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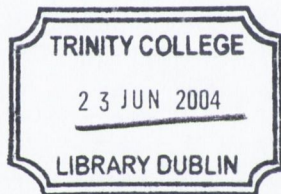
**Subverted gender, destabilised identity: how Love  
transcends desire in the queer tragedies of Federico García  
Lorca**



Robert Paul McDermid

Thesis submitted to the University of Dublin for the Degree of Doctor in Philosophy

January 2004



THESIS

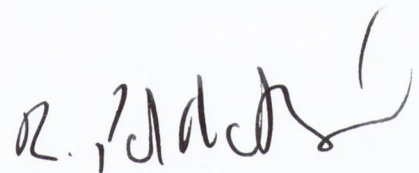
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. P. McDermid', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert Paul McDermid

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In memory of Jim McEnaney, for not knowing his geometry.

# **“Subverted gender, destabilised identity: how Love transcends desire in the queer tragedies of Federico García Lorca” by Robert Paul McDermid**

## *Abstract*

This thesis attempts to demonstrate the centrality of the dialectical tension between physical desire and metaphysical Love in the theatre works of Federico García Lorca. The study is informed by contemporary queer theory’s critique of gender and identity. It is structured around the consideration of six of the poet’s theatre texts in the light of the proposition of the key Love/desire opposition, while examining the construction of gender as the basis of subjective identity in these dramas. It begins with a review of the most substantial of García Lorca’s early attempts at writing theatre, the ‘religious tragedy’ Cristo, and finds therein an explicit proposal of the poet’s principal theme of the supremacy of Love over desire. García Lorca’s first commercial success, Mariana Pineda, is interpreted as a development of the Love/desire tension, with an emphasis on transcendence of physical and historicised existence. The following chapter on Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín explores the curious figure of the emasculated Perlimplín and his effort to give the object of his love, Belisa, a soul. A meditation on the fragmentary and challenging El público yields a vivid panorama of identity in crisis at the level of gender, and a paradigmatic Lorcan sacrifice of self for Love. The ostensibly conventional tragedy of Yerma is then reassessed as a masculinising quest for an inner dimension to existence. The final chapter argues for a practical re-reading of La casa de Bernarda Alba that sees Adela reaching for the freedoms of the masculine world outside and finding a transcendence of her physical state as the only form of escape. A reflection on the import of this study for the theory and practice of García Lorca’s theatre offers a concluding note to the thesis.

## Summary

*Alma extraña de mi hueco de venas,/ te he de buscar pequeña y sin raíces./*

*¡Amor de siempre, amor, amor de nunca!*

– “Tu infancia en Menton”, Poeta en Nueva York

The life of Federico García Lorca is assessed repeatedly within dualistic terms. Much has been written about the Granadine poet comparing, for example, his divergent but characteristic moods of vivacity and melancholy. Similarly, García Lorca’s work is often framed within the margins of opposing forces: between the traditional and the experimental; popular and ‘high’ culture; imagination and reason; freedom and repression. Recent psychoanalytical readings of his work have elucidated another of what is posited as an archetypal Lorcan preoccupation: the familiar Freudian tension between *eros* and *thanatos*, Love and Death. Few literary critics of García Lorca’s work have, until the last decade, questioned why the poet’s writings lend themselves to a thematic formula of oppositional values.

This present contribution to the study of García Lorca’s theatre works addresses not the dualistic themes of his work *per se*, but the overarching philosophical concerns of the poet. We view the dichotomies that arise in his work, and offer ground for analysis as resulting from a fundamental moral conflict. We therefore focus our inquiry on the poet’s enduring vision of a metaphysical, transcendent Love pitted against physical desire. It is our proposition that over the course of his literary output García Lorca refined and elaborated his earliest moral dilemma. We examine six texts ranging from the unedited juvenilia to the later more sophisticated and successful works of Yerma and La casa de Bernarda Alba. In the early works, such as Mariana Pineda and Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín, we find a series of enactments that exercise the struggle between the physical and the spiritual, while demonstrating a fixation on the figure that is martyred for Love. In the later works, both the



overtly experimental and those considered to be conventional, we see the instability of (gendered) identity resulting in a more complex, less clear-cut representation of the central Love/desire dialectic. In El público, García Lorca assesses the prospects for a Love transcendent against a relentless and bewildering parade of provisional identities. Meanwhile, the hopes of Yerma and Adela for spiritual fulfilment of their material beings is dissolved in the physical destruction of life that concludes their tragedies.

The poet rehearses in his own work what has been since the dawning of the industrial age a cultural and philosophical crisis of faith in subjective metaphysical depth. The rationalist ideology of the Enlightenment proposed the individual's identity as grounded by an inner sense of the Self, i.e. the soul. But this anchoring of identity in the metaphysical realm suffered from a Romantic and Modernist loss of confidence in an essential and abiding Self. In his work, García Lorca meditates on the desires of the body seeing them in the same terms as we in late-modern times view the contingent and itinerant fictions of identity. This leads the poet to query through the peculiar composition of his theatrical protagonists the notion of sex and gender as the primary fictions, or principal constructed realities, of the Self. However, it is not that García Lorca advocates an abandonment of the soul, rather in his sponsoring of metaphysical Love the poet seeks to hold onto the transcendent qualities of existence. We view this promotion of Love as an underestimated action of valour on the part of the poet, in the face of heteronormative dogma that denies any dimension of love to same-sex desire.

In our study we re-position García Lorca as a Modernist who anticipates but resists the late-modern (so-called post-modern) self-referentiality of subjective identity. Our reading of gender and identity follows contemporary queer theory's critique without revising García Lorca as a queer writer. We do not foolhardily stake a claim on his work as queer writing in the sense that it expresses same-sex desire, but we do propose several key intersections between the poet's thinking and queer theory's analysis of cultural formations of the Self.

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## Introduction

### *Gender and identity*

If there was a starting point from which this study emerged, it was a question of gender: why did a male dramatist come to conceive of so many impressive female characters such as Mariana Pineda, Yerma, doña Rosita, Julieta, the Zapatera, Bernarda and Adela? More specifically, the question became – what was a man whose primary emotional and erotic relations were with the same sex doing writing about the lives and loves of women?

Three problems with this question immediately came to mind. Firstly, to counter the above list of women characters we could add the names of several men, such as Enrique and Gonzalo of *El público*, the Joven of *Así que pasen cinco años*, Pepe el Romano, *Yerma*'s Víctor and don Perlimplín. Secondly, and especially given that García Lorca wrote about these men as well as those women, and about the relationships between women and men, why should we include the life of the author, explicitly his love of the same sex? Moreover, why make an issue at all of the sex, gender or sexuality of any writer in relation to her/his work?

The short answer to these doubts is that the original question arose from a very basic emotional response to the plays: I was intrigued. While reading or watching the theatre works of Federico García Lorca, I am unable to put aside my knowledge of the poet's life and the marginalisation he experienced through his same-sex loves. When I am impressed by these women characters who love men, I wonder at their significance for a male author who loved men.

This question of gender has been asked by many Lorcan critics and scholars but their answers have always been circumscribed by a heterosexist tendency to equate emotionally men who

love men with women who love men.<sup>1</sup> This results in the proposition that García Lorca empathised or identified with women, especially women amorously rejected or failed by men, and shared their sexual frustration/repression. It is the crudest, most reductionist analysis that so equates the gay man with the straight woman in terms of psychological make-up and social position<sup>2</sup>. This is not to say that García Lorca was not marginalised because of his sexuality, nor women for their gender, but it fails utterly to take cognisance of two crucial points. The first can be summarised thus: the marginalised (such as the oppressed woman or gay man) do not experience the world as marginal from their subjective viewpoint; they stand as marginal only in relation to the dominant, normative socio-culture. Just as the dominant culture, race, sex, sexual lifestyle, universalise their experience of the world, from any subjective vantage point, including the marginal one, life experience appears universal. The marginalised do not know their experience is marginal until told so by the dominant, and even so cannot do other than extend their experience as the universal experience of humanity.

The treating of García Lorca's same-sex desire as an 'issue', in the knowledge of which his literary work can be assessed, is the error made by those viewing his life and work from the perspective of the dominant culture. For García Lorca, his same-sex desire was the norm and so, even though he found himself on the margins, he was equally as capable of exploring the universal themes of love, desire and identity as those who were socio-culturally ascendant. He did not need to empathise with, project onto, or worse still, create proxy characters to explore the fundamentals of human life: he knew those feelings equally. No, his reasons for asking the questions that lie at the heart of his theatre are other. This brings us to the second critical point

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<sup>1</sup> Of the numerous examples we could cite, we draw attention to: Brenda Frazier, *La mujer en el teatro de Federico García Lorca*, (Madrid: Plaza Mayor, 1973); M<sup>a</sup> Estela Harretche, *Federico García Lorca: Análisis de una revolución teatral*, (Madrid: Gredos, 2000), esp. pp. 23-8; Francisco Umbral, *Lorca: poeta maldito*, (Barcelona: Bruguera, 1977), esp. pp. 82-92; Julio Huélamo Kosma, *El teatro imposible de García Lorca*, (Granada: University of Granada, 1996), esp. pp. 158-67; and on the relationship between García Lorca and both women in his life and with his female protagonists, see Ian Gibson, *Federico García Lorca, A Life*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1989).

<sup>2</sup> See Javier Herrero, "The Father against the Son: Lorca's Christian Vision", *Essays on Hispanic Themes in Honour of Edward C. Riley*, eds. Jennifer Lowe and Philip Swanson, (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1989), pp. 170-199, esp. p. 187.

that is glossed over by those heterosexist critics – why is sexuality (that of the author) equated with gender (that of his famous female protagonists)? The difficulty the heteronormative and patriarchal dominant culture has with same-sex desire is the same problem it has with women's desire: it refuses to accept a coherent relationship between biological sex and culturally-constructed gender. According to the dominant culture, men are desire's subjects and women its object. Women who wish to be the subjects of desire and men who wish to be the objects are getting the prescribed correspondence between their gender and their sex all wrong. García Lorca as a man and those characters he authored as women have their gender behaviour all wrong. This reminds us not to elide García Lorca's male protagonists. But with the men of García Lorca's theatre we have the corresponding feature of inappropriate gender conduct. These unimpressive men – José, Perlimplín, the Joven, the Director, Juan – fail miserably to be masculine, all of them comparing, in an unfavourable light, to the invisible men of *Bernarda Alba's* village.

Gender is a principal concern for the poet, as sex is the most basic level of identity. In human terms, when a child is born, the primary question 'Is it a boy or girl?' elicits a response that propels the child into language, society and culture based on the empirical evidence of the body's sex.<sup>3</sup> Through his querying of the sex/gender order, García Lorca finds himself examining the notion of essentialised identity. The cultural construction of gender based on biological sex questions the epistemological manner in which we presume that in a field of knowledge (especially of self-knowledge and identity), there are some unalterable essences or truths, such as biological sex. This inquiry is supported by contemporary postmodern feminist and queer thinking on identity. From the margins, and with the insights of such a perspective, women and queer men have, over the past couple of decades, been interrogating our understanding of subjective human identity as an urgent need to comprehend our relationship

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<sup>3</sup> For a full rehearsal of this proposition, see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), second edition 1999, 141-163, especially 142.

to the dominant. The vulnerable position of the margin does not allow a robust overthrow of the dominant, but, working within the dominant/subordinate nexus, there are strategies of resistance to the totalising effects of the prevailing culture. These strategies, of inversion, subversion, destabilisation, parody/pastiche (to be considered in relation to the phenomenon of camp), are, in general, a twisting or 'queering' of the essentialising feints of the dominant order.

In the selection of texts investigated, this study follows a chronological order for the sake, not of arguing for some illusory progressive development in García Lorca's thinking, but rather, of proposing that the poet's writings are driven by the same overarching concerns with several very fundamental philosophical dialectics. The foremost of these is the relationship of the soul to the body, and a parallel theory of metaphysical Love surpassing carnal desire.<sup>4</sup> The poet's discussion of these dialectics is interpellated by the challenge of gender and its destabilising of identity, something that García Lorca iterates in increasingly more sophisticated and refined ways through the course of the theatrical realisation of his ideas.

### *Cristo*

In his early, unfinished theatrical work Cristo, the dialectical foundation of the work is the opposition between the desires of the flesh and the need of the spirit for something more transcendent. As the young poet's early prose works demonstrate, this moral scientific question exercised the conscience of the teenage García Lorca. In the interactions García Lorca draws between his María and José, and between Jesús and the unknown Esther, we see the earliest of the poet's engagements in the cultural system of signs and values that organises the concept of constituted gender. Through his inquiries into gender, García Lorca exposes

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<sup>4</sup> Throughout the body of this thesis, we capitalise the initial letter of a number of nouns, central figures in our argument, when we wish these terms to be understood in their symbolic sense. Principally, these are: Love; Self, Other, Mask; and the discursive formulation Camp. We also advise, at this initial point, our use of 's/he' and 'h/er' instead of the masculinist, totalising usage of 'he' and 'his', when posited as universals.



the instability inherent in the liberal humanist notion of an essentialised and constitutive human subject. This encounter, in turn, feeds the poet's prospectus for a critique, to be pursued in his later theatre works, of a series of dialectical oppositions, a metaphysical framework of body and soul, surface and depth, artifice and truth. In this *tragedia religiosa*, the most substantial of the poet's youthful theatre works, García Lorca portrays one of the recurring figures of his writings, imagining, as the play does, something of the life and concerns of a teenage Jesus Christ. This fictional Christ is nineteen years old and something of a dreamer, always concerned with what lies beyond: beyond the hills that surround his village, beyond the limits of the Earth, the heavens above, and life beyond death. In short, his connection with the physical world is tenuous. The consequences of this, as played out in the drama, are: (i) the worries and fears his behaviour produces in his parents, especially the anxieties of María for her son's fate and her husband's incapacitating old age, and of José for his son's heterodox beliefs and the suspicions of his wife's infidelity suggested by the 'virgin' birth; (ii) Jesús's inability to reciprocate the (carnal) love offered to him by a young woman called Esther, and his reaching toward a higher, purer form of spiritual Love. The examination of gender and the scrutinising of the dominant/subordinate values that form the moral matrix of post-Enlightenment thinking, to be found in the poet's theatre work from Cristo and his earliest efforts on, demonstrate García Lorca's anticipation of the late-modern idea of the decentred, constituted self.

### Mariana Pineda

The central dialectic of the material versus the spiritual is taken up again in Mariana Pineda which the poet finished writing in 1925. However, in this series of *estampas* the focus is widened to take in the significance of the element of sacrifice, more specifically self-sacrifice in the face of unrequited love and the sacrifice of worldly life on the scaffold to a higher form of Love, as personified by the figure of a martyr. Taking as his starting point his childhood image of the historical Granadine heroine Mariana de Pineda, by way of the infantile song he

once sang with the other children of his native city, García Lorca effects a representation of the related philosophical oppositions of the physical/ temporal/ transitory to the metaphysical/ divine/ eternal by staging in his drama a realisation of the historical/ factual subject juxtaposed with the literary/ symbolic figure. The constructed nature of identities of the plural Mariana Pinedas instructs us in the central Lorcan preoccupation with the problematic notion of a fixed, coherent, essentialised self.

### *Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín*

The sole act of Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín provides us with a concise, highly-focussed, but lyrically textured recitation of the same theme pursued in Mariana Pineda of the relationship between body and soul, represented now by the characters of Belisa and don Perlimplín. In terms of origin and structure, the work falls somewhere between the animating of two-dimensional characters from a type of popular cartoon strip and the tragic farces of puppet theatre. As such, this brief and pocket-sized work *in camera* continues García Lorca's efforts to flesh out the literary/ symbolic/ iconic as he did with Cristo and Mariana Pineda. The dramatic thrust of Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín, which ends again in self-immolation, is once more an impossible attempt to reconcile the desires of the flesh with the need of the soul for a Love that lasts beyond death. As in all of the poet's theatre works, the value and semiotic structure culturally inscribed in gender is scrutinised. In Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín this is examined through his portrayal of a physically-deformed, aesthetically unappealing old man who marries an alluring, beautiful, young woman and finds himself infamously and exaggeratedly cuckolded. The attempt to reconcile body and soul culminates when, at the last moment of his physical life, Perlimplín transforms carnal desire into the undying Love of his wife.

## El público

By contrast, in terms of size and scope, the fragmented, provisional manuscript of El público offers a meditation of labyrinthine proportions on the same central fixations of the poet: the relationship between sex and gender, soul and body, truth and illusion, depth and surface. For undetermined but potentially significant reasons García Lorca designated the work as “irrepresentable”. This resulted in El público being neglected as a work of troublesome experimentation and its sidelining in favour of his now much-performed conventional works such as Bodas de sangre and La casa de Bernarda Alba. But, for García Lorca, El público represented his most personal work, “*mi obra*” and what he called elsewhere “*mi verdadero propósito*”. A product of modernism, written in 1930, El público resonates with and directly addresses those epistemological questions of contemporary life still posed by late modernity (or ‘postmodernity’), such as: how do we know meaning in a world constituted solely by representation; is there any longer a recognisable boundary between truth and fiction; how can we truly know (the identity of), and therefore be in a position to love, another person in such a theatrical world of ambiguous realities/ virtualities. Above all, in El público García Lorca consolidates the proposition graphically rehearsed in Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín that the impossible union of fleshly desire and spiritual Love stems from the drive towards a masochistic sacrifice of the Self in favour of the Other.

## Yerma

From the experimental theatre of El público and Así que pasen cinco años in the 1930s García Lorca moves to the territory of purportedly more conventional dramas. And yet a work such as Yerma encompasses a range of transgressive subversions that challenge the cultural and ethical template of dualistic values addressed in all the poet’s preceding works, including his more avant-garde pieces. Yerma is the queerest of García Lorca’s plays in that its assault on the coherence of essentialised gendered identity comes through its queer strategy of inversion, as well as through its focus on the masochistic and narcissistic elements of desire. Still the

question of the collapse of depth onto the surface – Mariana’s transfiguration into icon, Perlimplín’s soul embraced by Belisa’s body, the Emperador’s pursuit of “uno” in El público, the recurrent problem of the flesh/spirit opposition that so troubled the poet from his youngest times – comes to the surface, as it were, with Yerma’s longing for a phantasmic interior life, represented by the longed-for, illusive child that she destroys by the end of the play.

