her husband has never made her fecund--she has always been denied the seed of fertility. She is finally convinced that motherhood has been withheld from her because Juan does not put his heart and will into having

¹⁸ Obras Completas, III, 16.

children. With Yerma the idea of sex is definitely subjected to her own reasoning. She often contrasts herself, the unfruitful woman, with the women of her acquaintance who are already gravid. She sings the praises of fertility. But she will be made fertile by none other than her husband, although there is one instance wherein we notice the intimation that she might possibly become ill if she does not get a son very soon.

Es así. Claro que todavía es tiempo. Elena tardó tres años y otras antiguas del tiempo de mi madre mucho más, pero dos años y veinte días, como yo, es demasiada espera. Pienso que no es justo que yo me consuma aquí. Muchas noches salgo descalza al patio para pisar la tierra, no sé por qué. Si sigue así, acabaré volviéndome mala.¹⁹

Never would she resort to adultery to gain her own son; her Spanish sense of honor is too strongly ingrained and firmly fixed in her being. The idea of the sexual act without resultant motherhood, in her manner of reasoning, is synonymous with that of prostitution. She feels that she is being just and reasonable in claiming her right of motherhood, that her marital desires are not yearned for blindly. The definition which María, Yerma's friend, gives of pregnancy, as she gently passes her hands over her stomach in her anxiety is most poetic.

. . . Un pájaro vivo apretado en la mano . . .

¹⁹ Obras Completas, III, 21.

pero . . . dentro de la sangre.²⁰

Yerma ponders the glorious pains of childbirth and the suckling through which her young son would pass in his growing up into young manhood. There is clearly evident that Freudian touch in Yerma in which resentment of the husband engenders in the principal character the mental processes which terminate in crime (homicide).

Yerma never openly implies that her husband is not capable of being a father, yet there is one incident wherein can be adduced the idea that the sexual embrace is either revolting or that her husband is not capable of satisfying her. In her torn and tattered mental state she does not know. She asks the First Old Woman why it is that she does not have a son and what she can do to have one. For some time she has been wanting to talk to an older woman about it--because she wants to find out.

VIEJA 1ª: ¿Qué?

YERMA: Lo que usted sabe. ¿Por qué estoy yo seca? ¿Me he de quedar en plena vida para cuidar aves o poner cortinitas planchadas en mi ventanillo? No. Usted me ha de decir lo que tengo que hacer, que yo haré lo que sea, aunque me mande clavarme agujas en el sitio más débil de mis ojos.

VIEJA 1ª: ¿Yo? Yo no sé nada. Yo me he puesto boca arriba y he comenzado a cantar. Los hijos llegan como el agua. ¡Ay! ¿Quién puede decir que este cuerpo que tienes no es hermoso? Pisas, y al

²⁰ Obras Completas, III, 19.

fondo de la calle relincha el caballo. ¡Ay! Déjame, muchacha, no me hagas hablar. Pienso muchas ideas que no quiero decir.

YERMA: ¿Por qué? ¡Con mi marido no hablo de otra cosa!

VIEJA 1ª: Oye. ¿A ti te gusta tu marido?

YERMA: ¿Cómo?

VIEJA 1ª: ¿Que si lo quieres? ¿Si deseas estar con él?

YERMA: No sé.

VIEJA 1ª: ¿No tiembles cuando se acerca a ti? ¿No te da así como un sueño cuando acerca sus labios?

YERMA: No. No lo he sentido nunca.²¹

Perhaps this is an unwarranted interpretation; however, it is important only in the sense that modern psychology, in its studies into marital relationship and the causes for dissatisfaction among married couples, does cite this problem as a decided factor in marital unhappiness, leading to severe friction, and as a cause of the marriage disintegration.

Juan continues to live in a so-called normal relationship with Yerma throughout almost the entire drama, but does not concertedly live the role of husband, or, as Yerma states it, of producing children; he wants only to possess her for the satisfaction of his passions, to

²¹ Obras Completas, III, 28-29.

enjoy her body.

Yerma recalls how happy she was on her wedding night, the smell of the linens on the bed, and the image she thought she saw of her son in her husband's eyes. Her problem and obsession are not unique. It is the tragic outcome of an upbringing which twists or starves the spontaneous feelings of young women. Lorca shows this, indirectly, but nonetheless with an almost cruel clarity.

La mujer de campo que no da hijos es inútil como un manojo de espinos, y hasta mala, a pesar de que yo sea de este desecho dejado de la mano de Dios.²²

In accepting this concept Yerma blocks every way to escape and she withdraws even further into herself. As she cannot admit to any fault of her own and cannot see that she has come near to killing an essential part of her inner self, she can only turn against the instrument that fails her--her husband.

She doesn't cease to brood over her unfulfilled desire. The child does not come to her; she knows that her body has long been waiting and willing to receive it, from the very first night of her marriage. She feels defeated and hurt in her unfulfilled craving for motherhood. While she is externally obedient, she is accumulating an obscure hatred of the husband who takes his pleasure with her--a

²² Obras Completas, III, 64.

pleasure which she cannot share.

She vaguely but warmly recalls the swoon of happiness she felt in the arms of Víctor when she was but a young girl, when he took her in his arms to leap across a ditch. She was but fourteen years old then. She has never trembled as though in a dream when her husband came near her; the only man who has ever made her feel that way was Víctor--then but a young husky boy. With her husband she can feel only his cold waist and body.

Yerma convinces herself that Juan refuses spiritual coöperation in creating a child and so imposes barrenness upon her. There is the other man, Víctor, who has the power and strength to stir her senses and could probably give her the child which she craves so intently. But her rigid code of honor forbids her to acknowledge this solution; she cannot take him as her lover, she cannot leave her husband and live with Víctor, or with any other man for that matter.

In her despondency over not having a son, Yerma, in desperation resorts to the serious matter of consulting an old sorceress. She finally joins a pilgrimage to offer prayers asking the intercession of St. Anne so that she may be blessed with a son.

Señor, calma con tu mano
las ascuas de su mejilla.

Escucha a la penitente
de tu santa romería.
Abre tu rosa en mi carne
aunque tenga mil espinas.

Señor, que florezca la rosa,
no me la dejéis en sombra.

Sobre mi carne marchita
la rosa de maravilla.²³

While Yerma is at this gathering she meets the old woman whom she had formerly visited for help and advice. She wants Yerma to go home with her, to leave Juan and come and be the wife of her son. She tells Yerma that she will be blessed with a son by her boy.

YERMA: ¡Y qué me vas a decir que ya no sepa!

VIEJA: Lo que ya no se puede callar. Lo que está puesto encima del tejado. La culpa es de tu marido. ¿Lo oyes? Me dejaría cortar las manos. Ni su padre, ni su abuelo, ni su bisabuelo se portaron como hombres de casta. Para tener un hijo ha sido necesario que se junte el cielo con la tierra. Están hechos con saliva. En cambio, tu gente no. Tienes hermanos y primos a cien leguas a la redonda. Mira qué maldición ha venido a caer sobre tu hermosura.

YERMA: Una maldición. Un charco de veneno sobre las espigas.

VIEJA: Pero tú tienes pies para marcharte de tu casa.

YERMA: ¿Para marcharme?

VIEJA: Cuando te ví en la romería me dió un vuelco el corazón. Aquí vienen las mujeres a conocer hombres nuevos. Y el Santo hace milagros. Mi hijo está sentado detrás de la ermita esperándote. Mi casa necesita una mujer. Véte con él y viviremos los tres

²³ Obras Completas, III, 91.

juntos. Mi hijo sí es de sangre. Como yo. Si entras en mi casa, todavía queda olor de cunas. La ceniza de tu colcha se te volverá pan y sal a tu marido, hay en mi casa entrañas y herramientas para que no cruce siquiera la calle.

YERMA: ¡Calla, calla, si no es eso! Nunca lo haría. Yo no puedo ir a buscar. ¿Te figuras que puedo conocer otro hombre? ¿Dónde pones mi honra?²⁴

Thus Yerma goes on guarding her husband's and her own honor, half-proud, half despairing of her infertility in his arms. Her torturing physical hunger for the child --the only life she can feel--shakes her with pensive dreams.

Happier or less sensitive women glory and gloat in their physical love for their husbands, proud to bear their children, or they accept things as they come and as they are--with all the anxiety and gaiety they can muster. They have no sympathy with Yerma. In their advice to Yerma they say that if a woman wants children, she gets them. This suggests that if her husband, Juan, cannot father her unborn child, she should not be so honor-bound and particular, but seek a father elsewhere. If these women pity Yerma, it is seemingly only because they dislike her dour husband, particularly after he has brought his two unmarried and bigoted sisters into his house to keep a close watch over his wife. To the robust village

²⁴ Obras Completas, III, 97-98.

women these spinster sisters are described:

Porque dan miedo. Son como esas hojas grandes que
nacen de pronto sobre los sepulcros. Están untadas
con cera. Son metidas hacia adentro. Se me figuran
que guisan su comida con el aceite de las lámparas.²⁵

But despite this partisanship, their gossip and songs
which they sing while washing their linen down by the
river, have a hidden sting for the childless wife:

Las ropas de mi niño
vengo a lavar
para que tome el agua
lecciones de cristal.

Por el monte ya llega
mi marido a comer.
Él me trae una rosa
y yo le doy tres.²⁶

Yerma feels as though she were an outcast from the
teeming life around her. She is hurt, utterly hurt and
humbled as she watches the young shoots of wheat, and the
springs that never cease pouring water, and the sheep
which bear hundreds of lambs. It is as if the fields were
rising to show her their young broods in their slumber,
while she feels as though two hammers were beating at her
breast instead of the mouth of her own child.