### *La casa de Bernarda Alba*

All of the endeavours of his preceding works, (the body/soul opposition, the sacrifice of the Self for the Other, the queer inversions of gender and its subversion of identity, and the transfiguration of desire into Love) become the indices by which to comprehend the strange spectacle of La casa de Bernarda Alba. Often interpreted as the most (social) realist of García Lorca’s theatre works, most recent productions have moved away from naturalism to a conscious engagement with the play’s farcical elements, its symbolic and stylised aspects. The first tool employed in this tragic farce is Camp critique, a sign system of enactment. The second is the use of drag performance to expose the constructed nature of gender identity. The result is a reclamation of ground from heterosexually-compelled difference and the creation of a queer other-realm where desire may be censored, repressed or distorted but Love manages to proclaim its transcendent inclusiveness. More a farcical tragedy, La casa de Bernarda Alba is conspicuous for the absurdity of the scenario, the ridiculous extent of the cruelties inflicted by the women one on another, the monstrousness of Bernarda (reminding us of other queer monsters such as Perlimplín and Yerma). In the *camera obscura* of the author’s eye, Bernarda is not so much dictator as director of the in-house drama. She is analogous to El público’s Director in the pursuit of the façade, of the mask, of the ‘teatro al aire libre’. In fact, there is much correspondence in La casa de Bernarda Alba with García Lorca’s preceding work, with the early puppet farces as well as with the avant-garde works. We think of Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín and its metatheatricity, like El público’s ‘living in the theatre’, and with its ultimate self-sacrifice. Similarly, Mariana Pineda

and her bodily sacrifice to attain spiritual freedom find much resonance in Adela's suicide. Its christological references recall Cristo and the yearnings of Jesús for 'something beyond', like the desires of Bernarda's imprisoned daughters for freedom. Adela and the other daughters' aspirations to break out of the confines of the house evoke Yerma and her spatial and gender transgressions. Above all, the radical staging of the desires of women, in this single sex drama, demands in its turn a radical reinterpretation of the work.

The apparatus and theoretical basis for this analysis of gender and identity in García Lorca's theatre is drawn from the works of contemporary thinkers in the sphere of feminist and queer philosophy, principally Judith Butler, Jonathan Dollimore, Monique Wittig, Michel Foucault, Moe Meyer and David Halperin. Thus supported, I hope to demonstrate that García Lorca's dramatisation of his most essential beliefs reflected not only his intellectual inheritance and the themes of his own time, but also foreshadowed current ideas on how we claim to know ourselves and how we face our human desire to outlive our desires. By way of conclusion this study argues for a sweeping realignment in current approaches not only to critical interpretation of García Lorca's theatre but also to the practical staging of Federico's universal and progressive agenda.

## Chapter One:

# Jesus of Love: the profane passion and holy spirit of the young poet's Cristo

### 1.1 Introduction

Love is at first not anything that means merging, giving over, and uniting with another (for what would a union be of something unclarified and unfinished, still subordinate?), it is a high inducement to the individual to ripen, to become something in himself, to become world, to become world for himself for another's sake, it is a great exacting claim on him, something that chooses him out and calls him to vast things.<sup>1</sup>

No hay más ley que el Amor.<sup>2</sup>

Until the 1994 publication of the earliest writings of the young Federico García Lorca, it would have been impossible to comprehend the consistency with which the poet returned again and again to the same sentiment of placing metaphysical Love over carnal desire.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke, from a letter to Franz Xaver Kappus, 14 May 1904, included in Letters to a Young Poet, trans. M. D. Herter Norton, (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1993), p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> So Jesús declares to his mother María in Act I, Scene 4, of Federico García Lorca's Cristo (Tragedia religiosa), included in Teatro inédito de juventud, ed. Andrés Soria Olmedo, (Madrid: Cátedra, 1994), p. 254. All subsequent references to the work are included in the main body of the text and are from this edition.

<sup>3</sup> In 1994 Ediciones Cátedra Madrid published García Lorca's Prosa inédita de juventud, ed. Christopher Maurer, Poesía inédita de juventud, ed. Christian de Paepe, and Teatro inédito de juventud, ed. Andrés Soria Olmedo, thus bringing into the public realm a comprehensive account of the poet's earliest works. Access to these works had previously been limited to those academic researchers on good terms with the family archive, the Fundación Federico García Lorca, in Madrid, presided over by the poet's youngest sister Isabel and his nephew Manuel Fernández-Montesinos García. On the effects of the tight grip the family maintains on the poet's fiction, artwork, lectures and correspondence, see Daniel Eisenberg, "Lorca and Censorship: the Gay Artist Made Heterosexual", Angélica. Revista de Literatura, (Lucena), 1 (1991), pp. 121-145. From 1985, studies of this juvenilia started to emerge. Principal among those permitted to examine the early theatre works prior to the publishing of the

Concerning the works of the poet's juvenilia, prominent Lorca scholars are univocal in identifying in these writings the enduring subjects of García Lorca's opus. With regard to the early theatre works, Héctor Urzáiz Tortajada finds "las principales señas de identidad de su teatro". He continues:

Muchas de estas obras dan un inicio claro de la persistencia de unos campos de interés concretos en las propuestas teatrales.<sup>4</sup>

In his introduction to this 1994 edition, Christopher Maurer underlines the significant contribution knowledge of the juvenilia makes to our understanding of the man and his later work:

Aun reconociendo el carácter provisional e íntimo de estas páginas [de la obra juvenil], comparto con ellos [la familia del poeta] la certidumbre de que iluminan obras posteriores de García Lorca y parcelas hasta ahora poco estudiadas o totalmente desconocidas de su pensamiento y de su biografía.<sup>5</sup>

It is with this in mind that we approach our reading of the lengthiest of the early dramas, the unfinished two acts of Cristo, styled *tragedia religiosa*.<sup>6</sup> Dated 1919-20 by Andrés Soria

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authorised volume was the preeminent French *lorquista* Marie Laffranque (see her "Federico García Lorca: teatro abierto, teatro inconcluso" in La casa de Bernarda Alba y el teatro de Federico García Lorca, ed. R. Doménech, (Madrid: Cátedra/Teatro Español, 1985), pp. 213-231; her study of and notes to Federico García Lorca, Teatro inconcluso, transcription by Leslie Stainton and Manuel Fernández Montesinos, (Granada: University of Granada, 1987); and her "Nuevos elementos de valoración. La obra dramática de García Lorca y su teatro inconcluso" in Valoración actual de la obra de García Lorca: actas del coloquio celebrado en la Casa de Velázquez = lectures actuelles de García Lorca: actes du colloque tenu à la Casa de Velázquez, eds. J. J. Bustos & Y. R. Fonquerne, (Madrid : Casa de Velázquez/Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1988), pp. 11-21. The renowned biographer of García Lorca, Ian Gibson provided a tantalising taste of García Lorca's youthful theatrical forays in his "En torno al primer estreno de Lorca (El maleficio de la mariposa)" (in La casa de Bernarda Alba y el teatro de Federico García Lorca, p. 64). Most relevant to our examination of Cristo are the studies of Eutimio Martín who broke new ground with his insights into the 'christological' aspects of García Lorca's theatre based on his readings of this early drama (see Martín's "Federico García Lorca, ¿un precursor de la 'teología de la liberación'?" (Su primera obra dramática, inédita)", Lecciones sobre Federico García Lorca, ed. A. Soria Olmedo, (Granada: Comisión Nacional del Cincuentenario, 1986), pp. 27-33; also his Federico García Lorca, heterodoxo y mártir. Análisis y proyección de la obra juvenil inédita, (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1986); and "La nueva dimensión 'crística' de Federico García Lorca a la luz de sus escritos juveniles inéditos", in Valoración actual de la obra de García Lorca, pp. 93-111).

<sup>4</sup> Héctor Urzáiz Tortajada, "Farsa, sátira y parodia en el teatro juvenil de García Lorca", Cuadernos para investigación de la literatura hispánica, Fundación Universitaria Española, (No. 21, 1996), pp. 400-1.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher Maurer, "Introducción", Federico García Lorca, Prosa inédita de juventud, p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> See Andrés Soria Olmedo, "Introducción", Federico García Lorca, Teatro inédito de juventud, p. 37.

Olmedo, the piece emerges from what Soria Olmedo terms “[un] periodo de rápida y disciplinada adquisición de experiencia en escritura dramática”.

In the drama, García Lorca envisages the quotidian existence of a teenage Jesus Christ, and muses on the concerns and intimate relationships of the incarnated Son of God. García Lorca has free rein to sketch the life of Jesus within the blank space left by the Gospels in the biography of Christ between the ages of twelve (when he teaches the rabbis at the Temple) and thirty (when he begins his public mission). In her article “Renan en Fuente Vaqueros, o la *Vie de Jésus* según Federico García Lorca”, Simone Saillard follows the research of Eutimio Martín with the contention that García Lorca would have been greatly influenced, via his Krausist educators, by the French Hebraist’s biography of Christ<sup>8</sup>. Ernest Renan’s portrait (1863) treated the “Son of God” as a man of flesh and blood, understating the divinity of the figure. This emphasis on the humanity of the Christ-figure had important consequences, ultimately for García Lorca’s religious outlook.<sup>9</sup> Firstly, Renan’s biographical sketch provoked a sustained, indignant response from traditionalists offended by the French scholar’s sacrilegious representation of a secular Jesus. And then, as Saillard illustrates, the debate over Renan’s revision of the Christ-figure, continuing into the twentieth century, shaped the spiritual temperament of the young García Lorca’s liberal humanist teachers.<sup>10</sup> It seems audacious to prove some direct correspondence in detail between the young poet’s Cristo and Renan’s Vie de Jésus, but it is clear that the poet shares with Renan’s

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<sup>7</sup> Andrés Soria Olmedo, “Introducción”, p. 32. In his studies, Eutimio Martín argues that the work dates from 1917 in order to support his findings of a biographical link between the nineteen year-old author and his nineteen year-old Jesús. For further evidence of these “signo[s] autobiográfico[s]”, see Eutimio Martín, Federico García Lorca, heterodoxo y mártir, p. 202, and “La nueva dimensión ‘crística’ de Federico García Lorca...”, p. 97.

<sup>8</sup> Simone Saillard, “Renan en Fuente Vaqueros, o la *Vie de Jésus* según Federico García Lorca”, Valoración actual de la obra de García Lorca, pp. 65-91.

<sup>9</sup> The influence of Krausist professor Martín Domínguez Berrueta on the young García Lorca is borne out in the poet’s first published work, the essay volume Impresiones y paisajes (1918), which was the fruit of García Lorca’s participation in the educational tour of Spain organised by the same *maestro*. See also Simone Saillard, “Renan en Fuente Vaqueros...”, pp. 68-70.

<sup>10</sup> This influence on the young poet is what Javier Herrero intimates in his description of García Lorca as “simply a child of his time”. Javier Herrero, “The Father against the Son: Lorca’s Christian Vision”, pp. 170-199, p. 193.



groundbreaking reappraisal of the Christ-figure, both a desire to return to the radical teachings of Jesus Christ and an urgent need to rediscover the humanity of God's son.<sup>11</sup>

The teenage Jesús of Cristo dissents from the moral Law of his Hebrew faith, the Mosaic *Thora*,<sup>12</sup> and rebels against the conventions of social relations with his family and friends. Resembling in this regard Renan's Christ, the fictional Jesús envisaged by García Lorca is a radical (or heterodox),<sup>13</sup> challenger to a contemporary malaise of hypocrisy and selfishness; a selfless visionary who sacrifices his life for philanthropic Love. This concept of Christ is to be found in explicit terms in one of the tracts from the poet's early, unedited prose works, Místicas (de la carne y el espíritu). The prayer that ends the "Mística de negrura y ansia de santidad" contains the lament: "Tu cruz no hace sombra en la tierra. Estás olvidado, Socialista divino".<sup>14</sup> Clearly García Lorca identified his notion of Christ with those working for social and political equity.<sup>15</sup> Compare this to Renan's vision of Christ the "perfect idealist": an anarchist, seeking not, in civil terms, the overthrow of the socio-political order, but rather, a levelling of all humanity, rich and poor, before God. Renan's Christ proposes the

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<sup>11</sup> As another influenced by a Krausist education, compare Antonio Machado's vision of a miraculous, living Christ versus the mournful image worshipped in Catholicism of a dead, defeated Christ on the cross, to be found most plainly in his lyric verse "La saeta": "¡Oh, no eres tú mi cantar!/ ¡No puedo cantar, ni quiero/ a ese Jesús del madero,/ sino al que anduvo en el mar!". Campos de Castilla, ed. Geoffrey Ribbans, (Madrid: Cátedra, 1997), p. 199. We also note the image of "el Cristito de barro" that appears in García Lorca's "Nacimiento de Cristo" from the Poeta en Nueva York cycle.

<sup>12</sup> Renan explains the religious and apolitical nature of the *Thora*: "cette Loi, il faut bien le remarquer, était toute sociale et morale. C'était l'œuvre d'hommes pénétrés d'un haut idéal de la vie présente et croyant avoir trouvé les meilleurs moyens pour le réaliser. La conviction de tous est que la *Thora* bien observée ne peut manquer de donner la parfaite félicité. Cette *Thora* n'a rien de commun avec les 'Lois' grecques ou romaines, lesquelles, ne s'occupant guère que du droit abstrait, entrent peu dans les questions de bonheur ou de moralité privés. On sent d'avance que les résultats qui sortiront de la loi juive seront d'ordre social, et non d'ordre politique, que l'œuvre à laquelle ce peuple travaille est un royaume de Dieu, non une république civile, une institution universelle, non une nationalité ou une patrie". Ernest Renan, Vie de Jésus, ed. Jean Gaulmier, (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), pp. 115-6.

<sup>13</sup> As Eutimio Martín styles him.

<sup>14</sup> Federico García Lorca, Prosa inédita de juventud, p. 71. Attempting to date the work, Maurer notes that the poet mentions his *místicas* as being in preparation at the end of the 1918 Impresiones y paisajes. "Introducción", p. 39.

<sup>15</sup> Writing about Mariana Pineda, Eutimio Martín exemplifies the influence García Lorca's Krausist educators had upon him, which we can see so readily in Cristo: "Con esta obra Lorca actuó como militante de un catolicismo liberal. Su propósito fue en extremo ambicioso: enraizar el liberalismo político en un sustrato cristiano, o dicho de otro modo, insertar la doctrina y la ética del liberalismo en el mensaje evangélico. Más claro aún: conciliar democracia y cristianismo", "La nueva dimensión 'crística'...", p. 109.

subordination of all materialism, all governmental power and even religious belief to “la pureté du cœur”.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless he is still remarkably similar to García Lorca’s ragged, rambling philosopher, pursuing his own truth, with the hypothesis that Love comes before people, laws and things of this Earth: “Que lo que el corazón cree por encima de todas las cosas, ésa es la verdad” (I, 4; p. 255). For Renan’s Christ it is purity of heart, for García Lorca’s it is a pure form of Love that belongs to the symbolic realm. We can see the terms in which Jesús recognises this figurative Love when Esther confronts him about his intended mission on Earth, which ultimately leads to his self-immolation: it is necessary “Porque los hombres se han olvidado del Amor” (II, 3; p. 290).

In Cristo: Tragedia religiosa García Lorca presents us with a portrait of this nineteen year-old visionary, his relationship with his parents María and José, his friendship with a young woman named Esther who is unhappily in love with him, and also sketches relations between his parents. The action takes place over two acts with five scenes apiece, the second act remaining unfinished shortly into scene five. The first act rehearses the fears of María and José for the son’s future in view of his unconventional behaviour. Act I includes a visitation to María by the archangel Gabriel: a second annunciation, that heralds the Passion and death of Jesús. The second act focuses on the plight of Esther and examines her unrequited love for Jesús. It is during this act, when offered physical love by Esther, that we see Jesús unable to respond in kind, bound as he is to reach towards a purer, metaphysical Love. It is the gap between the love which Esther offers and the Love which Jesús seeks that generates the tension at the heart of Cristo. The notion that the young García Lorca advances in one of the early *místicas* is relevant here: the pure and spiritual form of Love is that which produces our notions of an interior, essential existence or soul: “El amor puro y magnífico es el que forma

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<sup>16</sup> Ernest Renan, Vie de Jésus, p. 95.

las almas".<sup>17</sup> As the young Esther proffers her outward, physical being to Jesús, so Jesús embraces his interior, immortal self and his communion with the divine.

The model of a love, (or rather desire), grounded in the material world, which is offered but cannot be reciprocated because the object of that love is oriented towards a spiritual Love, is iterated by García Lorca through the relationships between the central characters in all of his major dramas. Just as Esther's love for Jesús is entirely unilineal, and Jesús is solely cathected in his embracing of Love (in his case, the ideal of the Kingdom of God), so we observe the love of Sylvia for Curianito el nene in El maleficio de la mariposa, being spurned by the Earth-bound Curianito who chases his ideal Love in the Mariposa, a creature that belongs to the heavens. Chapter Two of this study investigates the love borne by Fernando for Mariana Pineda, her refusal of that physical love, and her movement towards a transcendent Love of freedom which replaces her feelings for the liberal Pedro on a symbolic level. Chapter Three examines the briefest, yet richest, example of Garcia Lorca's schema in the somatically-challenged don Perlimplín's desire for the beautiful Belisa, and the manner in which he moves her to a spiritual level of consciousness by splitting himself into an image of idealised beauty, the Joven de la capa roja. Similarly, the identity of the Director in El público, examined in Chapter Four, is mobile, making it unfeasible for Gonzalo to return his love, bound as Gonzalo is to an image that is impossible to reach, the Director's alter-ego, Enrique. Yerma, which is addressed in the fifth chapter, encompasses a further sophistication of the Love/desire paradigm. The apparently barren Yerma does not admit the love that Víctor proffers her; instead she sublimates her desires to a phantasmic, elusive dream of having a child. Although the object of Adela's desire in La casa de Bernarda Alba is nominally Pepe el Romano, this character provides another example of Love's transcendence of physical love with her defiant moves toward freedom, a condition that she only attains in spiritual form with her self-sacrifice.

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<sup>17</sup> Federico García Lorca, "Mística en que se trata de una angustia suprema que no se borra nunca", Prosa inédita de juventud, p. 85-6.

It should be apparent from this brief review of the chain of unreciprocated desires and impossible Loves in the major Lorcan dramas examined in this study that there are female characters who are as much the authors of desire as there are men. The unusually strong element of the desires of resilient women and equally atypical men of diminished potency highlights the importance that an examination of gender will be to our analysis of this juvenile drama and the more mature works. The principal focus of the thesis is the opposition of fleshly desire to spiritual demand, one of the central conflicts in the poet's theatre,<sup>18</sup> together with the feature of gender instability in these plays.

### *1.2 Flesh and Spirit*

The harmony of soul and body – how much that is! We in our madness have separated the two, and have invented a realism that is vulgar, an ideality that is void.<sup>19</sup>

[V]uestro gran pecado ha sido desligar la carne del espíritu, no comprendiendo en vuestra miserable pequeñez que la carne es el espíritu y el espíritu la carne.<sup>20</sup>

In his dialogues Timaeus and Phaedrus, Plato put forward the concept of an interior, abiding essence or anima, partly an element of the body's materiality, and partly a reflection of God's divinity. The medieval conception of the mortal body as a poor mimetic copy of the immortal soul of God's creation, owed everything to this classical formulation. By the time of the Enlightenment, the Cartesian vision of the discrete, rational subject and a separate, entirely nonphysical essence, synonymous with the origin of individual identity or soul, had taken such root in cultural discourse that even when modernity was generating aesthetic reactions,

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<sup>18</sup> As Herrero sustains in relation to García Lorca's religious attitude. Javier Herrero, "The Father against the Son...", p. 173.

<sup>19</sup> Oscar Wilde, "The Picture of Dorian Gray", Complete Works of Oscar Wilde, (London: Collins, 2001), p. 24.

<sup>20</sup> Federico García Lorca, "Mística que trata del freno puesto por [la] sociedad a la naturaleza de nuestros cuerpos y nuestras almas. Visión de juventud", Prosa inédita de juventud, p. 162.

such as Romanticism, Idealism and Modernism, the principle was difficult to dislodge. Despite the modifications that have taken place in our imagining of the soul, we would suggest that, since Plato, the cultures of Western civilisation have been nourished by the notion of the Self split into the figures of body and soul.<sup>21</sup> Yet, by the late nineteenth century, this belief, especially the Enlightenment conceptualisation of an oppositional body/soul, physical/metaphysical entities, was under interrogation, if not dispute. The same Ernest Renan, defending his proposal that Christ was an idealist, suggests that:

Jésus n'est pas un spiritualiste; car tout aboutit pour lui à une réalisation palpable.

Mais c'est un idéaliste accompli, la matière n'étant pour lui que le signe de l'idée, et le réel l'expression vivante de ce qui ne paraît pas.<sup>22</sup>

His Christ saw no necessary distinction between the material and the non-physical; one represented the other concomitantly. By the time of Oscar Wilde, as we can see from the epigrammatic statement cited above, modernist thinkers were formulating the concept of a collapse of the Self's essential interiority onto the surface. No longer was it that the soul represented the body and vice versa, but rather that the soul had become a mere representation in a material field of representation. It is this emptying of spiritual depth that preoccupies the young García Lorca from his earliest writings on. The young poet railed against the superficial desires of the flesh and sought refuge in the conception of an inner being, as we can see in this excerpt from one of the *místicas*: "El hombre es un pedazo de carne en que vive un genio llamado lujuria y un consuelo llamado alma".<sup>23</sup> The youthful García Lorca wished to subordinate his physical desires to the flawless figure of the soul: "La carne por la carne me espanta. El espíritu por la carne es lo ideal".<sup>24</sup> It is paradigmatic of the poet's early work to find this emphasis on a raw oppositional formula, as, commenting on the body/soul dialectic, Christopher Maurer observes: "[es el] dualismo que caracteriza toda la obra

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<sup>21</sup> For a more comprehensive rehearsal of the genealogy on which this account is based, see Jeanne Riou, *Imagination in German Romanticism: Re-thinking the Self in its Environment*, (Bern & Oxford: Peter Lang, 2004, *forthcoming*). Esp. Chapter One: "Mind, Body, Soul in Rationalistic Discourse".

<sup>22</sup> Ernest Renan, *Vie de Jésus*, p. 196.

<sup>23</sup> Federico García Lorca, "Mística de negrura y de ansia de santidad", *Prosa inédita de juventud*, p. 67.

<sup>24</sup> Federico García Lorca, "Estado de ánimo de la noche del 8 de enero", *Prosa inédita de juventud*, p. 191.

temprana de Lorca: la división en dos dominios antagónicos que sólo pueden reconciliarse mediante el misticismo”.<sup>25</sup> In marginally different phraseology, Javier Herrero highlights the dichotomy between the mortality of matter and the enduringness of one’s essence: “in [...] Libro de poemas Lorca introduces the theme of the essential contradiction between life’s inner struggle for permanent joy and the unstoppable march of the cosmic circle towards death”.<sup>26</sup> Recalling Renan’s schematic of a Christ who sought the idealised form of the spirit by setting himself against the Law, Andrés Soria Olmedo suggests that Cristo centres on “la oposición de la letra (muerta) y el espíritu”.<sup>27</sup> In contrast but still drawing upon Renan’s creation, Simone Saillard focuses on another oppositional scheme present in the drama, suggested by Renan’s portrait of the Palestine of Christ’s time which runs along the lines of *Norte/Galilea/alegría* versus *Sur/Jerusalén/tristeza*.<sup>28</sup> By way of explanation for this dialectical quality in the work, Christopher Maurer underscores the young García Lorca’s sense of self, during an act of auto-eroticism, splitting into a carnality that torments, and a spirit that rises above and disowns the flesh. He cites the following passage from the tract “[¿Qué hay detrás de mí...?]”:

Las acciones de mi cuerpo las contempla mi espíritu muy alto y soy dos durante el gran sacrificio del semen. Uno que mira al cielo incensado de azucena y de jacinto y otro que es todo fuego y carne que esparce muerta vida con perfume de verano y de clavel.<sup>29</sup>

The struggles of a teenage García Lorca with the dialectic of Love over temporal love/desire have led Eutimio Martín to emphasise the biographical link between the poet and his fictional

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<sup>25</sup> Christopher Maurer, “Introducción”, Federico García Lorca, Prosa inédita de juventud, p. 22. Lest it be thought that García Lorca moved on from his preoccupation with the body/soul opposition in his later work, see Javier Herrero’s analysis of the 1929 “Oda al Santísimo Sacramento del Altar” where he observes that the second, third and fourth sections of the poem are subtitled ‘Mundo’, ‘Demonio’, ‘Carne’, which represent “the enemies of the soul in Christian theology”. “The Father against the Son...”, p. 188.

<sup>26</sup> Javier Herrero, “The Father against the Son...”, p. 175.

<sup>27</sup> Andrés Soria Olmedo, “Introducción”, Federico García Lorca, Teatro inédito de juventud, p. 38.

<sup>28</sup> Simone Saillard, “Renan en Fuente Vaqueros...”, p. 74.

<sup>29</sup> Federico García Lorca, Prosa inédita de juventud, p. 189.

Christ.<sup>30</sup> Noting that in the list of *dramatis personae* for the earlier, abandoned version of *Cristo*, subtitled *poema dramático*, Jesús is recorded as being nineteen years old,<sup>31</sup> Martín bases his argument on the supposition that *Cristo* (*tragedia religiosa*) was written in 1917, making García Lorca the same age as his Jesús.<sup>32</sup> Certainly, with regard to the flesh/spirit opposition there is much evidence of the young poet's concerns being exercised in the figure of Christ he creates. The young Jesús unburdens himself to his mother describing his imagined alternative life, if he were able to be satisfied with material comfort and reciprocate Esther's love, and how that life would still be subject to divine interference:

Madre, yo imaginaba entonces para mí una vida tranquila y dulce, mi huerto lleno de lirios, mi campo de trigo y las risas de mis hijos [...] al mirar hacia el cielo, todas las estrellas que se ven y que no se ven cayeron sobre mí y me taladraron con sus puñales de luz la carne y el alma [...] dejándome la carne fría y dura como la nieve de las cumbres. (I, 4; p. 260)

Two significant elements are revealed in this speech. Firstly, the imagery of transfiguration which sees starlight in the form of "puñales de luz" that impale both body and soul<sup>33</sup>; and secondly, the illustration of how this transfiguring (of the soul) brings mortal death to the body, represented by the extinguishing of bodily heat, leaving "la carne fría y dura como la nieve de las cumbres". The first element is an echo of the angel Gabriel's warning to María in the preceding scene:

La carne de tu hijo será taladrada por clavos y por lanzas, pero su alma será herida más profundamente aún por las espadas de la Confusión. (I, 3; p. 248)

The second element is highlighted by Jesús himself a few lines later: "tengo la carne de nieve, y el alma errante" (I, 4; p. 261). Here he anticipates his fate, his physical death and mutation into a divine being. Javier Herrero makes a pertinent observation on the mortification of the flesh in spiritual terms: It is "the essence of religious experience: not only does the spirit

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<sup>30</sup> See Eutimio Martín, *Federico García Lorca, heterodoxo y mártir*, p. 202.

<sup>31</sup> *Cristo* (*poema dramático*), Federico García Lorca, *Teatro inédito de juventud*, pp. 223-230.

<sup>32</sup> Disputed by Andrés Soria Olmedo. "Introducción", Federico García Lorca, *Teatro inédito de juventud*, p. 37, note 84. See also Eutimio Martín, "La nueva dimensión 'cristica'...", p. 97. See note 7.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. ESTHER: "Tienen dentro todas las estrellas del cielo" (II, 1; p. 276).

oppose the flesh, it freezes it".<sup>34</sup> The schism between the heavens above, the realm of the immortal spirit, and the Earth below with its secular desires is described in dramatic imagery by José: "Una estrella roja se ha corrido de horizonte a horizonte, dejando en el cielo una llaga profunda de sangre hirviente" (I, 5; p. 266). The vision of a bleeding wound prefigures the costal stigma that will be inflicted on Jesús on the Cross, bringing him death and the transfiguration of his physical life into the divine. This extraordinary splitting of the heavens, "nunca una estrella ha partido el cielo en dos pedazos" (I, 5; p. 266), suggests the rift that cannot be bridged between the corporeal and the nonphysical, as is manifest in Jesús's rejection of Esther for transcendent Love. This, despite Esther's appeal that Jesús cultivate mortal love and resist the call of the heavens: "¿Por qué en vez de estrellas no plantaste [en tu corazón] semilla de amor humano?" (II, 3; p. 285). The denial of physical love in favour of an abstract Love is also the cross that Yerma finds herself crucified upon, as she makes clear to Juan: "Una cosa es querer con la cabeza y otra cosa es que el cuerpo, ¡maldito sea el cuerpo!, no nos responda".<sup>35</sup> For Esther, too, there is no hope of correspondence with Jesús as the Vieja in *Cristo* indifferently observes: "¡Pobre espiga loca, enamorada de las nubes!" (II, 1; p. 281). Jesús is so concerned with spiritual affairs that the object of Esther's love is as insubstantial and ethereal as the clouds. That Jesús was ever focused on worldly matters is entirely dubious given Gabriel's description of how Jesús was generated in María: "Mis manos volcaron en tu vientre la profunda sabiduría de las estrellas" (I, 3; p. 244). So far, the image of the Christ that García Lorca presents us with does not tally with the epithet "Socialista divino"; it seems this Jesús is more interested in the kingdom of God than the kingdom of God here on Earth. Barely suspended between the allure of the heavens and the attractions of carnal love,<sup>36</sup> Jesús is unable to resolve the dilemma, incapable as he is of incorporating the physical into the nonphysical. To be content with human love would be to follow the Vieja's advice, in *Yerma*,

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<sup>34</sup> Javier Herrero, "The Father against the Son...", p. 179.

<sup>35</sup> "Yerma", Federico García Lorca, *Obras III, Teatro, 1*, ed. Miguel García-Posada, (Madrid: Akal, 1996), pp. 415-494. III, 1, p. 480. All page reference are to this edition and are included in the main body of text.

<sup>36</sup> As Javier Herrero registers: "Lorca expresses the sense of vocation of Jesus as a conflict between the appeal of the stars and the call of all flesh". "The Father against the Son...", p. 179



and unite the spiritual with the material: “Para tener un hijo ha sido necesario que se junte el cielo con la tierra. Están hechos con saliva” (III, 2, p. 489). What the Vieja suggests is that in human terms the only way to proliferate, and therefore continue life beyond death is for bodily functions to step in, for there to be an exchange of somatic fluids and for the basic desires of the flesh to take over.

### *1.3 The Flesh*

Hitherto we have been considering body and soul as a symbolic opposition sustaining the text. In order to address the seeming irreconcilability of the two indices, we must now review in more detail the shaping of these apparently antithetical positions before we move on to consider their possible transcendence. The Vieja from Yerma has articulated that only in physical bonding can any future be created. The same advice is directed toward Jesús by his mother in this brief exchange:

MARÍA: Tu corazón necesita el agua del amor.

JESÚS: ¡El amor de Esther es otra clase de amor! (I, 4; pp. 258-9)

This ‘other type of love’ contrasts with the spiritual form of Love that Jesús strives toward. What Esther may offer him is analogous to the love that Juan holds for Yerma, as we can apprehend in her rejection of his advances: “Me buscas como cuando te quieres comer una paloma” (III, 2; p. 494). This carnal love or physical passion we find represented variously in later works such as La casa de Bernarda Alba in terms of: (i) bodily sensation – ADELA: “el sabor de su boca” (III, p. 399), BERNARDA: “se chupan los dedos” (I, p. 324), reminding us of Cristo’s VIEJA: “[los niños] están hechos con saliva”; (ii) material nourishment – MARÍA JOSEFA: “[dar] la teta y el pan” (III, p. 397), which connects to both “comer una paloma” in Yerma and “el agua de amor” in Cristo; (iii) human warmth – BERNARDA: “el calor de la

pana” (I, p. 316), PONCIA: “por calentura de varón” (I, p. 316), standing in contrast to “la carne de nieve”.<sup>37</sup>

Esther may hold for Jesús “el agua de amor”, but Jesús needs something more than human love can provide, which is exactly what Yerma senses faced with Juan’s desire: “¿Es preciso buscar en el hombre al hombre nada más?” (I, 2; 435). Although Esther is constructed in the text as representing purity and associated with the revitalising and potent qualities of fresh water,<sup>38</sup> it is only in the loneliest and darkest places of Jesús’s existence that he can admit the imagining of a desire: “Venía ya por el camino y en el silencio de la noche quise amarla y la amé con todas mis fuerzas” (I, 4; p. 259). The divergence between Esther’s desire and Jesús’s need for Love is the source of their respective misery. Like Perlimplín, “herido de amor” (I, p. 89),<sup>39</sup> both agonise over the impossible distance between one who loves and the other who seeks Love. Esther’s predicament is certainly comprehended by Jesús: “no era justo que un corazón sufriera teniendo yo el unguento que lo sanara” (I, 4; p. 259); but he can do nothing to help this “¡Pobre mariposa sin alas!” (II, 1; p. 276). As we note in the penultimate scene of the drama when Jesús and Esther encounter a group of small children who carry an injured little bird, Jesús is capable of providing life-giving love, but it is Love from the divine realm of the stars. Pressing the wounded bird to his lips, he whispers a prayer:

Para el sueño de la muerte, te doy el agua de mi amor. Para el brillo de tus ojos, te doy  
el brillo de mis estrellas. (II, 4; p. 293)

The bird resuscitates and, given the kiss of divine Love (“el brillo de mis estrellas”), flies off into the heavens. Pointedly, to Esther’s surprised query, “¿No estaba herido?”, Jesús announces: “En la carne nada más” (II, 4; p. 293). Like the bird, Esther’s pain is only physical: her wounds of carnal love can be transcended, with the kiss of pure, spiritual Love

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<sup>37</sup> “La casa de Bernarda Alba”, Federico García Lorca, *Obras IV, Teatro 2*, ed. Miguel García-Posada, (Madrid: Akal, 1992), pp. 305-404. All page reference are to this edition and are included in the main body of text.

<sup>38</sup> See *Cristo* MARÍA: “Ella es pura como el agua cristalina” I, 4; pp. 259; and ESTHER: “Como los trigos maduros/ está mi corazón./ ¿Quién traerá el agua clara/ por cauce sin amor?” II, 1; p. 269)

<sup>39</sup> “Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín”, Federico García Lorca, *Obras III, Teatro, 1*, ed. Miguel García-Posada, (Madrid: Akal, 1996), pp. 261-304; p. 289.

that cuts loose fleshly constraints and ascends, like the bird, toward heaven. It is timely to recall Mariana Pineda's self-sacrifice and elevation to status of martyr, transcending her physical suffering: "muy herida [...] / por las cosas de la tierra" (III, 2; p. 187).<sup>40</sup> If we take Javier Herrero's observation that "The ideal can be seen, but it seems to be unreachable: the flesh interposes itself as an unbreakable barrier",<sup>41</sup> it is suggested that the desires of the flesh are an impediment to accessing the domain of the spirit. But this "barrier" of Herrero's is not unbreakable: on the contrary, the body is very much a permeable boundary, as we will discuss in Chapter Four with reference to El público. The body is a limit that may be penetrated, though the penetration if done violently and with a foreign object will probably be fatal. And yet, mortal death is not something to be feared; rather it should be embraced as the transfer point to the immortal sphere of the soul. Jesús reveals as much to Esther with his oration: "Besad la mano que hunda un puñal en vuestra carne" (II, 3; p. 288). For the same reason Perlimplín is the author of his own death, plunging "[un] puñal de esmeraldas" (III, p. 302) into his breast. The visit of the angel Gabriel discloses to María, in a graphic vision, the fate of her son, "el sacrificio final de su hijo", as Eutimio Martín has noted<sup>42</sup>:

MARÍA: (*En las cumbres de la angustia y del sueño*) la terrible tormenta que lava sus llagas podridas y sus lepras antiguas; ¡Veo a mi hijo! ¡lleno de sangre y herido por el rayo, veo a mi hijo! (I, 3; p. 247).