Her talks with her husband become increasingly
quarrelsome and bitter and their relations seem devoid of
any tenderness or mutual understanding or affability. But

²⁵ Obras Completas, III, 44.
²⁶ Obras Completas, III, 51.

Yerma is withered, barren; not in her flesh but in her soul. The flowering of her body is lost through withering. Neither witchcraft nor religious fervor, nor the way of the world, can free her from frustration in not receiving the blessings of motherhood. Everything wells up within her when she meets her husband for the last time, as he suggests that she go to bed with him. This angers Yerma intensely. A bitter argument ensues and Juan finally tells Yerma that she may as well resign herself to not having a son because he doesn't want one and that he never did. He's very much happier without one. All that he wants out of life are the material things, things which can be held in the hands; what the eyes can see. Many women, he says, would be very happy to have her place. To him life is so much sweeter by not having children. Yet he does say that it is not the fault of his wife and thus intimates that his own sterility is the cause for their having no children. All that he wants from life is a home, an easy life, and a woman to gratify his own sexual pleasures; nothing more. He demands that she say no more about her craving. He has heard all that he wants to hear. She is to stay home and take care of their house. She is never to hope for a child. "Resign yourself!" he shouts, "to being barren and childless and let us live in peace without any more of this continual lamenting for things in the

air--for things which cannot be;" for things that neither of them can control.

"Embrace me," says Juan. "You want me as you sometimes want a pigeon to eat." "Kiss me . . . like this." "That I'll never do." Yerma shrieks and seizes her husband by the throat. He falls backward. She chokes him until he dies. The chorus of the pilgrimage begins to chant.

Marchita, marchita, pero segura. Ahora sí que lo sé de cierto. Y sola. Voy a descansar sin despertarme sobresaltada, para ver si la sangre me anuncia otra sangre nueva. Con el cuerpo seco para siempre. ¿Qué queréis saber? No os acerquéis, porque he matado a mi hijo, yo misma he matado a mi hijo!27

A group of people gathers in the background and the chorus can be clearly heard. Yerma, in her utter frustration and vehement, burning desire to become a mother has killed, and so snuffed out, the last hope she held of becoming a mother. She could not be a mother by her husband. Honor prevented her from seeking the arms of another to assuage this craving, gnawing desire which devoured her mind. With Juan died all her hopes; thus, the lament that she has killed her own son. It was not Juan, to her, that was dead, but the son that might have been hers were her husband not sterile.

There is an ascending scale of frustration in the

27 Obras Completas, III, 104.

plays which Lorca wrote in the last three years of his life, and in each of them the women are destroyed because of their acceptance of the sombre moral code of their social world. In his last play, La Casa de Bernarda Alba (The House of Bernarda Alba), published nine years after his death and in a version which he may not have considered as final, Lorca exposed this code in the strangest form.

The characters which appear in the play are all women. It is set in the country house of Bernarda Alba, a caste-proud and wealthy widow with five daughters, one of which, Angustias, is rich in her own right as the heiress of her father, Bernarda's first husband. The village itself lies in a hot plain. It is far from the river; its inhabitants drink their water from wells and live practically a life as stagnant as they believe the water they drink to be. Its women, as far as they are not in domestic service or on the verge of being paupers, live and die within the walls of their whitewashed houses. To go to church is their main diversion. There the young girls see the young men of the neighborhood, while they are spied upon by the eyes of all the older women. The men have more freedom. They are at least in the fields during the day. Even if they break out of their domestic confines and find the pleasure of being with the one bad woman, Paca la Roseta, of the village, or with a stranger

from the outside world, they are seemingly forgiven because they are men. None of the families of the village are accepted as equals by Bernarda Alba, who sits in the house she inherited from her father as though in a castle. Even during the lifetime of her easy-going husband, i.e., her second husband, she had imposed her steely will on the household. She enjoys her sole possession of power and property, determined not to let it be dissipated by the marriage of her daughters, except that of the eldest, Angustias, aged thirty-nine, who is an heiress in her own right. Bernarda condemns the girls to nun-like seclusion during the traditional eight years of mourning for their father.