Just as Jesús will undergo the Passion that will set him free of his physical life, Yerma's body is fatally wounded through her suffering for an idealised child she cannot have. She laments to the wisewoman Dolores: "¡Ay! Has puesto el dedo en la llaga más honda que tienen mis carnes" (III, 1; p. 474).

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<sup>40</sup> Federico García Lorca, Obras IV, Teatro 2, pp. 95-211. All page reference are to this edition and are included in the main body of text.

<sup>41</sup> Javier Herrero, "The Father against the Son...", p. 173.

<sup>42</sup> Eutimio Martín, Federico García Lorca, heterodoxo y mártir, p. 213.

## 1.4 Death

The road to Jesús's death, or *via dolorosa*, is, as Christ's, a path of sorrow and suffering. Jesús's journey begins long before his final days; in fact, the torment of Esther's love and the pursuit of a pure soul which removes him from her, are the first steps of agony that he must take along what Gabriel made known to his mother as "un camino muy largo con un rastro de sangre" (I, 3; p. 246). The figure of the Christ-like martyr is a pivotal one in the theatre work of García Lorca. As such we will consider the sacrifice that Mariana Pineda makes of herself for her idealised, liberal Love in Chapter Two. We will then investigate don Perlimplín's self-erasure in Chapter Three. The passion and death of Adela, with her "corona de espinas" (III, p. 399), is addressed in Chapter Six. Most pertinent to our current discussion is the image of the *Desnudo rojo* of El público, which is in point of fact a *desdoblamiento* of the character Gonzalo, as we discuss in Chapter Four. The *Desnudo* first appears "coronado de espinas azules" (V, p. 129) and hanging from an upright bed.<sup>43</sup> The figure takes part in a strange fusion of a passion play and a hospital scenario. The christological references are unequivocally asserted in the litany of phrases drawn from the Gospels' record of Christ's last words on the Cross: "Padre mío, aparta de mí este cáliz de amargura" (V, p. 130); "Padre mío, perdónalos, que no saben lo que se hacen" (V, p. 136); "Padre: en tus manos encomiendo mi espíritu" (V, p. 138); and "Todo se ha consumado" (V, p. 139). But these locutions appear ambiguously in the text as 'lines' drawn from the passion play that is supposedly being staged. The identity of the *Desnudo rojo* is negotiable. It is in the moment of death where the 'truth' of the figure's being is resolved in its metamorphosis into, briefly, Gonzalo, but ultimately a movement onto the symbolic plane in the form of the *pez luna*. Death represents the ultimate truth where the mutable forms of the body, in all their contingency, come to an

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<sup>43</sup> Federico García Lorca, *Obras. V, Teatro, 3, (Teatro imposible). Cine, Música*, ed. Miguel García-Posada, (Madrid: Akal, 1992), pp. 69-157. All page references are to this edition and are included in the main body of text.

end and the existence of the immortal soul takes over.<sup>44</sup> The passion of the *Desnudo rojo* is expressed in terms of bleeding and wounding that would be very familiar to Jesús and Esther:

DESNUDO: Yo deseo morir. ¿Cuántos vasos de sangre me habéis sacado?

ENFERMERO: Cincuenta. Ahora te daré la hiel, y luego, a las ocho, vendré con el bisturí para ahondarte la herida del costado. (V, p. 130)

The haemorrhaging that results in death recurs in the physical representation of Mariana Pineda, who grows tangibly paler as the colour of her dress gradually fades to white. Yerma too faces the same threat of lifelessness, hence her appeal to Juan: “Es tu sangre y tu amparo lo que deseo” (III, 1; p. 478). Similarly, the doomed lovers of *Bodas de sangre* are pursued by a blood-thirsty Luna/Leñador intent on sapping what keeps them alive: “Pues esta noche tendrán/ mis mejillas roja sangre” (III, 1; p. 390). This brings us back to Esther who articulates for us the connection between love, wounding and death; her words invoke the Catholic iconography of the Sacred Heart, symbol of Love, and here also bound with the crown of thorns:

¡Toda su figura está enroscada en mi corazón sangriento! Yo quiero llenar mi pecho de terribles zarzales y de punzantes espinas para que mi amor no pueda escapar sin darme la muerte (II, 1; p. 277).

In a revealing moment in the following scene, Esther is cutting roses when she pricks herself. With expression, she immediately grasps the connotation of her deed and addresses the flower: “Tú me castigas porque te quito la vida [...] ¡quizás amarías a otra rosa de tu mismo rosal!” She continues to externalize her thoughts: “amaba tanto como yo, y que mis manos torpes arrojaron al sepulcro...” (II, 2; p. 282). Esther clearly associates this link between love, death and bodily penetration which forces disintegration of the flesh with herself: “¡Tú eres como yo!” (II, 2; p. 283). But the nexus is more fully realised in the future envisaged for Jesús. His sacrifice of the Self on the Cross is at once a bold statement for the spiritual salvation of all humanity, while being at the same time a miserable moment of physical

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<sup>44</sup> We continue this discussion in Chapter Four, where we explore further the relationship between truth and death, and their bearing on notions of subjective identity.

suffering and death. This iconic moment is precisely what fascinates García Lorca. In it we can see represented the transcription of human love through an act of self-immolation into spiritual Love: immortal, abiding, eternal. Jonathan Dollimore's evaluation of the image of Christ on the Cross resonates profoundly in the recurrent and dominant likeness of the martyr to be found in *Cristo* and so much of García Lorca's theatre:

What else [...] was Christ in his death but the keenest image of abjection and arrogance, the epitome of that transgressive masochism which has played such an important part in making and unmaking our culture, not least in the figure of the martyr, and which figures over and over again in the cultural depictions of the crucifix?<sup>45</sup>

But lest we conclude that García Lorca's Jesús is projected as primarily a creature of flesh, a man, who transmutes into a figure of the spirit, a divine being, it is vital that we review the production of Jesús in the drama as an agent of the celestial, and how this causes anxiety and apprehension in those around him. We note the disquiet with which the Vieja asks Esther about the man for whose love she appears fatally wounded: "¿¡Qué tienen los ojos de ese hombre que te han herido de muerte!?" Esther's reply signals the otherworldly dimension to the object of her love: "Tienen dentro todas las estrellas del cielo" (II, 1; p. 276).

### *1.5 The Spirit or the realm of the Immaterial*

If, as the proverb says "the eyes are the windows of the soul", or as Antonio Machado's declares "hay que soñar con los ojos abiertos", the eyes being designated as the phenomenological mediator between the exterior world and the soul, then we can allow Esther her revealing perception of the unfathomable infinity of the heavens to be found in the eyes of her loved one. It is as much a response to Jesús's assertion: "el que me mire a los ojos comprende lo borroso de mi espíritu" (I, 4; p. 258). Somewhere in the mysterious inner world

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<sup>45</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 286.

of Jesús is the source of his physical suffering.<sup>46</sup> His mother senses her son's exhaustion but Jesús asserts that the cause is "[la] amargura de mi alma que está despierta" (I, 4; p. 258). In the earlier, abandoned version of Cristo, the *poema trágico*, the poet's María has a more insightful understanding of her son's troubles: "Tú tienes/ una profunda herida/ en el alma" (I, p. 227). In the fuller rendering of the drama it is Esther who recognises the torment that gnaws away at Jesús from inside: "Tienes alma de peregrino insaciable" (II, 3; p. 284). It is this indefinable, almost existential, anguish carried within by Jesús that surfaces as a conviction that his destiny is to suffer: "¡Estoy hecho para el dolor!" (I, 4; p. 260).

We might remind ourselves of Esther's vision that is contained within her Jesús is this inner world that is somehow as vast and as limitless as the starry sky. Given that Jesús cannot escape from the impalpable suffering that comes from inside him, it is no surprise that the young Christ expresses the cause of his malaise as having come face to face with his interior domain that is also an unlimited, perduring realm – a figure best conceptualised as the soul. To his mother, Jesús confesses:

¡He visto el infinito, madre!, y por un instante he comprendido toda su expresión. ¡La sucesión de estrellas no se acaba nunca como nunca deja de temblar el inagotable manantial del tiempo! (I, 4; p. 260)

The terms from this speech that identify and define the soul are those also implied by Esther's insight into Jesús's inner being: vast, unbounded, inexhaustible and beyond mortal range. Throughout the text we are engaged by this discourse of an incomprehensible infinity that appears distinct from, and other to, the world inhabited by the characters of the drama (in the same manner as the body is separate from the soul), with the exception of Jesús, who uniquely, if excruciatingly, conjoins the physical with the immaterial in his person. Encountering the angel Gabriel, who appears disguised initially as a pilgrim (compare the "peregrino insaciable" that Esther associates with Jesús's soul), María is confronted by a

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<sup>46</sup> We note the title of one of the juvenile *místicas*: "Mística de nuestro mundo interior desconocido". Federico García Lorca, Prosa inédita de juventud, p. 137.

heavenly being who originates from an entirely spiritual plane. For María this divine place is a distant state:

GABRIEL: Yo vengo de la luz fundida en el alma, de donde se ven los ríos de las estrellas y el eje de los vientos. Yo vengo de la superficie de azul sin fin, de los terribles desiertos del silencio, de la infancia del infinito.

MARÍA: De muy lejanos países vienes... (I, 3; p. 243)

Later, to her husband, José, María clarifies for us the synonymy of Gabriel's origins and the ambit of the heavens: "Las estrellas están muy lejos de los hombres" (I, 5; p. 266). Thus she declares what is for her the distance between Heaven and Earth, the physical and the spiritual, and between body and soul. It is an especially difficult acknowledgement, given the fears she nurses for her son, as we witness in her prayers: "¡Dios mío! Quitad a mi hijo la amargura infinita que tiene en el corazón", "¿Para qué pasa las noches sollozando y mirando a las estrellas?" (I, 2; p. 240).

The gap that divides this world and the celestial, that cleaves body from soul, is conceived metaphorically in the drama by way of a micro-narrative of the familiar and the foreign. The narrative depends firstly on María and José's anxieties over their son's fixation on what is distant, figuratively beyond the horizon of their world. Initially, this concern is articulated by José:

Quando de niño yo lo enseñaba [a Jesús], tomaba la madera con sus manitas y sin poner atención a cuanto yo le decía se quedaba mirando fijamente a las montañas. (I, 1; p. 238)

At the end of the Act I, the following dialogue rehearses the same fear for Jesús and his obsession with remote concerns:

MARÍA: ¡Aquellas montañas!

JOSÉ: El sol nace por detrás de ellas.

MARÍA: ¿Y qué hay detrás de esas montañas?

JOSÉ: Otros campos y otras aldeas.

MARÍA: ¿Y más allá?



JOSÉ: (*Pensativo*) Más allá, Jerusalén.

MARÍA: (*Queriendo recordar una cosa muy borrada*) ¿Jerusalén?

JOSÉ: Sí, la gran ciudad del templo y de la sabiduría.

MARÍA: ¡¡Jerusalén!! (I, 5; pp. 267-8)

The distant object of dread is thus named as the city of Jerusalem. On a superficial level it would seem obvious to read this as an allusion to the future of the young Christ: Jerusalem representing the culmination of his mission on earth where he is arrested, and made to suffer and die. Indeed this reading is appropriate, explaining as it does that the parental apprehension which we witness in this scene is a typically familial concern. However, we are principally interested in the symbolic function of the terms contained in this micro-narrative. We therefore note José's description of the city as "del templo y de la sabiduría". The former refers back to a historical moment touched on in the first scene of Act I by María. She recalls the time "cuando hicieron el templo y vino el profeta Ezequiel" (I, 1; p. 237). Soria Olmedo observes in his notes to the edition that Ezekiel is remembered principally for his vision of a new temple for a new nation of Israel.<sup>47</sup> In other words, the prophet is associated with a time when, for the Hebrews, God's kingdom would be established here on Earth. The latter of the two qualifications of "Jerusalén" reminds us that as much as Jesús can be bracketed with the same vision of the advent of the kingdom of God, so he has also been identified for us as "la profunda *sabiduría* de las estrellas" (I, 3; p. 244 – my emphasis) by the angel Gabriel. And it is Gabriel who first highlights the grave significance of the place beyond the borders of María's world:

MARÍA: Y, ¿qué hay detrás de esas montañas?

GABRIEL: (*Con voz terrible*) ¡Jerusalén! (I, 3; p. 245)

For María and for those bound by the limits of their physical sphere, what lies elsewhere, beyond their place of residence, the environs of their daily life and, by metaphorical extension, beyond their understanding of corporeal existence, is circumscribed by a

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<sup>47</sup> See Federico García Lorca, "Cristo: tragedia religiosa", *Teatro inédito de juventud*, p. 237, note to line 111.

forbidding and ambiguous frontier, “la obscuridad profunda del horizonte” (I, 3; p. 246), that appears in substance as a skyline, and should be perceived in metaphysical terms as Death. Jesús is presented as traversing this boundary. Analogous to Mariana Pineda who is portrayed by García Lorca in “*una divina actitud de tránsito*” (III, 7; p. 203), and who finds herself removed from all those with whom she is spending her last days on Earth – “¡Qué lejanas os siento!” (III, 8; p. 208) – Jesús confesses to an uncomprehending mother: “¡...te siento muy lejos de mí!” (I, 4; p. 261).

The movement of Jesús from the physical to the spiritual becomes more evident in his declaration to Esther, when he explains his inability to respond to her: “Voy sintiendo a la humanidad muy lejos de mí, y yo me veo muy lejos de la humanidad” (II, 3; p. 287). The other world that Jesús is now joining is marked by qualities of immensity and impenetrability. It is no accident that Jesús and the angel Gabriel who “comes from the realm beyond” share, not only formal characteristics as we will discuss presently, but that their respective entrances into the drama are explained as arrivals from unknown, indefinable routes: Gabriel in the third scene, “[...] los caminos son invisibles y yo me extravié” (I, 3; p. 241); Jesús in the following scene, “Me perdí por mis caminos...” (I, 4; p. 251). The otherworldly domain is suggested at the opening of the play by the stage direction which calls for the setting of the Holy Family’s home to emerge from “(*una infinita lejanía azul*)” (I, 1; p. 233). The blue expanse of heaven is the same as that which envelops the (onstage) theatre of *El público* at the final moment of the drama when the Director and his servant are overwhelmed by death: “(*Todo el ángulo izquierdo de la decoración se parte y aparece un cielo de nubes largas, vivamente iluminado*)” (VI, p. 157).

Our evaluation of the terms in which the text of the drama expresses the trope of the soul has uncovered the metaphors of the stars and the heavens, and the preoccupation with a world beyond the natural sphere of physical knowledge: a rich language of figurative bodies that reveals the contours of the soul in its expanse, its remoteness and its enduringness. We should

also now consider the related concept of incomprehensibility that is implied in the fears and apprehensions María and José experience for their son. The final scene of Act I finds Jesús's parents in anxious conference over their son's strange behaviour. The same day had seen Jesús remonstrating with Daniel, the father of Esther, a pharisee, and all that that implies: "Daniel, como todos los fariseos, tiene lepra en el espíritu" (I, 4; p. 254), for what Jesús sees as Daniel's 'perverse' interpretation of the Law (the *Thora*). This brief exchange between María and her son on the matter revisits Jesús's insistence on the supremacy of spiritual Love over convention, as examined above:

JESÚS: El hombre que deja secarse los lirios y no los riega porque es sábado tiene perverso el corazón. Daniel es malo.

MARÍA: Es fiel cumplidor de la ley.

JESÚS: No hay más ley que el Amor. (I, 4; p. 254)

José is witness to Jesús's censure of Daniel and relates to María his mixture of fear, perplexity and hesitancy faced with an unrecognisable, obscure image of his son: "Yo guardé silencio, lleno de miedo, porque mi hijo me pareció entonces algo que pertenecía a las tinieblas" (I, 5; p. 265). Jesús's mother can offer her husband no comfort, acknowledging, as she does, that her son is indeed dominated by the unknown and the unintelligible: "¡Piensa muchas cosas invisibles!" (I, 5; p. 263). The concerns for her son harboured by María are echoed by Esther, in her charged and melancholy interview with Jesús<sup>48</sup>: "Cada día tienes la mirada más lejos. Parece que miras una cosa invisible" (II, 3; p. 284). The angel Gabriel's visitation to María takes place in an atmosphere of irreality: opening with MARÍA: "¡Ay de mí!... estoy adormecida en el mar terrible de los sueños" (I, 3; p. 245); and closing with Gabriel's injunction "(*Hundiéndose en el fondo*) ¡Ya eres toda un Sueño!..." (I, 3; p. 250). In this scenario, shifted from the material world to the ambiguous state of the oneiric, the angel proposes that the mysteries of human life are presently unfathomable to God's creation: "la tierra tiene sombra blanca" (I, 3; p. 242). It is suggested that God and the human race He

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<sup>48</sup> Soria Olmedo observes that this intimate scene between the two "tiene [...] algo de despedida". Andres Soria Olmedo, "Introducción", Federico García Lorca, *Teatro inédito de juventud*, p. 42.

created are estranged, that God has become mysterious and unknowable to mankind: “Hace mucho tiempo que los hombres no ven la luz” (I, 3; p. 242).<sup>49</sup> Early in the drama, José articulated the same conviction: “Él [Dios] está más allá de la humanidad” (I, 1; p. 236); and Jesús’s assessment of the world in which the voices of God’s prophets have become intelligible, resonates with Gabriel’s judgement concerning “los profetas”: “A medida que pasa el tiempo se agigantan sus figuras carnales, pero la luz que nos dejaron huye por un ocaso de incompreensión” (I, 4; p. 255). Explaining his second visitation to María, Gabriel highlights the connection between the dream-state and the realm of the divine: “Tan sólo en los sueños comprenderás algo de lo que manda el Señor” (I, 3; p. 246). To further emphasise the link, Gabriel reminds María: “Dios es el Dolor y el Sueño” (I, 3; p. 246). We note the association of the domain of God with the symbolic function of the dream and recall that Jesús also is presented as a property of another world. Before María, Gabriel delivers a startling pronouncement that upon the death of her son the mysteries of life which God has chosen to withhold from creation will be disclosed: “Hasta la muerte de Jesús no comprenderás los enigmas que te rodean” (I, 3; p. 249). And yet, one of the most puzzling mysteries is Jesús himself, at least, as we have seen, to those with whom he has come in contact during his life to this point: María and Esther who notices peculiar focus on ‘invisible things’, and José who at once fears and cannot comprehend the strange behaviour of his unorthodox son. And from the other side, as it were, Jesús regards the physical world around him with wonder and perceives the mystery in all the material things of the Earth. Witness his meditations on the cicadas of his native land:

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<sup>49</sup> The Old Testament tale of Noah and the Flood, common to the mythologies of many religious belief systems, marks the point at which God, disappointed by his creation’s flaws, destroys all but a sample of his work, and retreats from direct, earthly participation in human affairs. The distanced deity becomes God the Father, the Old Testament god of judgement and retribution. The figure of the Christ, God the Son, will come to reconcile ‘man’ to ‘his’ creator. For this theory, see Karen Armstrong, A history of God: from Abraham to the present: the 4000-year quest for God, (London: Heinemann, 1993). On this point, we note Urzáiz Tortajada’s description of another of García Lorca’s juvenile dramas on a religious theme, the farce Jehová (1920): “Esta visión carnavalesca y degradante del Paraíso no puede ser más elocuente, poniendo en escena a un Dios ridículo y cansado a los pies de su fracasada creación”. Héctor Urzáiz Tortajada, “Farsa, sátira y parodia en el teatro juvenil...”, p. 392.

Son más profundas [las cigarras] que los pájaros porque no pueden volar [...] ellas cantan algo que saben de cierto. Como las aguas y los árboles. (I, 4; p. 252)

Worthy of note is the distinction he makes between the birds of the air, whose domain is the heavens, and the features of the physical world – water, trees, and the cicadas (although winged, these insects live in the trees and tall grasses). His musings continue and, significantly for us, demonstrate that it is the objective world that remains concealed for Jesús: “Es que ahora las entiendo [las cigarras] mejor que nunca [...lo que] ellas tienen de misterioso y de incomprensible” (I, 4; p. 252). The young Christ’s curious speculations on the enigma of the corporeal contrast radically with Yerma’s desire for “cosas que están en el aire”.<sup>50</sup> Despite his many unmistakable connections to the nonphysical, Jesús seems to share with Juan a desire for the tangible: JUAN: “A mí me importa lo que tengo entre las manos. Lo que veo por mis ojos” (III, 2; p. 492); we return to Juan’s position in our discussion of the spiritual/corporeal dialectic in Chapter Five. What is certain for Jesús is his intention to transcend the gulf between God and humankind, between the earthly and the divine. At the climax of his first appearance in the play, where he opens his heart to his mother in a confidential exchange, Jesús moves his mother to tears with fright and compassion for her troubled son. The following speech, which is conspicuous for the care the poet took to underline it, appears and signals Jesús’s acceptance of his destiny:

*(levantándose y extendiendo los brazos en cruz)* Ahora nazco para las estrellas y para los hombres, para las hormigas y para los lirios. (I, 4; pp. 261-2)

For Andrés Soria Olmedo, this moment is a rebirth, a point where Jesús throws off his worldly form and sets about God’s work: “Como en las vidas de los santos, hay una ‘conversión’, un renacer que marca un punto de no retorno”.<sup>51</sup> But rather than a road-to-Damascus conversion, the speech marks Jesús’s acceptance of his necessary transformation from son of María to Son of God, a reverse of the Bethlehem phenomenon. This transmutation is not, however, a straightforward passage from one world to the next. Jesús

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. Juan’s complaint about Yerma’s “continuo lamento por cosas oscuras, fuera de la vida, por cosas que están en el aire” (III, 2). “Yerma”, Federico García Lorca, *Obras III. Teatro 1*, p. 492.

<sup>51</sup> Andrés Soria Olmedo, “Introducción”, Federico García Lorca, *Teatro inédito de juventud*, p. 40.

will bridge the gap between this world and heaven. His death will uncover the mysteries of life and bring the promise of eternal life for all. As Gabriel reveals to María, it is the *purpose* of Jesús to die. And by crossing the enigmatic horizon of Death, through the transfiguration of his corporal existence into the divine, by becoming the spirit of 'man', the figure of Christ will forever represent a bringing together of the spiritual Kingdom of God with the Kingdom of God on Earth. Though Jesús is now an enigma, his purpose here on Earth will be revealed through his ultimate self-sacrifice.

### *1.6 The Phantom*

Because of its importance in his more mature theatre, it is necessary for us to deviate, briefly, at this point from our examination of the flesh/spirit paradigm in order to highlight the special significance of the trope of the non-colour white in Cristo. In all of García Lorca's theatre works, the figure of "that which is white" appears as a marker of insubstantiality, a device employed by the poet at strategic points and in various guises. The principal value that García Lorca assigns to "that which is white" is announced through its usage in Cristo. The opening scene of Act II offers us an insight into the situation of Esther, absorbed as she is by her unrequited love for Jesús, in her interview with the Vieja. Easily a precursor of the encounters between Yerma and the unpretentious, godless old woman in Scenes 2 of Acts I and III of that later drama, the Vieja in Cristo intuitively guesses the predicament of Esther. Her conclusion is that the unresponsive Jesús cannot be made of flesh and blood: "estás enamorada de un fantasma" (II, 1; p. 280). The figure of an immaterial phantasm encompasses the symbolic bodies that will haunt the later works of the poet – the incorporeal, the spiritual, the immortal, the invisible and the ethereal. This set of figurative articles will stand in opposition to the values of the somatic, the physical, the temporal, the visible, the earthly and the substantial. Eutimio Martín justly identifies the Vieja's indictment of Jesús with "el mismo profundo carácter fantasmagórico que Yerma le reprocha a Juan [:] 'Ahora tienes la cara blanca... tú

cada vez más triste, más enjuto, como si crecieras al revés”<sup>52</sup>. But the trope of the white recurs persistently: the white-winged Mariposa, ephemeral creature of the air; the pale, white-garbed martyr for freedom, Mariana; “la blanca Belisa” (I, p. 255)<sup>53</sup>, impossible love of don Perlimplín; the blanched Luna-leñador of Bodas de sangre, organism of heavenly orbit; the long, white, silk capes of the Jugadores de cartas in Así que pasen cinco años and the Prestidigitador in El público, all agents from another world and nullifying go-betweens of Death; the character of the Niño muerto in Así que pasen cinco años wears a death mask of wax and is attired in his white first communion suit, while the Maniquí clothed in the Novia’s bridal dress represents an animated, noncorporeal entity; the transgressive figure of María Josefa in La casa de Bernarda Alba, dressed in her white bridal gown, promoting freedom and transcendence of the physical barriers imposed by Bernarda.

In Cristo, the poet’s symbolic use of ‘that which is white’ effects a distinction between those limited by worldly boundaries, María, José, Esther and the representative of the heavenly domain Gabriel. Jesús, oriented toward a surpassing of the physical world around him, is closely associated with Gabriel through his depiction as a figure from the permanent and spiritual realm of translucent whiteness. To the Vieja’s frank and uncomprehending question, “¿De quién te has enamorado?”, Esther describes Jesús as “[...] un hombre que tiene las manos de nieve y el mirar de plata” (II, 1; pp. 278-9). The ‘gaze of silver’, which echoes José’s earlier observation of “la claridad que [Jesús] tiene en los ojos” (I, 1; p. 238), suggests the bright, white glint of the precious metal as well as a coldness and the permanence of life beyond death. Jesús’s “manos de nieve” refer back to his self-description in the preceding act as having “la carne de nieve” (I, 4; p. 261), as well as equating him to Gabriel: MARÍA: “Los peregrinos no tienen las manos de nieve” (I, 3; p. 243). The reference to snow reiterates the allusion to the coldness of silver and is supported by the poet’s later application of the

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<sup>52</sup> Eutimio Martín, Federico García Lorca, heterodoxo y mártir, p. 221.

<sup>53</sup> “Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín”, Federico García Lorca, Obras III, Teatro 1, pp. 261-304.

element in El público. There we witness the death of the Director and his servant in the fall of snow that brings the curtain down on the play (VI, p. 157). Taken with the image of the horse from Bodas de sangre – “las crines heladas,/ dentro de los ojos/ un puñal de plata” (I, 2; p. 323), snow, with its coldness, its theft of heat from the living body, functions like silver, and holds connotations of death and the world beyond. We should also note the exercise of the same rhetoric in Yerma. The eponymous, tragic heroine yearns for a child that she believes will come from a sphere beyond physical range, portrayed as a mountain ridge capped with hard, cold snow (compare this to hard, cold silver):

¿De dónde vienes, amor, mi niño?/ ‘De la cresta del duro frío’ [...] ¿Qué pides, niño,  
desde tan lejos? [...] Los blancos montes que hay en tu pecho. (I, 1)

The metaphor certainly evokes the southerly horizon of García Lorca’s native Granada, bounded as it is by the Sierra Nevada. In the latter respect, the same image inhabited the poet’s mind for Mariana Pineda, and this time there is no doubt it refers to the natural landscape of the poet’s native city, where Mariana once lived, as he describes in an interview from 1933: the story of Mariana came into his imagination “como una niebla blanca en copos, que venía [...] desde la Sierra Nevada”.<sup>54</sup> We will discuss in Chapter Five the connection between the ephemeral child and Juan, but it is worth noting here that Yerma relates both child and husband to the same quality of cold, and links this to death: “yo le noto la cintura fría, como si tuviera el cuerpo muerto” (III, 1). In Cristo the descriptions of Jesús’s body are complemented by those of his apparel “(Entra Jesús [...] la blanca túnica. Su caballera es de oro oscuro, y sus ojos de un azul nublado)” (I, 4; p. 250). Aside from the whiteness of his tunic (compare Gabriel “Se deja caer la túnica y aparece radiante y hermoso. Toda la escena se llena de luz blanca” I, 3; p. 244), we mark the dark gold colour of his hair which approximates to Gabriel, who has “los cabellos como el sol” (I, 3; p. 244). We further note that gold, like silver, is another precious metal adding an inhuman quality to his appearance,

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<sup>54</sup> Federico García Lorca, Obras, V, Prosa, 1, ed. Miguel García-Posada, (Madrid: Akal, 1994) p. 611.



and resonating with Gabriel's "sandalias de plata" (I, 3; p. 244). The links between Jesús and Gabriel are corroborated by Simone Saillard:

Basta recordar los grillos que 'palpitan ocultos'... y observar también el juego de silencios y luces que relacionan la escena IV con la inmediatamente anterior, que es la de la Anunciación onírica, para darse cuenta de que una especie de 'fondu-enchaîné' escenográfico superpone la figura del hijo a la del mensajero genésico.<sup>55</sup>

The figure of Jesús, barely distinguishable from the angel Gabriel, seems so unearthly, so ethereal and so strange that his appearance frightens the little children that he and Esther come across in the fourth scene of Act II:

Niño 1º: Yo nunca he visto un hombre tan raro [...]

Niño 2º: ¿Será un brujo?

Niño 3º: A mí me da mucho miedo.

Niño 1º: ¡Mucho miedo!... (II, 4; p. 295)

The children's impression of Jesús as an uncommon, supernatural being underscores the generation in the text of the young Christ as a figure circumscribed by spiritual attributes, and in particular the manifestation of Jesús with those figurative properties related to the trope of white. García Lorca's stage representation of an emblematic Christ articulated in whiteness derives from the vision of Jesus that the young poet calls upon in the prayer that concludes his "Mística de negrura y de ansia de santidad":

Jesús blanco, Jesús puro, Jesús hombre, yo te amo con frenesí. Clavel de dolores,  
azucena inmaculada, jazmín de dulzor, yo te amo todo.<sup>56</sup>

The composition of Jesús in terms of "blanco" and "puro", along with the alliterative hints of white evoked by the jasmine flower, the ('immaculate') madonna lily and, possibly, the white variety of carnation, represent the spiritual dimension of the character. Aligned with the category of "hombre", reminding us of the mortal existence of Christ, this nomenclature condenses the background metaphysics of the drama Cristo: the Jesus who is at once body and soul, corporeal and immortal. And yet, as we have seen, the opposition is not a

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<sup>55</sup> Simone Saillard, "Renan en Fuente Vaqueros...", p. 87.

<sup>56</sup> Federico García Lorca, Prosa inédita de juventud, p. 71.

symmetrical one: there is a certain dominance in the drama of the nonphysical in the poet's portrayal of the Christ. Certainly, the tensions in the play, the anxieties of his parents, and the distress of the rejected Esther, stem from Jesús relinquishing the material ties to his mortal life, and hence the re-configuration of the character as an otherworldly entity.

An aspect of Cristo that demonstrates the ascendancy of the spiritual domain over the physical world is to be found in the juxtaposition of sign and substance. In the following chapter, we will discuss in depth the importance of the relationship between the static and superficial image, and the theatrical instituting of lifelike representation with regard to the production of an iconic Mariana Pineda. However, this device is also influential in the juvenile work. As the stage directions of Cristo make clear, García Lorca's Renan-esque conceptualisation of Jesus as an unorthodox, socialist preacher is restricted by the location of the drama in the realm of the totemic image. In both versions of Cristo, the discarded *poema dramático* and the extant *tragedia religiosa*, the setting for the drama as laid out by the poet is identical: “(Como en los cuentos de los niños y en las estampitas sagradas [...])” (I, 1; pp. 225 and 233). Like Mariana Pineda, the purview of Cristo is one drawn from the narratives of children and the reference point of symbolic graphics. Although the drama elaborates García Lorca's notions of the worldly and mortal problems of an unconventional visionary, the enactment of a believable biographical tale of Jesus is delimited by the dominion of a mythical and iconographic field. Even as the characters develop during the course of the play, the poet does not allow us to forget that they proceed from the province of pictorial representation. Witness the moment when Gabriel reveals himself to María: “(La Virgen se inclina y queda en éxtasis con las manos sobre el pecho y los ojos entornados, tal como la pintara Fray Angélico)” (I, 3; p. 244). Elsewhere, some of the images the poet provides for the sceneography of his work closely parallel the visual stage directions of his later compositions. The translation between the first scene of Act I, Esther and the Vieja, and the second scene, which finds Esther alone and contemplating her unreciprocated love for Jesús, is effected with the stage direction “Una bandada de gorriones campesinos cruza el azul sin

nubes” (II, 2; p. 281). For the transitions between the prologue and Act I, and Acts I and II, of Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín García Lorca employs a stylised version of the same device: *Bandadas de pájaros de papel (negro) cruzan [...]* (p. 271; and I, p. 286). The stage direction that closes Act I evokes a sense of the epic, the eternal and the everlasting, as well as generating a petrified image of what is being represented on stage: “*las arcadas del fondo se incrustan en el horizonte como láminas de marfil en una arqueta de esmalte azul*” (I, 5; p. 268). The same symbolic terms are utilised by the poet in El público to represent the timeless world beyond death that Julieta inhabits: “los arcos vacíos por el cielo” (III, p. 108).

### 1.7 Love

In the character of Jesús, García Lorca has realised a reconciliation of the body with the soul, the flesh with the spirit. Within these binary terms, the nonphysical appears to prevail. However, what García Lorca proposes with his incarnation of the Christ is not a resolution of the body/soul dialectic, not a triumph of the spirit over the flesh, rather it is both a mode of traversing the notional divide and a transcendence of fleshy limits through the supplanting of desire by Love. In a short prose piece from 1917, we find García Lorca meditating on Love and desire, although, by not capitalising the initial of “amor” he fails to distinguish, in his terminology, physical love from perfect Love.<sup>57</sup> The young poet asks rhetorically: “¿El deseo es la llama del amor? No. Si el deseo enciende al amor, ya no hay tal. Yo no deseo a los que amo, y deseo a los que odio”.<sup>58</sup> What the young García Lorca is trying to express is the superiority of transcendent Love over desire, arguing that carnal desire is separate from and incompatible with sublime Love. More successful at communicating his concerns, the poet’s theatre repeatedly offers illustration of his very particular belief in the supremacy of Love. In

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<sup>57</sup> We are reminded that García Lorca titles one of his early prose meditations “Mística que trata de un amor ideal”. Federico García Lorca, Prosa inédita de juventud, p. 79.

<sup>58</sup> “Estado de ánimo de la noche del 8 de enero” Federico García Lorca, Prosa inédita de juventud, p. 192.

Cristo, the following exchange between Jesús and Esther delineates the prevalent nature of transcendent Love:

JESÚS: [...] sufro por una flor deshojada tanto como por un niño muerto. ¿De qué carne está hecho mi corazón?

ESTHER: Tu corazón está así porque ningún sentimiento fuerte lo ata sobre la tierra.