The four girls know only too well that there is little if any chance of their getting husbands. Their shares in the estate are small, not tempting to suitors, even if there were eligible ones in the village, and no man can see them now. It is particularly bitter for all of them that Angustias, the wealthy spinster stepsister, should be betrothed to the handsome Pepe Romano, the only man of the social class whom they used to see. It is hardest for young Adela, who is passionately in love with him and knows that he desires her, even though he is willing to get the money and lands of her older sister. Adela is proud of her young body, afraid of withering away

behind the bleak, whitewashed walls of the house, and willing to rebel for her right to love. Every night, after Pepe Romano has paid a dutiful call to his betrothed, Angustias, he lingers on outside Adela's window grating until the small hours of the morning--and their meeting is passionate. Adela can hide her love and passionate determination from her mother, but not from her sister Martirio. Martirio is the second youngest. Once, only once, a man had wanted to court her, but because his father had been a common laborer, Bernarda had driven him away. Martirio had been waiting for him in vain behind her barred window, with nothing but a nightdress to clothe her. Now she is kindled by the appearance and sight of Pepe Romano, and his daily visit to the windows of her sisters is driving her crazy. Hiding her hatred and longing under meek submission, she spies on Adela. She might accept the conventional marriage between the man and Angustias, because there would never be any joy in it, but she cannot bear the thought that Adela should have what would always be denied to herself. Of the remaining sisters, one, Amelia, is spared any suffering by her almost infantile, brainless vacuity, while the other, Magdalena, saves her sanity by desperate cynicism and clear-minded resignation to her fate. Neither of them can do anything to halt the currents of passion released by the appearance

of the male. From the cracks in the street door, they even watch the laborers as they pass to and from their work.

These currents are clearly seen by an old family privileged servant, who is the only person to speak frankly to Bernarda. A breath of vulgarity and shrewdness is brought into the cloistered house by Old Poncia. She speaks to the girls of the normal, brutal, gusty life shared by men and women on the outside. But even this sturdy, warm-blooded woman has been warped by her thirty years' service in Bernarda's house; she has turned sly and malicious, resentful of the arrogant contempt with which she is treated. For Bernarda's pride of caste kills every human approach. Though she likes hearing all the village gossip from Poncia, she grants her no right of companionship. To Bernarda, poor folks are like beasts, they seem to be made from another kind of substance.

Los pobres son como los animales; parece como si estuvieran hechos de otras sustancias.²⁸

Poncia chafes against Bernarda's rule, but appears to accept her rules. She would like to prevent a catastrophe which she sees coming, when Angustias' impending wedding drives Adela to a reckless decision, but has not the courage and selflessness to act. The only soul in the

²⁸ Obras Completas, VIII, 18.

house who is beyond the reach of Bernarda's soulless code is her old mother, who is a deranged woman, eighty years old and still talking of wanting a husband and children. Her senility has affected her mentality. She escapes from her room and rants wildly:

¡Quiero irme de aquí! ¡Bernarda! ¡Acasarme a la orilla del mar, a la orilla del mar!²⁹

Quando mi vecina tenía niño y yo le llevaba chocolate y luego ella me lo traía a mí y así siempre, siempre. Tú tendrás el pelo blanco, pero no vendrán las vecinas. Yo tengo que marcharme, pero tengo miedo que los perros me muerdan. ¿Me acompañarás tú a salir del campo? Yo quiero campo. Yo quiero casas, pero casas abiertas y las vecinas acostadas en sus camas con sus niños chiquitos y los hombres fuera sentados en sus sillas. Pepe el Romano es un gigante. Todas lo queréis. Pero él os va a devorar porque vosotros sois de trigo. No granos de trigo. ¡Ranas sin lengua!³⁰

The combined frustrations of the entire household bear down upon her. Her lunacy reveals the suppressed madness in these women's unnatural lives, but it does not help any one of the other prisoners of Bernarda's house.

In a sultry summer night, when the stallion of the farmyard, symbolizing freedom, drums his hooves on the stable wall until he is let out, Adela commits her final act of revolt. She meets her sister's betrothed outdoors. When Martirio surprises her on her return to the house, Adela cries out that she will never again stay in their

²⁹ Obras Completas, VIII, 48.

³⁰ Obras Completas, VIII, 113-114.

prison. She will brave the opinion of the world--the world of the village which hounds rebels to death--and she will live in freedom where her lover will be able to see her at his own pleasure, even after his marriage to her sister. She sees her sister's marriage only as one of convenience. Martirio is mad with rage and envy of Adela's triumphant body.

¡Estaba con él! ¡Mira esas enaguas llenas de paja de trigo!³¹

The impassioned girl tells the entire household that she is his wife and that he is outside in the garden, strong as a lion. Bernarda takes a rifle and goes out in search of Pepe Romano, followed by Martirio. The other women hear a shot; Martirio comes back to tell them that Pepe Romano is dead. This is not true; Bernarda has missed him and he has escaped on his horse. But Adela does not stay to hear this. Her lover has been killed: she goes out and hangs herself. Now Bernarda's stony conviction of the righteousness of her code of honor is stronger than ever; stronger than any feeling she might have for her dead daughter. She orders her other daughters to lay out Adela in her room and to dress her in a virgin's shroud. For this is to be the story that the villagers will hear.