(II, 3; pp. 286-7)

In an earlier scene, Jesús indicates that his fleshly heart is being consumed, not by passion, but by the transforming, elemental force of sublime Love: “mi corazón se deshace en llamaradas revueltas” (I, 4; p. 258). The burned-up space of Jesús’s somatic core is eventually charged with the enormity and endlessness of the oceans, of representing the scale of spiritual Love: “Toda el agua del mar cabe ya en mi corazón” (I, 5; p. 263). In answer to Esther’s concern for his reception in the wider world beyond his childhood village, Jesús contends that there will be no boundaries or limits to the scope of his message of pure, exalted Love: “todas las puertas se derriban en nombre del Amor” (II, 3; p. 284). We note that García Lorca is now deliberate in his use of a capitalised “Amor” in the symbolic sense. Christopher Maurer connects Yerma’s “lo mío es dolor que ya no está en las carnes” (III, 2; p. 490) with the *pena negra* of Soledad Montoya and the *Monja gitana* in Romancero gitano.<sup>59</sup> We might also add Mariana’s “¡Amor, amor, amor, y eternas soledades!” (III, 9; p. 211), and the “imaginación” that allows don Perlimplín to reinvent himself as the otherworldly object of Belisa’s desire, as examples of the transmutation of earthly passion into heavenly Love which we will deal with in subsequent chapters. In his “Estado de ánimo de la noche del 8 de enero”, the young García Lorca laments: “Yo soy un hombre hecho para desear y no poder conseguir”.<sup>60</sup> It is not, however, that the poet cannot have what or whom he desires, but rather it is that what he desires is not secular. We must conclude that the impossibility of desire, of “[...]el deseo que carece de un objeto específico”,<sup>61</sup> has no physical, material response. We remind ourselves

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<sup>59</sup> Christopher Maurer, “Introducción”, Federico García Lorca, Prosa inédita de juventud, p. 36.

<sup>60</sup> Federico García Lorca, Prosa inédita de juventud, p. 191.

<sup>61</sup> Christopher Maurer, “Introducción”, Federico García Lorca, Prosa inédita de juventud, p. 34.

that the poet's premise for his fictive Christ is summarised in Jesús's affirmation "Que lo que el corazón cree por encima de todas las cosas, ésa es la verdad": that Love transcends all.

### *1.8 The Masculine and the Feminine*

We might imagine that if a hierarchy exists in the dialectics of body/soul, desire/Love, with one value dominant, the other subordinate, this would secure the authority of one lover, or desirer, over the other. In a heterosexual economy, this would imply one sex over the other, and of course, in a patriarchal regime, that order would be male over female, for the male is posited as the author of desire and the female the desired. But García Lorca's work refuses to recognise the prescribed order, not, or at least not only, on account of the poet's same-sex desires, rather, and more importantly, because this would potentially disrupt the coherency of his argument that Love transcends desire. When Love is viewed at the level of symbol, anatomical sex and culturally-instituted gender have no relevance. Here within the text of *Cristo*, and in subsequent chapters, we will survey our proposition of the queer configuration of sex and gender in García Lorca's theatre. The bodies of women and men, as the loci of discrete identity come under the onslaught of invasive and explosive forces that expose the contingency of their selfhood. And the semiotic organisation of gender is elucidated as the performative production of the differentiated dualism of feminine and masculine.

As we discuss at greater length in Chapter Four, the discourse of nineteenth-century biomedical knowledge organised the categories of sex into a hierarchy that regulated the trajectory of human development as child/woman/man. Along this scale the figures on García Lorca's stage, male and female, move 'up', towards the male, and 'down', towards the infant; for nothing, above all, gendered identity, is fixed in the theatrical ambit of the poet's vision. It is also admissible to note the distribution of oppositional physical/moral values attendant on gender: from male/female to active/passive, strong/weak, rational/emotional, mature/narcissistic. It is in terms of these values that García Lorca sketches his male and

female characters, except that the relationship between the cultural attributes and anatomical sex is reversed. Like Perlimplín, the Zapatero and Yerma's Juan, José is portrayed as old, indecisive and lacking in manly vigour. In common with Curianito el nene, Mariana's Pedro, the Director of El público, the Joven of Así que pasen cinco años, and all the men of Bernarda Alba's village (with perhaps the exception of the mythical Pepe), the poet's figure of Jesús shares an effete weakness and effeminacy. Meanwhile, María is depicted in terms of a productivity and strength that appear at odds with her representation as the pure and faultless virgin.

The textual creation of José is twofold. Initially, and foremost in the work, we are presented with an old man whose days of fruitful activity and youthful strength are long gone. All that is left for José now are the sorrows, regrets and fears of old age. As María says of Daniel: "Es un hombre triste", to which José adds himself: "como todos los viejos somos" (I, 1; p. 234). All that awaits José is the prospect of death, as he articulates in the *poema dramático* version: "mi sueño de muerte" (I, p.226). In the same original version, the discourse on age and its associated debility is altogether more pronounced. The poet sharpens his focus on the age difference between María and José and the consequent discrepancies between them. We note that José's first intervention in the text is qualified by his depiction as a frail, elderly man, not long for this world: "(Éste [José] habla lentamente, como el viejo que está muy cerca de la muerte)" (I, p. 225). María addresses José as: "¡Viejo esposo!" (I, p. 228), which is replicated in the *tragedia religiosa* version of the text (I, 1; p. 234). Also in the earlier version, the inverted relationship between husband and wife, between frail, old man and virile, young woman is indicated with María positioning herself as José's protector: "¿Acaso ya mis manos/ No pueden defenderte?/ ¡Viejo mío!" (I, p. 226). María's treatment of the elderly José is akin to Marcolfa's and Belisa's attitude to Perlimplín. In the latter drama, the aged figure of don Perlimplín is continually reduced in the language of the women to the status of child, with firstly Marcolfa and then Belisa as his guardians. Their manner of addressing Perlimplín best exemplifies their relationship to him in the use of the diminutive and childish epithets:

“hijito” (II, p. 264), “Perlimplinito” (II, p. 269), “Perlimplinillo” (II, p. 270), and “chiquitito” (II, p. 271). In the same way that the diminutive, elderly Perlimplín is reduced in emotional stature to the status of a child, so María’s care for José is almost maternal rather than wifely. Simone Saillard characterises José’s portrayal as “infantilizado e inofensivo”.<sup>62</sup> The example of José demonstrates the mobility of gender identity and makes use of medical opinion during García Lorca’s time, which proposed a scale of human development from child to woman to man, by reversing the development of this male, reducing him to a station lower than that of woman and therefore in a position to be dominated by her. The correlation between physical weakness, diminished bodily stature and the process of reverse development is lucidly also illustrated in this exchange between Yerma and her husband:

YERMA: Trabajas mucho y no tienes tú cuerpo para resistir los trabajos.

JUAN: Cuando los hombres se quedan enjutos se ponen fuertes como el acero.

YERMA: Pero tú no. [...] Ahora tienes la cara blanca como si no te diera en ella el sol.

[...] Venticuatro meses llevamos casados, y tú cada vez más triste, mas enjuto, como si crecieras al revés. (I, 1; p. 419)

The assumption of masculine vigour and strength on María’s part is reinforced by her role as provider for the family, now that José’s strength has failed him (MARÍA: “¡Pobres manos viejas!” I, 1; p. 237). In response to José’s anxieties about the family’s economic survival (“En la casa ya no tenemos dinero” I, 1; p. 237), María suggests that she could provide for them by working constantly at spinning: “Hilaré día y noche” (I, 1; p. 237 and I, 2; p. 240). Her proposed employment is presented as, firstly, one that satisfies her: “yo hilaba y estaba contenta” (I, 1; p. 236); and, moreover, as an exercise in productivity and industry: “Hilaré, hilaré como las arañas que forman sus estrellas sobre las plantas [...]” (I, 2; p. 241). The activity itself establishes María as a precursor of those other Lorcan woman of needlecraft. But where the embroidery of the Monja gitana, Mariana Pineda, and the daughters of Bernarda Alba is in essence a decorative art, acceptable as a feminine diversion, but

<sup>62</sup> Simone Saillard, “Renan en Fuente Vaqueros...”, p.86.

ultimately superfluous in ‘masculine’ utilitarian terms, María’s proposition of a copious output is imbued with a virile energy and will serve to support a family. The Monja gitana fantasises while embroidering flowers on the altar cloth, Mariana dreams of Liberty as she stitches the word into the insurrectionists’ standard, the Alba women divert their erotic desires into their sewing of another’s bridal sheets, and Yerma makes baby clothes for another’s child while she can only imagine motherhood. In contrast, María’s cloth will be used to make tunics and other clothing items, or rather, her activity will produce material, that is it will generate clothing and financial income for the family. Her occupation stands in further contrast to José’s incapacity; while María engenders and reproduces through her labour, José is burdened with worries and apprehension for his son’s fate and his own mortality: he finds himself “rodeado en los últimos momentos de [mi] vida por blancas sombras” (I, 1; p. 235). Along similar lines and noting the connection with La zapatera prodigiosa, Saillard detects “[La] Temática inversada del Viejo y la Niña, sopor masculino frente a una sospechosa y mítica actividad tejedora de la mujer”.<sup>63</sup> José’s anxiety is compounded by the nagging doubt of his wife’s fidelity, given the circumstances of how María became pregnant with Jesús. In the *poema dramática*, the repressed misgivings of José surface: JOSÉ: “¿Tú me has amado siempre?”; MARÍA: “Has sido mi cayado” (I, p. 230). Martín speculates that the young poet intended elaborating José’s uncertainty into one of the themes of the early version of Cristo.<sup>64</sup> Certainly, the theme is much less prominent in the fuller work, but what we do encounter is a narrative, of José’s unproductiveness juxtaposed to María’s strength and fruitfulness, or what we might define in the category of Yerma’s Juan as sterility.<sup>65</sup> José admits to the weakness that old age brings him, with a suggestion that the unhappiness of the household stems from his ineffectiveness: “¡Si yo no me sintiera viejo, en esta casa brillaría la felicidad!” (I, 1; p. 235). Attempting to reassure José, María affirms his integrity as a man with a comparison to an ear of wheat, that although blighted is still plentiful and complete: “La espiga, aunque esté

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<sup>63</sup> Simone Saillard, “Renan en Fuente Vaqueros...”, p. 82.

<sup>64</sup> Eutimio Martín, Federico García Lorca, heterodoxo y mártir, p. 202.

<sup>65</sup> Simone Saillard, equates José with the term “esterilidad”, “Renan en Fuente Vaqueros...”, p. 85.



llena de cizaña, es espiga”. Unfortunately, José’s reply, continuing the agrarian metaphor, identifies the flaw in María’s argument, and therefore in himself: “Pero con los granos muertos” (I, 1; p. 235). With dead seed, the infertile José is emasculated in the face of María’s plentiful production, José is neutered; given his lingering doubts over Jesús’s origin, José is cuckolded. The loss of male power that José experiences prefigures the usurpation of Pedro’s cause by Mariana and foreshadows Belisa’s cuckolding of Perlimplín. The inability of Juan to give Yerma a child is predicted by José’s infertility, as José’s weakness is a prognosis of the condition of the men in Bernarda Alba’s village (PONCIA: “Los hombres de aquí no son capaces de eso” I, p. 324).

In the text of Cristo it is also possible to isolate two supporting theses in the configuration of gender: the image of the effeminate boy and the hyper-idealised likenesses of the virgin and the virgin mother. From a couple of passing references to the childhood of Jesús, according to the recollections of José, we are impressed by the sensitivity and over-refined qualities of the boy Christ. Resonating with our earlier discussion of the trope of white, José dismisses the possibility of Jesús ever being capable of providing for the family, recalling as he does the boy’s disinclination toward manual work: “El trabajo rudo no se hizo para manos blancas” (I, 1; p. 239). The same child is remembered for his preoccupation and concern for the tiniest of God’s creatures: JOSÉ: “se iba muy despacio siguiendo a una hormiga”; perhaps a rougher lad would have crushed the same insect. In addition, José cites an occasion when the young Jesús displayed even more extraordinary care for the micro-cosmos around him: during a hailstorm, Jesús “Cubrió con su túnica el rosal y los lirios para que no los hirieran los granizos” (I, 1; p. 238).

Considering the subject matter of Cristo, it is not surprising that García Lorca includes images to support the orthodox Catholic conceptualisation of the Virgin. As we have just examined with regard to José’s uncertainties over María’s fidelity, there is a narrative vein in the text based in the account of the immaculate conception of Christ. But what is unexpected is that

the principal instance where María articulates the paradox of virginity (pure, intact sainthood) and motherhood, her resentment at having such a condition thrust upon her is also emphasised. As she responds to Gabriel: “¡Bendición amarga como el mar, que quieras darme la santidad a cambio de mi amor de madre!” (I, 3; p. 248). Nonetheless we recognise that García Lorca elaborates his incarnation of Christ’s mother from the template of Catholic imagery. From the initial description of the setting, indicated by the poet (“*como en los cuentos de los niños y las estampitas sagradas*” I, 1; p. 233), the play is situated in the sphere of the iconic. We note that the *poema dramático* has María costumed in the predictable blue robes that are derived from her appearance in Renaissance art (I, p. 225). In both versions the emblem of the Virgin, the *azucena* or madonna lily, features in the preliminary depiction of the setting, signalling the idealised image of María (I, p. 225 and I, 1; 233). The reference to the characteristic flower, and its connotations of purity, is revisited in the colouring of the Virgin’s hands: “(María [...] *con sus manos de azucena*)” (I, 5; p. 265). The pivotal role of the Madonna in the formulation of a Catholic ideal of motherhood – pure, intact, selfless, saintly and sexless – is indisputable. García Lorca does not fail to include the seeds of this discourse in his drama, with Jesús instituting the symbolic and divine purpose of his mother: “¡Bendita seas tú y todas las madres!” (I, 4; p. 256). Both his mother and the other woman with whom Jesús is chastely intimate, Esther, are portrayed as virtuous and incapable of the smallest sin: JESÚS (*to* MARÍA): “¡No, madre! Que tus labios santos no digan nunca una mentira” (I, 4; p. 254); VIEJA (*to* ESTHER): “que tu boca no pronuncie palabras de perversión” (II, 1; p. 279). Both women are repositories of goodness and truth, and in these terms reinscribe the unrealistic and desired embodiment of womankind.

### 1.9 Conclusion

In contrast to the uncorrupted honesty of María and Esther, García Lorca finds lies spoken by the pharisaical ministers of God’s church; he accuses them of sullyng the message of Christ with their hypocrisy and perversion. In his early prose, among the many jibes thrown at the

clergy of the Catholic church, we hear the poet lament to Christ the new pharisees of our times: “Paz sublime, tus palabras son profanación en boca de sus sacerdotes [de la Iglesia]”.<sup>66</sup> Elsewhere, the hypocrites of the church are damned: “Sois unos miserables políticos de mal, ángeles exterminadores de la luz”.<sup>67</sup> Eutimio Martín contends that the Christ of both Renan and García Lorca sets out to counter the pharisees and their obfuscation of God’s commandments by redirecting people to the most basic of all commandments: “Jesús viene a restablecer la obligación mosaica de amar al prójimo que los fariseos olvidan de predicar en su magisterio público”.<sup>68</sup> For Daniel Eisenberg the purpose of Jesús’s mission is more wide-ranging and even more revolutionary: “Christ came to set people free in a sexual sense as well as a religious and social sense”.<sup>69</sup> In Eisenberg’s terms García Lorca’s “Socialista divino” struggles not only for social equality and justice, but for sexual liberation.

All this is certainly admissible. But having reviewed the functions of the key dialectic of body and soul in Cristo, we would suggest that these assessments place too little emphasis on the concerns of the youthful García Lorca. This early foray into the writing of fully developed drama remains unfinished and underworked. Cristo is not one of the poet’s most sophisticated works. It often reads like one of those poetic dialogues that would amuse him in his early poetry and prose work, its exchanges two-handed (useful for a young puppeteer), and perfunctory. Of course we ought not to expect an elaborate and complex work from the young García Lorca; it is infrequent for artists to produce their best work at such a callow age. However, given its limitations, the work still provides an unadorned lattice on which the shoots of the poet’s thinking would grow and mature. The central preoccupations of his work are there, if green and unflowering. In Cristo, García Lorca launches a youthful, idealistic, rear-guard action in defence of the soul (and its supremacy) in the face of modernity

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<sup>66</sup> “Mística de negrura y ansia de santidad”, Federico García Lorca, Prosa inédita de juventud, p. 71.

<sup>67</sup> “Consideración amarguísima acerca de la idea en las ciudades y en los campos”, Federico García Lorca, Obras. VI. Prosa. 1, ed. Miguel García-Posada, (Madrid: Akal, 1994), p. 59.

<sup>68</sup> Eutimio Martín, Federico García Lorca, heterodoxo y mártir, p. 214.

<sup>69</sup> Daniel Eisenberg, “Lorca and Censorship...”, p. 135.

(mechanisation, incipient globalisation, the compression of time and space), the concomitant collapse of essential or ‘depth’ identity and a late-modern emptying of meaning. The same interest in promoting the transcendence of an immortal essence will reappear in his beatification of Mariana Pineda, in the self-sacrifice of Perlimplín, the dissolution of the theatre in El público, the impossibility of Yerma’s child, and the transgressive self-immolation of Adela. His apology for the soul stems not from an abstract fixation on the desire for an eternal life, but from an overriding conviction in the dominion of an invisible, insubstantial, immaterial, non-worldly Love.<sup>70</sup> Correspondingly, García Lorca understands death as: firstly, an arresting of the mutable and contingent guises of life, i.e. the shifting condition of human identity; secondly, that death is a necessary and performative sacrifice of physical being; and finally, the expiring of life is a transfer point to an immortal and sublime existence.

As we shall discuss in Chapters Two and Four, García Lorca argues that since the nature of physical desire is so restrained by a narcissistic impulse, the only possible demonstration of spiritual Love involves a sacrifice of the Self in favour of the Other, a self-effacing move to privilege the existence of the loved one. This proposition will find itself enmeshed in modern interrogations into the fixity of subjective identity as articulated in contemporary theory of gender. As we have seen in the rudimentary example of Cristo, the inversion of culturally-interpellated gender values highlights a crisis in the knowledge of human selfhood. Writing about the Shakespearean practice of boy-actors interpreting female roles,<sup>71</sup> Jonathan Dollimore signals to us the instabilities arising from an incoherence between body and gender:

the [cross-dressed] players were seen to undermine the idea that one’s identity and place were a function of what one essentially was – what God had made one. The idea

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<sup>70</sup> “Oda a Walt Whitman” from the Poeta en Nueva York cycle provides an illustration of the poet’s rejection of fleshly desire in favour of an idealised if unattainable Love.

<sup>71</sup> See Chapter Four’s discussion of the version of Romeo and Juliet staged by the Director in El público.

of a God-given nature and destiny had the corollary that nothing so essentially predetermined could or should ever change. Constant change was worse still; [...] the scandal of the player was not so much that he disguised his real self in playing; rather he had no self apart from that which he was playing.<sup>72</sup>

The following chapter on Mariana Pineda will continue where we left off in our discussion of the iconographic images of the nonphysical Jesús and the Virgin María. Referring to the opening stage direction in Cristo, Soria Olmedo's assertion that the sceneography follows "el modelo estático del teatro poético modernista"<sup>73</sup> might well be applied to the setting for Mariana Pineda. Indeed, the tableau effect in Act I, scene 3 of Cristo,

*Toda la escena se llena de luz blanca. La Virgen se inclina y queda en éxtasis con las manos sobre el pecho y los ojos entornados, tal como la pintara Fray Angélico.*

is a visual anticipation of Mariana's transfiguration from popular heroine into Lorcan saint.

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<sup>72</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, Sexual Dissidence, p. 290.

<sup>73</sup> Andrés Soria Olmedo, "Introducción", Federico García Lorca, Teatro inédito de juventud, p. 36.

## Chapter Two:

### Mariana Pineda: iconic martyr to Love

#### *2.1 Introduction: "la Mariana amante"*

At a banquet given in May 1929 in honour of the Granada premiere of Mariana Pineda, García Lorca described the second of his plays to be produced as “[una] obra débil de principiante”.<sup>1</sup> The poet’s admission of the weakness of this early work sets the tone for subsequent critical evaluation of the piece. In her careful study of Mariana Pineda, Concha Zardoya attributes “las debilidades y flaquezas de la obra” to “la brevedad del tema”.<sup>2</sup> Her proposition is that García Lorca’s piece depends on a structure that is too simplistic to able to sustain the dramatic tension. The play does indeed rely entirely on the clear-cut themes of love, liberty and death, as Zardoya asserts,<sup>3</sup> emanating from the historical event of Mariana de Pineda’s execution for her activities in support of the liberal cause in opposition to the regime of Fernando VII. It is my intention in this chapter, however, to demonstrate that García Lorca’s Mariana Pineda is deliberately narrow in its themes. It is a highly focussed poetic vision of a woman who transmutes her material desires into a spiritual Love for all humanity,

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<sup>1</sup> García Lorca’s first dramatic work to see an audience was El Maleficio de la Mariposa, which was produced by Gregorio Martínez Sierra in Madrid in 1920. Despite the poet’s many efforts and the enthusiastic support of his friends Melchor Fernández Almagro and Salvador Dalí, García Lorca eventually gave up trying to persuade Martínez Sierra to produce Mariana Pineda and turned to his actress friend Margarita Xirgu instead. Xirgu’s company first staged Mariana Pineda as part of the company’s summer season in Barcelona’s Teatro Goya in 1927. The production was taken to Madrid in October of that year. In 1929 the revived show played Granada’s Teatro Cervantes, a few metres away from Plaza Mariana Pineda, opening on the 29th of April. The following week this banquet was organised and held in Granada’s Hotel Alhambra Palace in honour of Margarita Xirgu and the triumph of local man García Lorca. On the occasion of such success, the author’s comment points to both affable modesty in the man and a revealingly mature appraisal on the part of the artist of the drama’s importance in the canon of his work. See Ian Gibson, Federico García Lorca, (London and Boston: Faber & Faber, 1989) pp. 97, 131, 138, 142-3, 177, 235.

<sup>2</sup> Concha Zardoya, “Mariana Pineda: Romance trágico de la libertad”, *Revista Hispánica Moderna*, 34 (1968), pp. 471-97, esp. p. 496.

<sup>3</sup> Zardoya, “Mariana Pineda: Romance trágico...”, p. 481.

freeing her soul from her physical self and ascending through saintly martyrdom to the ranks of the saints and becoming patron to all those who sacrifice themselves for love.

In the context of García Lorca's other theatre works, Mariana Pineda stands a little in relief, as it recalls superficially, especially in terms of its verse dialogue, period setting and melodramatic plot, a Romantic play.<sup>4</sup> The historicity of the work does not represent the poet's intentions for his play. The Mariana that García Lorca wished to bring to the stage was quite different to the historical figure who died in 1831. In an interview given in 1927, after Mariana Pineda had opened in Madrid, García Lorca revealed the range of models for his stage creation from which he had chosen, and his choice is a significant one, as we shall see in the course of this chapter: "empiezo por reconocer que hay mil Marianas de Pineda distintas. La Mariana heroica, la Mariana madre, la Mariana enamorada, la Mariana bordadora; hasta la Mariana vulgar que cose y lava los pañales de sus hijos o condimenta un guiso para sus invitados. Pero yo no las iba a 'hacer' todas. Puesto a elegir, me interesó más la Mariana amante."<sup>5</sup>

## *2.2 The historical versus the fictional*

The historical Mariana was born in Granada in 1804. She was the second surviving daughter of the nobleman Mariano de Pineda y Ramírez, retired naval captain and Knight of the Order of Calatrava, and María de los Dolores Muñoz y Bueno, a commoner. In 1819 Mariana was married to Manuel de Peralta y Valte, a twenty-five year old soldier and liberal from Huéscar, Granada. Her husband died three years later, leaving her with two young children, José María and Úrsula María. Interesting herself in her husband's politics after his death in 1828, Mariana organised the escape of her cousin and lover Fernando Alvarez de Sotomayor from

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<sup>4</sup> For a detailed argument defining Mariana Pineda in the context of Romantic verse plays such as Zorilla's Don Juan Tenorio (a strongly favoured play of the student Lorca) see Robert G. Havard, "Mariana Pineda: Politics, Poetry and Periodization", in Leeds Papers on Lorca, ed. Margaret A. Rees, (Leeds: Trinity and All Saints College, 1988), pp. 45-56

<sup>5</sup> "Los autores después del estreno", in Federico García Lorca, Obras, VI, Prosa, 1, p. 489.

Granada's gaol. He was another liberal sympathiser and soldier who was actively conspiring against the crown. In 1829, Mariana's third child, Luisa, was born, daughter of another lover, José de la Peña y Aguayo. At the beginning of 1831, and after the failed uprisings of Torrijos and Manzanares, Mariana was implicated in the liberal conspiracy through her commissioning of a flag bearing the liberal colours and slogan, 'Libertad, Igualdad, y Ley'. Hounded by Ramón Pedrosa y Andrade, her undesired suitor and the judge appointed by the despot king to root out liberal conspirators, Mariana is arrested and imprisoned in the convent of Santa María Egipcíaca. Refusing to denounce the names of her fellow conspirators, on Pedrosa's orders Mariana was sentenced to be executed by garotte, the king confirmed her sentence and she was executed at Granada's Campo del Triunfo on the morning of the 26 May 1831. Fernando VII died two years after Mariana, and in 1836 Mariana de Pineda's remains were exhumed and paraded in honour around Granada with her memory publicly rehabilitated and exalted<sup>6</sup>.

In a letter to Melchor Fernández Almagro, from September, 1923, García Lorca described his image of Mariana Pineda:

Vestida de blanco, con el cabello suelto y un gesto melodramático hasta lo sublime, esta mujer ha paseado por el caminito secreto de mi niñez con un aire inconfundible. Mujer entrevista y amada por mis nueve años... Si tengo miedo de hacer este drama, es precisamente por *enturbiar* mis recuerdos delicadísimos de esta viudita rubia y mártir.<sup>7</sup>

It is this Mariana that the poet brings to the stage, the figure who was "entrevista y amada" by García Lorca as a child, a figure invoked from the imagery of a child's fragile memories. García Lorca's words signal some of the principal elements that constitute his drama, which

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<sup>6</sup> All details of the life of Mariana de Pineda are from Antonina Rodrigo's comprehensive and most complete investigations into her life and death, *Mariana de Pineda: Heroína de la libertad*, (Barcelona: Plaza & Janés, 1977) (there are three subsequent, expanded editions to the study). Rodrigo is still considered the foremost authority on Mariana's biography. As recently as May 2003, Antonina Rodrigo gave a lecture-homage to the figure of Mariana de Pineda at the opening of the European Centre for Women's Studies by the Ayuntamiento de Granada, Concejalía de la Mujer, now in the renovated eighteenth-century house in Granada's Calle Águila where Mariana lived until her death.

<sup>7</sup> Federico García Lorca, *Obras*, VI, Prosa, 2, *Epistolario*, ed. Miguel García-Posada, (Madrid: Akal, 1994), p. 823.



will be examined in this chapter. We will consider the animation of a childhood memory with regard to the composition of the drama as series of *estampas*, and with the framing device (forming a prologue and final note to the drama) of the popular ballad, recounting the sad fate of Mariana de Pineda, sung by generations of Granadine children. Moreover, the poet's interest in conjuring up a figure from personal memory and popular recollection introduces the elements of fiction, as opposed to the hard 'facts' of history, and imagination ("caminillo secreto").<sup>8</sup> Moreover, his conceptualisation of the heroine, the designation of Mariana as "mártir" offers us the opportunity to consider García Lorca's fascination with martyrdom and self-sacrifice. In turn, we will need to understand the nature of Mariana's agony and death, her rationalising of the sacrifice of her life for the sake of love. The concept of the martyr, in its religious sense, also leads us to investigate the elevation of the Mariana de Pineda who lived at the beginning of the nineteenth century in Granada to the status of secular saint, patron of liberty and women's freedom in particular, how the physical can ascend to the spiritual, and what this triumph of the nonphysical over the material means for García Lorca's Mariana Pineda.

On the level of biographical detail, the historical versus the fictional, Federico's stage character Mariana differs from the Mariana de Pineda of history in a number of ways. Out of a cast of twenty, only the three principal roles, Mariana, her lover Pedro de Sotomayor and

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<sup>8</sup> We observe the etymology of the word *history* in English, going back to its Greek origin where as in the Spanish *historia*, the meaning is both history and story – all history being a fictional tale to tell.

her nemesis Pedrosa correspond, at least in name, to the historical figures.<sup>9</sup> Others bear a largely direct correspondence but with fictional names. Mariana's adoptive mother doña Úrsula becomes García Lorca's doña Angustias. The three servants who lived with Mariana de Pineda until her death, María Román, María del Carmen Sánchez and Antonio Burel are conflated into Isabel la Clavela. The young Fernando corresponds more loosely to a seventeen year old admirer of the 'real' Mariana, José de Salamanca y Mayor, who like his fictional counterpart is rejected by Mariana. The two children of the drama come to us unnamed by the poet; in historical fact, Mariana had three children as indicated above. The nuns of the convent of Santa María Egipcíaca, where Mariana de Pineda spent her last days are represented by the play's Sor Carmen, the mother superior, other Monjas and two Novicias. In a similar way, the liberal sympathisers with whom Mariana conspired are embodied by four Conspiradores on stage.

Some details of the drama correlate to the historical facts, while at other points the poet employs his poetic licence. The 'real' Mariana died a few months before her twenty-seventh birthday, but García Lorca's Mariana complains to her friends, the sisters Amparo y Lucía, "¡Ya pasé los treinta!"<sup>10</sup> At the time of her death, Mariana's children would have been eleven, ten and two years old respectively, as Mariana was barely sixteen when she had her first child. The Niño and Niña of García Lorca's play could equate in terms of their ages to

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<sup>9</sup> Except that the historical figure of Fernando Álvarez de Sotomayor becomes Pedro in García Lorca's text, and the name Fernando is transferred to the stage Mariana's young admirer. In the spring of 1924 Federico wrote from the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid to his friend Antonio Gallego Burín to ask for his assistance with the project of Mariana Pineda. Gallego Burín was preparing a study of the Grenadine heroine and the poet requested some information on the details of Mariana's biography, the facts of the liberal conspiracies, the figure of Pedrosa and the socio-political condition of Granada of the previous century "con objeto de hacer un poco de ambiente". With regard to the historical correspondence of his characters, Federico informs Gallego Burín that "mis personajes son, a más de ella, Pedrosa, Sotomayor, y las monjas de Recogidas" (The convent of Santa María Egipcíaca had disappeared by García Lorca's day, but lived on in the street name Recogidas, derived from the fact that the nuns used to take in 'fallen' women). But Federico goes on to reassure his friend "que no tiene nada que ver con lo histórico porque me lo he inventado yo". Federico García Lorca, Obras, VI, Prosa, 2..., 828-9.

<sup>10</sup> Mariana Pineda, I, 3. Federico García Lorca, Obras IV, Teatro 2, ed. Miguel García-Posada, (Madrid: Akal, 1992), p. 107. All subsequent references to Mariana Pineda are from this edition and page numbers are included in the body of the text.

Mariana's eldest two, although we are given no indication by the poet. If the children were the same age as their real counterparts then it would mean that the stage Mariana had her children in her early twenties and that the presence of the youngest of the real children, the illegitimate Luisa, is erased by the poet. Among other details worth noting are that the settings seem to resemble closely the historical environs of Mariana de Pineda. Both *estampas* I and II are set in Mariana's house. A number of references to geographical locations in Granada allow us to form a speculative notion of Mariana's house being situated roughly in the vicinity of Calle Águila, the factual location of Mariana de Pineda's house, where it stands to this day.<sup>11</sup> The third *estampa* is set in the convent of Santa María Egipcíaca, which once stood at the top of Calle Recogidas. The white-walled Moorish building with its arches, cypresses and fountains recalls the *carmen* in which Doña Rosita la soltera is set.<sup>12</sup> This setting has a similar purpose. For doña Rosita to be amid such elegant, beautiful and romantic surroundings and not to have love, means that her own destiny is slow, ageing torture. For Mariana it is a setting close to paradise and to her spiritual completion and yet, it is also a place of physical confinement, literally imprisonment, prompting further introspection and a frustration of her final purpose. The first and second *estampas* both take place in Mariana's house, the third in the prison-convent, and this locational confinement suggests a relationship between Mariana Pineda and three other García Lorca works where the heroine's drama is

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<sup>11</sup> Fernando mentions having passed through Plaza Bib-Rambla and Mariana having returned from the church of Santa Ana by way of the street Zacatín (I, 6; pp. 117, 119). The Zacatín is mentioned again as being the route to Mariana's house by Conspirador 3 (II, 7; p. 156). The Zacatín was one of the main thoroughfares of Granada, running parallel to the River Darro until the Darro was paved over at the end of the nineteenth century. Following this street in the direction Mariana mentions, away from the church of Santa Ana, and going on a little further as the crow flies, Calle Águila is to be found a few hundred metres away. In Mariana de Pineda's day, the area around her house would have bordered on the verdant *vega*, perhaps suggested by Fernando's references to the smell of quince fruit that pervades Mariana's house and the flowery façade "*llena [...] de guirnaldas*" (I, 6; p. 117). On the other hand, this same reference recalls the opening stage direction of the prologue, which takes place in Plaza Bib-Rambla, and the instruction that one of the houses "*estará pintada con escenas marinas y guirnaldas de frutas*" (p. 98).

<sup>12</sup> On García Lorca's fascination with the enigmatic dwellings termed locally in Granada as *cármenes*, Ian Gibson informs us "Lorca found in the title of a seventeenth-century composition by the Granadine poet Pedro Soto de Rojas the ideal definition of the *carmen*: 'Paraíso cerrado para muchos, jardines abiertos para pocos'". Gibson, Federico García Lorca, p. 36. Clearly this influenced the poet in his portrait of doña Rosita in the gilded cage of her *carmen*.

played out in a physically contained environment: Doña Rosita la soltera (again), La zapatera prodigiosa and La casa de Bernarda Alba.

The time setting for the piece is indicated principally by the period costumes and furnishings of Mariana's house. But the most significant datum that allows us to fix the drama temporally is the account of the rising, defeat and death of General Torrijos, in the second *estampa*. This we know took place in 1831 and precipitated Mariana's fate: here at least the poet seems faithful to history. On the other hand, the historical escape of Fernando Álvarez de Sotomayor and his flight to Gibraltar took place in 1828. García Lorca uses this event as a poetic conceit to fuel the drama of the second *estampa*.<sup>13</sup>

García Lorca's Mariana is essentially a poetic vision of a shining, fair, white-clad martyr, a reflection of a mental image, and not the historical personage.<sup>14</sup> The poet was clear on how his vision should be rendered on stage: "el teatro no es ni puede ser otra cosa que emoción y poesía en la palabra, en la acción, y en el gesto".<sup>15</sup> How García Lorca went about translating the poetic into a stageplay with its spoken word and its visual and plastic facets is something we will address now as we look at the structure of the play and the concept of 'total' theatre. This concept is typically Lorcan, and is employed heavily in Mariana Pineda.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See Rodrigo, "Mariana de Pineda...", chapter 1 "La situación política en Granada en 1831", p. 17-29, and chapter 10 "El conspirador Álvarez de Sotomayor y su fuga", pp. 85 – 98.

<sup>14</sup> Reporting the highly favourable reaction of Melchor Fernández Almagro to the poet's plan to write a play on the subject of Mariana de Pineda, Ian Gibson writes: "Lorca's approach to it [the subject of the play] – to express the poetic, and not the slavishly historical, truth – seemed to him [Fernández Almagro] the correct, indeed the only, one." Gibson, Federico García Lorca, p. 131.

<sup>15</sup> The poet interviewed before the Lola Membrives production of Mariana Pineda in Buenos Aires, 1933. Federico García Lorca, Obras, V, Prosa, 1, Primeras prosas; conferencias; alocuciones; homenajes; varia; vida; poética, antecríticas, entrevistas y declaraciones, ed. Miguel García-Posada, (Madrid: Akal, 1994), p. 611.