Y no quiero llantos. La muerte hay que mirarla

³¹ Obras Completas, VIII, 119.

cara a cara. ¡Silencio! (A otra hija.) ¡A callar he dicho! (A otra hija.) ¡Las lágrimas cuando estás sola! Nos hundiremos todas en un mar de luto. Ella, la hija menor de Bernarda Alba, ha muerto virgen. ¿Me habéis oído? ¡Silencio, silencio he dicho! ¡Silencio!32

The honor of the house of Bernarda Alba will be saved. Nothing else is of any importance. Death is much stronger than frustrated, rebellious life.

In black on white--the black of sterile mourning set against the dead white of the prison house--Lorca's play shows the working of an old Spanish code of honor and caste in its deadly extremes, valid and fatal in a sector of society where there is no outlet, no hope of sanity and freedom, for the hysteria of frustrated women. Erotic frustration and perverted power are certainly not specifically Spanish, but the tragic fatality that seems so inevitable to its victims is a characteristic element of the Spanish world from which Lorca took his characters and his plot.

The exceptional sensitiveness to feminine reactions and frustrations which fills Lorca's plays runs through much of his literary production.

In Lorca's last dramatic production, Doña Rosita la Soltera, o el Lenguaje de las Flores (Doña Rosita the Spinster, or the Language of the Flowers), we are offered

³² Obras Completas, VIII, 123.

still another version of frustrated love. It is the frustration created by society's concept of how the individual reacts in an apparent dilemma. The setting at the turn of the twentieth century frames a heroine, Doña Rosita, who lives within her drawing room and suffers like a wilting flower for twenty years. And yet, though she seldom ventures outside her house and garden, her plight reveals small perishable fragility which is the romantically frustrated life of this woman of the provinces.

It is the tragic story of a girl who waits for fifteen years for her betrothed to return from across the seas and marry her, but he jilts her and the marriage is unfulfilled. For more than fifteen years he maintains his deception by writing false letters.

To Rosita it is a world of loneliness and barrenness. She rejects the suggestion of her guardian uncle for a proxy wedding. Her world is such a tattered one. Her bosom has become flaccid, her hips have widened, and the yearning look seems to recall the happier days of past youth. She suffers the slow agonizing death of her soul. She is a woman who was once very much in love, but who is now slowly wilting after waiting over fifteen years for marriage. She has suffered all the repressions of normal love and the accompanying frustrations.

She will never marry. She has made hope and love

absolute entities, which she cannot modify to meet new contingencies. The only thing which she has left is her dignity. What she has within is for herself alone.

In La Zapatera Prodigiosa (The Shoemaker's Wonderful Wife) we observe an emphasis on the poetic rather than on the dramatic. La Zapatera is a young wife of eighteen married to a man of fifty-three. She suffers frustrations through her need for love and sharing.

There is some evidence in the theme of this comedy, innocent and joyful as it seems in its depiction of a peasant girl's happy resolution of her marital problems, which points to the pathos in Lorca's later folk tragedies. Conscious of her youth and her beauty, the Shoemaker's Wife feels tied down by her tired, conscientious, and colorless old husband. Ultimately, her flirtations and tempestuous outbursts drive her patient husband out into the world; then she is compelled to deal with the gossip of the neighbors and the scandals which have been evoked by her turning the shoeshop into a tavern where suitors come and make advances.

The frustrations in this Andalusian folk comedy are further brought about by the Shoemaker's Wife's refusal of the advances of young suitors and slurring remarks and suspicions of the gossipers.

Only in the end, after several months' absence,

when her husband returns disguised as a puppeteer, does she triumph over the frustrations. Even so, one feels that this is probably not enough to regain her position in society, or even perhaps, to quiet her concealed frustrations and sense of betrayal in marriage.

The exceptional sensitiveness to feminine reactions and frustrations is important for our study, as it runs through the whole of Lorca's work.

An early poem, La Soltera en Misa (The Spinster at Mass), describes one of those spinsters of Granada with opulent bosom--a ripe, lonely woman dressed in black silk, who loses herself in the incense fumes where sex and religious ritual merge.

Bajo el Moisés del incienso, adormecida.

Ojos de toro te miraban.
Tu rosario llovía.

Con ese traje de profunda seda,
no te muevas, Virginia.

Da los negros melones de tus pechos
al rumor de la misa.³³

In Lorca's La Monja Gitana (Ballad of the Gypsy Nun), there is evident also the reference to maternal frustrations in the very narrow and confined world of the nun, cloistered or not, who most pointedly lives in a world of her very own. The habit of the religious cannot

³³ Obras Completas, II, 194.

mute the desires for motherhood. It is pronounced and most observable in younger nuns, those who have recently left the Motherhouse, the headquarters and training center for girls who enter as candidates for the reception of holy orders, for teaching and working in the mission schools. In the nun's eyes we can observe the hungry, longing look as they caress the tiny child of some parishioner or of their family who have called to visit them in the convent parlor. In the just mentioned ballad, Lorca must have had very much the same in mind when he wrote:

¡Oh, qué llanura empinada
 con veinte soles arriba!
 ¡Qué ríos puestos de pie
 vislumbra su fantasía!
 Pero sigue con sus flores,³⁴

Love and death, sex and destruction are linked in Lorca's poetry as fundamental themes. The dark menace of rape is grotesquely fanciful in Preciosa y el Aire (Preciosa and the Air); it is real and appalling in Escena del Teniente Coronel de la Guardia Civil (Scene from the Lieutenant Colonel of the Civil Guard).

All the sediments of eroticism are in Lorca's widely popular poem of love, La Casada Infiel (The Unfaithful Wife) which exudes sexual ideology, masculine honor, and virginity. Perhaps La Casada Infiel, like

³⁴ Obras Completas, IV, 23.

Yerma, wants a son, and perhaps we would not be incorrect in assuming that her husband is unable to satisfy her passions.

En las últimas esquinas
 toqué sus pechos dormidos,
 y se me abrieron de pronto
 como ramos de jacintos.
 El almidón de su enagua
 me sonaba en el oído
 como una pieza de seda

 bajo su mata de pelo
 hice un hoyo sobre el limo.
 Y me quité la corbata.
 Ella se quitó el vestido.
 Yo el cinturón con revólver.
 Ella sus cuatro corpiños.

 Sus muslos se me escapaban

 Aquella noche corrí

 No quiero decir, como hombre,
 las cosas que ella me dijo.

 Me porté como quien soy.
 Como un gitano legítimo.³⁵

The quality of emotional expression in Lorca's works is true and finds basis in the immediate character of Spain herself. Lorca devised characters who are the expressions of spontaneous instinct. They, like Spain, have come to grief through some imperfection of their personalities, which is constantly being enlarged by the society about them.

His genius as poet-dramatist is richest as an out-

³⁵ Obras Completas, IV, 24-26.

growth of Andalusian folk paganism; a world closed in on itself and sheltered from the perversities of a modern twentieth century civilization.

Lorca has devised women characters who are symbolic of Spain herself. In detail, Spain is each of the women in his works. The Mother in Bodas de Sangre exhibits an element of jealousy as she remembers the pleasures of marriage when her husband was alive. By the same characteristic, there is an element of Spain's jealousy of other nations' evolution and economic and political structure which history and her feeling of self-sufficiency have denied her. Just as the Mother yearns for grandsons and the sons that her husband did not live to present her, so does Spain, in retrospect, bemoan her past glories in comparison to her present status and what the march of progress has refused her.

Bernarda, in La Casa de Bernarda Alba, is similar to this Mother. She also remembers the joys experienced with her two husbands and conveys an air of jealousy for the possibilities of her daughters. Her life is one of frustration and nostalgia. Bernarda shows unreasonable dominance and control over her daughters, which engenders resentment and rebellion and the loss of her daughters. So has Spain, the mother of former colonial greatness, lost her many daughter nations. Spain, too, basks in the light

of her past glories and must now be content with her failures. There were moments in her history which showed good promise for development, but fruition escaped her.

The wives in Lorca's works are Spain herself. Spain has remained infertile through her unwillingness to receive outside ideas, which she considers beneath her honor. She has failed to compromise the Spain of yesterday with the Spain of today. She has not profited by her past mistakes because she continues much the same as before. Yerma's hopes for motherhood were unrealized because Juan was unable to make her seed fertile. The Novia failed in her aspirations because she would not compromise with reality. Bernarda failed, as did La Zapatera, in her refusal to compromise with age. Spain has failed as a world power because she has not compromised and grown, or made the transition from the youth of her past glories and joys to the old age of present-day Spain.

Lorca's unmarried women, Doña Rosita and Bernarda's five daughters show the anomaly of waiting for something to happen, of waiting for others to enter their lives, but that for which they wait does not materialize. Doña Rosita, like Spain, is proud of her caste and is complacent, so does nothing to change the pattern. María Josefa and the daughters rebel against existing conditions, but only death results. They do not reach their yearned ful-

fillment. Neither has Spain reached any pronounced degree of growth and fulfillment because her insistent adherence to the old patterns have prevented her progress. Throughout her long history there have been occasional rebellions against the existing order, but historically speaking, they show only fleeting moments of promise. In short time she returned to her old pattern, reaching no sense of real growth, progress, and fulfillment, but a state of proud complacency.

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APPENDIX

The numbers preceding the following English translations refer to footnote numbers in the text.

4 Many poems came from him verbally--verbally because the poet recited them aloud as he conceived them and composed them, and at times put off transcribing them, or more often, giving them out for publication. And so, during those years when he still had not published a book and only a handful of poems had appeared in a few magazines, García Lorca already enjoyed renown in literary circles where his verses were passed from mouth to mouth as if they were a tradition.

7 . . . and may my blood upon the field
form soft red loam
where the tired laborers
can rest their spades.

9 Tree of blood moistens the morning
where the newly-delivered woman groans.
Her voice leaves crystals in the wound
and in the window a print of bones.

While the light that comes secures and gains
white boundaries of forgotten fable
in the rush from the turmoil of the veins
towards the clouded coolness of the apple.

Adam dreams in the fever of the clay
of a child which draws nearer galloping,
with the double throb of his cheek its way.

But another obscure Adam sleeping
dreams seedless moonstone far away
where the child of light will be kindling.

10 BRIDE: And I know I'm crazy and I know that my breasts rot with longing; but here I am--calmed by hearing him, by just seeing him move his arms.

11 BRIDEGROOM: Forget it. I'll eat grapes. Give me the knife.

MOTHER: What for?

BRIDEGROOM: To cut the grapes with.

MOTHER: (Muttering and looking for it) Knives, knives. Cursed be all knives, and the scoundrel who invented them.

BRIDEGROOM: Let's talk about something else.

MOTHER: And guns and pistols and the smallest little knife--and even hoes and pitchforks.

BRIDEGROOM: All right.

MOTHER: Everything that can slice a man's body. A handsome man, full of young life, who goes out to the vineyards or to his own olive groves--his own because he's inherited them.

BRIDEGROOM: Be quiet.

MOTHER: . . . and then that man doesn't come back. Or if he does come back it's only for someone to cover him over with a palm leaf or a plate of rock salt so he won't bloat. I don't know how you dare carry a knife on your body--or how I let this serpent stay in the chest.

12 MOTHER: Yes, yes--and see if you can make me happy with six grandchildren--or as many as you want, since your father didn't live to give them to me.

13 Neighbors with a knife,
with a little knife,
on their appointed day, between two and three,
these two men killed each other for love.
With a knife,
with a tiny knife
that barely fits the hand,
but that slides in clean
through the astonished flesh
and stops at the place
where trembles, enmeshed,
the dark root of a scream.

14 Your father, he used to take me. That's the way with men of good stock; good blood. Your grandfather left a son on every corner. That's what I like. Men, men; wheat, wheat.

15 Decent women throw themselves in the water; not that one! But now she's my son's wife.

16 Because I ran away with the other one; I ran away! (with anguish) You would have gone, too. I was a woman burning with desire, full of sores inside and out, and your son was a little bit of water from which I hoped for children, land, health; but the other one was a dark river, choked with brush, that brought near me the undertone of its rushes and its whispered song. And I went along with your son who was like a little

boy of cold water--and the other sent against me hundreds of birds who got in my way and left white frost on my wounds, my wounds of a poor withered woman, of a girl caressed by fire. I didn't want to; remember that! I didn't want to. Your son was my destiny and I have not betrayed him, but the other one's arm dragged me along like the pull of the sea, like the head toss of a mule, and he would have dragged me always, always, always--even if I were an old woman and all your son's sons held me by the hair.

17 SERVANT: Oh, lucky you--going to put your arms around a man; and kiss him; and feel his weight.

BRIDE: Hush.

SERVANT: And the best part will be when you'll wake up and you'll feel him at your side and when he caresses your shoulders with his breath, like a little nightingale's feather.

BRIDE: Will you be quiet?

SERVANT: But, child! What is a wedding? A wedding is just that and nothing more. Is it the sweets--or the bouquets of flowers? No. It's a shining bed and a man and a woman.

BRIDE: But you shouldn't talk like that.

SERVANT: Oh, that's something else again. But fun enough too.

BRIDE: Or bitter enough.

SERVANT: I'm going to put the orange blossoms on from here to here, so the wreath will shine out on top of your hair. (She tries on the sprigs of orange blossom.)

18 The mountains white upon your chest.

Let the branches tremble in the sun

and the fountains leap all around!

I shall say to you, child, yes,

for you I'll torn and broken be.

How painful is this belly now,

where first you shall be cradled!

When, my child, when will you come to me?

19 That's the way it is. Of course, there's still time. Helen was three years, and long ago some in my mother's time were much longer, but two years and twenty days--like me--is too long to wait. I don't think that it's right for me to burn myself out here. Many nights I go out barefooted to the patio to walk on the ground. I don't know why I do it. If I keep on like this, I'll end up by becoming ill.

20 . . . A live bird pressed in your hand . . . but
. . . more in your blood.

21 FIRST OLD WOMAN: What?

YERMA: What you already know. Why am I child-
less? Must I be left in the prime of my life taking
care of little birds, or putting up tiny pleated
curtains at my little windows? No. You've got to
tell me what to do, for I'll do anything you tell me
--even to sticking needles in the weakest part of my
eyes.

FIRST OLD WOMAN: Me, tell you? I don't know any-
thing about it. I lay down face up and began to
sing. Children came to me like water. Oh, who can
say this body you have isn't beautiful? You take a
step and at the end of the street a horse whinnies.
Oh! Leave me alone, girl; don't make me talk. I have
a lot of ideas I don't want to tell you about.

YERMA: Why not? I never talk about anything else
with my husband.

FIRST OLD WOMAN: Listen: Does your husband please
you?

YERMA: What?

FIRST OLD WOMAN: I mean--do you really love him?
Do you long to be with him?

YERMA: I don't know.

FIRST OLD WOMAN: Don't you tremble when he comes
near you? Don't you feel something like a dream
when he brings his lips close to yours? Tell me.

YERMA: No. I've never noticed it.

22 A farm woman who bears no children is useless--
like a handful of thorns--and even bad--even though
I may be a part of this wasteland abandoned by the
hand of God.

23 Lord, soothe with Thy own hand
the fire upon her cheek.

Listen to the penitent
in holy pilgrimage.
Open your rose in my flesh
though it have a thousand thorns.

Lord, make blossom the rose,
leave not my rose in shadow.

Upon my barren flesh
one rose of all the wonder.

24 YERMA: What can you tell me that I don't already know?

OLD WOMAN: What can no longer be hushed up. What shouts from all the rooftops. The fault is your husband's. Do you hear? He can cut off my hands if it isn't. Neither his father, nor his grandfather, nor his great-grandfather behaved like men of good blood. For them to have a son heaven and earth had to meet-- because they're nothing but saliva. But not your people. You have brothers and cousins for a hundred miles around. Just see what a curse has fallen on your loveliness.

YERMA: A curse. A puddle of poison on the wheat heads.

OLD WOMAN: But you have feet to leave your house.

YERMA: To leave?

OLD WOMAN: When I saw you in the pilgrimage, my heart gave a jump. Women come here to know new men. And the saint performs the miracle. My son's there behind the chapel waiting for you. My house needs a woman. Go with him and the three of us will live together. My son's made of blood. Like me. If you come to my house, there'll still be the odor of cradles. The ashes from your bedcovers will be bread and salt for your children. Come, don't you worry about what people will say. And as for your husband, in my house there are stout hearts and strong weapons to keep him from even crossing the street.

YERMA: Hush, hush! It's not that. I'd never do it. I can't just go out looking for someone. Do you imagine I could know another man? Where do you place my honor?

25 They give me the creeps. They're like those big leaves that spring up quickly over graves. They're smeared with wax. They grow inwards. I figure they must fry their food with lamp oil.

26 These clothes are my baby's
I wash here in the stream
to teach the stream a lesson
how crystal-like to gleam.

Down the hillside he comes
at lunchtime to me,
my husband with one rose
and I gave him three.

27 Barren, barren, but sure. Now I really know it

for sure. And alone. Now I'll sleep without
startling myself awake, anxious to see if I feel in
my blood another new blood. My body dry forever!
What do you want? Don't come near me, because I've
killed my son. I myself have killed my son!

28 The poor are like animals--it seems as though
they were made of different substances.

29 I want to get away from here! Bernarda! To get
married by the shore of the sea--by the shore of the
sea!

30 When my neighbor had a baby, I'd carry him some
chocolate and later she'd bring him to me, and so on--
always, and always and always. You'll have white
hair, but your neighbors won't come. Now I have to
go away, but I'm afraid the dogs will bite me. Won't
you come with me as far as the fields? I like fields.
I like houses, but open houses, and the neighbor
women asleep in their beds with their little tots,
and the men outside in their chairs. Pepe Romano is
a giant. All of you love him. But he's going to
devour you because you're grains of wheat. No, not
grains of wheat. Frogs with no tongues.

31 She was with him! Look at those skirts covered
with straw!

32 And I want no weeping. Death must be looked at
face to face. Silence! (to the other daughter) Be
still, I said! (to another daughter) Tears when
you're alone! We'll drown ourselves in a sea of
mourning. She, the youngest daughter of Bernarda
Alba, died a virgin. Did you hear me? Silence,
silence, I said. Silence!

33 Drowsy under the Moses of the incense.
Bull eyes looking at you,
your rosary was raining.
In that dress of deep silk,
Virginia, do not move.
Give the black melons of your breasts
to the murmur of the Mass.

34 O far extending plain
with twenty suns above!
What river on tip toe
glimpses your fantasy!

But she stays with her flowers,

35 In the corners of the outskirts
 I touched her sleeping breasts,
 and suddenly they opened to me
 like spikes of hyacinth.
 The starch of her petticoat
 sounded in my ears
 like a piece of silk

 underneath her cluster of hair
 I made a hollow in the earth.
 I took off my tie.
 She took off her dress.
 I my belt with the revolver.
 She her four bodices.

 Her thighs escaped me

 That night I ran

 I won't say, as a man
 the things she said to me.

 I behaved as the person I am.
 Like a proper gypsy.