<sup>16</sup> Citing Sebastián Gasch ("Lorca dibujante" in *La Gaceta Literaria*, 30 (1928)) José Luis Plaza Chillón draws our attention to "esa función plástica y poética a la vez, constante en muchos artistas de vanguardia, 'la tendencia plástico-poética, la traducción de un estado del alma, por medio de ritmos, líneas y colores'". José Luis Plaza Chillón, "El teatro y las artes plásticas. Escenografía y estética teatral de vanguardia: Federico García Lorca, La Barraca y otros montajes (1920 – 1937)", PhD thesis, (Granada: University of Granada, 1998), p. 171.

### 2.3 'Total' theatre

Mariana Pineda comprises three acts, or *estampas*, covering 113 pages (García-Posada edition), and breaking down into a prologue of two pages, followed by 35, 38 and 29 pages respectively. Though the lengths of the acts appear a little uneven, the *estampas* each break down into nine scenes. Each act opens without the protagonist onstage: Act I with the maid La Clavela and doña Angustias discussing their fears for their Mariana; Act II with La Clavela entertaining Mariana's children with the ballad of the Duke of Lucena and the embroidery girl; Act III with the two young Novicias spying through the keyhole on Mariana, the strange new inmate of the convent. Our initial access to the person of Mariana is by way of these intermediaries. The opening scenes of *estampas* II and III, as well as the three scenes following the opening of Act I (where Mariana receives a visit from the jolly sisters Amparo and Lucía), represent the incorporation by the poet of the *entremés* into his drama.<sup>17</sup> The *entremés* is a feature García Lorca used in domestic performances of his puppet plays and it can be found incorporated in a certain style in most of his mature works. The gossip washerwomen scene at the opening of Act II of Yerma, the visit of the Ayola sisters in Doña Rosita la soltera (parallel creations to the sisters Amparo and Lucía), Scene 5 of El maleficio de la mariposa where Alacranito terrorises Curianito and Curianita Silvia with his carnivorous appetite, and to some extent the first introduction of María Josefa at the end of Act I of La casa de Bernarda Alba and later, complete with lamb in arms in Act III, are all prime examples. These *entremeses* form part of the carefully orchestrated and precisely judged internal rhythms that pulse through García Lorca's dramas, an important facet of his 'total' theatre. In 1927, when the Margarita Xirgu production of Mariana Pineda arrived in Madrid from Barcelona, *El Sol* observed the configuration of the drama as being "una alianza de

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<sup>17</sup> The *entremés* is the tradition from the time of the Renaissance in Spanish (and European) theatre of presenting a short comic turn or farcical set-piece between the acts of major drama. The tradition is perhaps at its most well known in the vast theatre canon of Lope de Vega, but extends all the way to Valle-Inclán. The light-hearted tone allows the audience a respite from the demands of the more serious drama.

palabra y visión no muy distinta, en esencia, de la sugestión musical”.<sup>18</sup> The correlation between the structures of García Lorca’s theatre pieces and musical composition has been widely commented on.<sup>19</sup>

Each element of García Lorca’s dramatic structure, then, is as carefully arranged as a musical orchestration. The creation of a Lorcan drama is always about the judicious and masterly deployment of all theatrical tools, as Concha Zardoya reminds us: “Colores, formas, movimientos, gestos y palabras se integran en una unidad totalizadora, en una síntesis”.<sup>20</sup> García Lorca put into effect this concept of ‘total’ theatre not only in his function as dramatist, but in his work as a stage director. That is why, José Luis Plaza Chillón informs us, Mariana Pineda, in terms of its structure and composition belongs to “las experiencias de teatro total, que [García Lorca] llevó a cabo con La Barraca”.<sup>21</sup> Plaza Chillón goes on to describe how García Lorca the stage director informs his creation of a ‘total’ theatre:

la labor de director de escena del dramaturgo es sumamente importante [...] Él [García Lorca] cuidaba todos los detalles con gusto y precisión. Nada se le escapa a sus sentidos. El decorado que es el lugar donde han de moverse sus personajes, es punto de mira importante. Así los colores, las formas, los movimientos, etc., son analizados e integrados en una visión totalizadora del espectáculo.<sup>22</sup>

This ‘total’ theatre became embedded in García Lorca’s stage work from his childhood puppeteering where he was able to orchestrate all of the theatre pieces: design and build diminutive stage sets, arrange music and sound effects, and manipulate and perform all the acting parts by himself. In essence, puppetry gave the poet his first experiences of total

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<sup>18</sup> *El Sol*, 13.x.27

<sup>19</sup> Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín is described as the voices of four characters interwoven in a “kind of concerto grosso for four instruments” by García Lorca’s brother Francisco. From the introduction to Federico García Lorca, Five Plays: Comedies and Tragi-comedies, transl. James Graham-Luján and Richard L. O’Connell, (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1977), p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> Zardoya, “Mariana Pineda: Romance trágico...”, p. 489.

<sup>21</sup> Plaza Chillón, “El teatro y las artes plásticas...”, p. 169.

<sup>22</sup> Plaza Chillón, “El teatro y las artes plásticas...”, p. 170.

control of the representation, to be author, director, designer and performer at once.<sup>23</sup> In Mariana Pineda we can see much evidence of total theatre. Firstly we observe that the poet's text contains directions on how the lines should be delivered by actors with indications of voice, emotion and timing. We note the care with which the actors are choreographed by stage directions in terms of entrance and exits, movement and position on stage. García Lorca was also at pains to suggest the settings and stage furniture in related drawings. In Mariana Pineda, incidental music and song are indicated, and in this and his other theatre the poet himself often provides the incidental music. Our attention is also drawn to how the poet broadens the appeal of his stage canvas to encompass all the senses. We are told in the initial stage directions, describing Mariana's drawing room, that there is "*sobre una mesa, un frutero de cristal lleno de membrillos*", indeed "*Todo el techo estará lleno de la misma fruta, colgada*" (I, 1; 102). And Fernando comments on the wonderful smell of quince pervading Mariana's house (I, 6; 116). García Lorca broadens our reception of the drama from the visual/auditory, to one that totalises the sensory experience with the fragrant, sweet quince fruit's evocation of smell and taste. The effect of the poet's totalising strategy is to represent

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<sup>23</sup> In this regard, we think of the figures who pop up in the prologues of García Lorca's earlier works: the Autor of La zapatera prodigiosa; the Poeta of El maleficio de la mariposa and the puppet play Retablillo de don Cristóbal; and Mosquito of the other puppet work Tragicomedia de don Cristóbal y la señá Rosita ("*Representa [...] la poesía del pueblo andaluz*"). The terms *poeta* and *autor* appear to be used indistinguishably by García Lorca, which, given the usage up until the early nineteenth century of the term *autor* to mean both creator of an artistic work and/or producer of a stage company, points to the lack of distinction made in García Lorca's thinking between the roles. The prologue function of these characters can be interpreted as an attempt on García Lorca's part to guide or influence the audience's reception and understanding of his work (hence the notion of the *advertencia* that crops up in the preface to these early dramas). Is this not an attempt to manipulate the experience absolutely? We also note the reappearance of the Autor in the later, vanguard work of Comedia sin título and the Director of El público. Here the Autor steps beyond the prologue *advertencia* and participates in the action as a full role, blurring the distinction even further between author and director, character and performer, theatre and the 'real' world. The interventions of García Lorca in his works in the guise of Poeta/Autor mount an interesting challenge to the notion of "theological" theatre as proposed by Jacques Derrida. Derrida's view of traditional theatre governed, in terms of representation and interpretation, by a distant, god-like, author-creator is questioned by García Lorca's strategy of projecting himself into his dramas. García Lorca's author-creator becomes part of the performance and shapes its reading from within as well as without. In the poet's theatre the creator is also the executor of the work. This differs in turn from the alternative Derrida sees to the theological in Antonin Artaud's theatre of cruelty; for Derrida, Artaud's techniques deconstruct the theatre that bases itself on the scripted word, on symbol and analytical theories. Clearly, Artaud's style is not relevant to Mariana Pineda, but we will return to the ideas of theatre of cruelty in the chapter on El público. We take the example of Derrida's interest in Artaud from Jochen Schulte-Sasse's foreward to Peter Burger's Theory of the Avant-Garde, trans. Michael Shaw, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 20.

as vividly as possible the poetic vision of Mariana that lived so graphically in his childhood memories.

#### 2.4 From still image to performance

As we have already mentioned, the poet refers to the three acts of Mariana Pineda as *estampas*. Immediately, this calls to mind similar terms used by García Lorca to structure other dramas: the four *cuadros* of Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín; the five of Así que pasen cinco años; the seven of Bodas de sangre; the six of Yerma and El público the two *cuadros* of La viudita que se quería casar (one of the poet's youthful unedited works); and the eclectic use of *jardines* to describe the acts of Doña Rosita la soltera.<sup>24</sup> Although the term *cuadro* is used frequently in modern Spanish drama to define a section of an act, i.e. a scene, it is also the term that corresponds to the French *tableau (vivant)*, which, in English-language theatre, names the technique where actors momentarily maintain a certain pose thereby creating a static image. It is this second meaning that interests us in the context of our discussion of the *estampa*. The connection between the terms *cuadro* and *estampa* is that they both describe acts of two-dimensional image production and this signals a key factor in the theatre creations of García Lorca. Furthermore, the notion that each act of Mariana Pineda is a 'print', the three forming a series of prints, suggests a process similar to, but appropriately, given the play's historical setting, more old-fashioned than, the photographic recording of an event. Certainly, García Lorca's intention is to indicate that the acts of his drama should carry the weight of authoritative reproductions of events gone by, in the same way that the poet

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<sup>24</sup> With regard to García Lorca's curious titling of his works, in the same letter to Melchor Fernández Almagro from September 1923 quoted above we find the poet describing his Mariana Pineda as "una especie de cartelón de ciego estilizado"; then see Chapter Three on Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín. Our discussion of that play's designation as "una aleluya erótica" refers to Margarita Ucelay's study which describes the origin of the *aleluya* as a type of popular strip cartoon sold at fairs and markets, usually by blind people.



insisted that La casa de Bernarda Alba be “un documental fotográfico”<sup>25</sup>. As we shall discuss, the poet demonstrates in his theatre a profound interest in the relationship between the fixed, still image – the print, the *tableau*, the photograph – and the moving, live representation of the theatre piece.<sup>26</sup>

García Lorca uses the term *estampa* in Mariana Pineda in precisely the way he uses *cuadro* in his subsequent work, firstly to label the divisions of the drama but also to describe the theatre technique of the *tableau vivant*. Thus we find the moment when Fernando returns to Mariana at her bidding in the first *estampa* that she is seated and that Fernando is by her side: “*componiendo una clásica estampa de la época*” (I, 8; p. 127). In a similar moment of the second act, the stage direction indicates that Mariana and the Conspiradores should form an *estampa* (II, 7; p. 157). The label *estampa* is also used, as we have noted with the play structured into three *estampas*. Not only is this a scheme for naming the play’s architecture, but the aesthetic of the *estampa* informs the director of the poet’s ambitions for the scenography. Hence in the opening stage direction of the prologue we find the instruction “*La escena estará encuadrada en un margen amarillento, como una vieja estampa*” (p. 98). Similarly, the opening stage direction of the second *estampa* demands a particular colour scheme based on the technique of lithography: “*Entonación en grises, blancos y marfiles como una antigua litografía*” (II, 1; p. 140). Lithography differs from the standard process of making a print in that any area not required for the print, such as the background is treated so that it does not take up ink. The resulting image is starker than a print which covers the page

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<sup>25</sup> The play is introduced with an *advertencia* from the poet that “*estos tres actos tienen la intención de ser un documental fotográfico*”. In the, tentatively comprehensive, list she compiles of García Lorca’s theatre works (planned, commenced and completed), Marie Laffranque includes the provisionally titled Ampliación fotográfica y Drama fotográfico, of which only the plot and character sketch appear to have been written by the poet. Laffranque dates the work to 1926, almost two years after García Lorca finished Mariana Pineda, but long before the ‘photographic documentary’ of La casa de Bernarda Alba. See Marie Laffranque, “Nuevos elementos de valoración. La obra dramática de García Lorca y su teatro inconcluso” in Valoración actual de la obra de García Lorca: Actas del coloquio celebrado en la Casa de Velázquez, A. Esteban & J-P. Étienne (eds.), (Madrid: Universidad Complutense, 1988), pp. 11-22.

<sup>26</sup> See note 12 on the *estampas* of Hermenegildo Lanz, the *verbenas* which so fascinated García Lorca, and their relationship to the *alulaya* of Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín in Chapter Three.

in ink. The specifying of a monochrome colour scheme of white, grey and marble signals the darkness of the night in which Mariana is engaged in clandestine affairs. We might also see the switch from the more general term *estampa* to *litografía* as indicating a sharpening of focus on the secret life of Mariana that occasions her dramatic fate. Meanwhile, taking the three acts together, it is quite evident from the prologue, where the children's chorus sings the ballad of Mariana Pineda, and the end of the third act, where a verse from the ballad closes the play, that the *estampas* are 'framed' by the song which lodged in García Lorca's childhood memory. Then, on a physical level, the theatre proscenium, (and in García Lorca's day Spanish theatre houses were largely proscenium), provides a decorative visual frame for the carefully composed picture or *estampa*, as Plaza Chillón notes: "visualmente la obra está presentando estampas o cuadros marcados por telones pintados".<sup>27</sup> What is important in all of this is that with the *estampas/litografías*, García Lorca carefully establishes the sense of a static image integrated into the progressing representation, as well as injecting notions of history and authenticity into his drama.

What is it about the animating of the static, two-dimensional image, and the reverse process of the *tableau* effect, that so concerns García Lorca? Both the print and the photograph purport to reflect the physical reality of the subject accurately. But, of course, the still image is as much an artistic creation as the moving one. In the composition of a print or the taking of a photograph the figure of the author is as present in the produced image as the playwright is in a play, and the emotion or meaning the author desires to communicate is as much open to the interpretation of the viewer as the play is to the audience. The 'reality' of the print and the photograph is an imitated one and cannot pretend to document life any more than the fictions of theatre – all is representation. And yet García Lorca is aware of this difficulty with the still image. It is precisely the print/photograph's quality of representation that is mobilised by the poet in his theory of theatrical performance, as we shall demonstrate. The incorporation of

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<sup>27</sup> Plaza Chillón, "El teatro y las artes plásticas...", p. 169.

another artistic form of imagery into his theatre offers the poet a way of exercising his thinking on the relationship between reality and fiction, and the problem of maintaining a stable and coherent identity in a world where the movement of time means relentless change. Equally important is that theatre involves movement, and therefore change, while the still image is just that, fixed and invariable.<sup>28</sup>

The stasis and fluidity of identity is something that García Lorca turns his attention to in his later work, especially in El público but also in Yerma and La casa de Bernarda Alba, and is summed up by the Director of El público as “sacar la máscara a escena” (I, p. 81).<sup>29</sup> The poet is interested in the pursuit of the truths of and reality in human existence by removing all that is theatrical, masking and representation; and that the theatre stage itself should display only that which is true and real. The struggle played out in El público between the champions of facticity and of fiction, Hombre 1 and the Director respectively, is the debate over the truth of the image. In Mariana Pineda, we start with the *estampa* that presents Mariana and her tale as images of history, of what *really* happened, and through García Lorca’s ‘amplification’ we witness a poetic fantasy of a history. In effect, the ‘true’ story of Mariana cannot be represented as she has become elevated to the status of icon. What García Lorca tacitly seeks to achieve is the realising of his childhood memory, and the incarnation of the icon.<sup>30</sup> The Mariana that the poet materialises exists in the tension between the immobilised, iconic figure

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<sup>28</sup> With regard to the fixed subject of a still image, the following extract from García Lorca’s notes for the projected Ampliación fotográfica y Drama fotográfico, quoted by Marie Laffranque (“Nuevos elementos de valoración...”, p. 20), seems entirely relevant: “los personajes [...] están fijos en un momento del que no pueden salir [...] el sentimiento de los personajes es puramente exterior, lo que se ve y nada más. [...] La escena ha de estar impregnada de ese terrible silencio de las fotos de muertos y ese gris difuminado de los fondos”.

<sup>29</sup> Federico García Lorca, Obras, V, Teatro, 3. (Teatro imposible), Cine, Música, Madrid, Akal, 1992. For the text of García Lorca dramas, other than Perlimplín, we refer to García-Posada’s edition of the poet’s collected works, Teatro 1, 2 & 3, Vols. III, IV & V, Madrid, Akal, 1996 & 1992. All page and act numbers are included after the quotations. In the first *cuadro* of El público, Hombres 1, 2 & 3 seek to remove the mask from the Director and all the shameful truths it covers (“el rubor imprudente que a veces surge en las mejillas”) and bring forth “el verdadero teatro. El teatro bajo la arena”.

<sup>30</sup> With regard to the image of Mariana extracted from García Lorca’s memory and placed on stage, Roland Barthes’s analysis of the impact of the photograph on culture, in his Camera Lucida (trans. Richard Howard, (New York: Hill & Wang, 1981), p. 98, that with the photographic image the private realm enters the public, and the private is then “consumed” publicly, seems pertinent.

of the heroine – the inert symbol of liberty – and the animated, human creature whose love, whose passion for another is so strong it transmutes into a higher, purer Love for all humanity and transforms the woman into the martyr-saint.

With Mariana Pineda García Lorca attempts to operate in several directions at once: bringing an image to life and secularising a saint while stylising a life and elevating a woman's passion to a transcendent Love. In doing so the poet explores one of the key dialectics that dominates his work. The interaction of the static image of a print or photograph and the mobile representation of theatre is repeated in the opposition of the absolute surface of the statue to the mutable form of the human body in El público. Similarly, the clash of the stable with the transitory governs the predicament of the Joven of Así que pasen cinco años and doña Rosita. While both are immobilised in their lives, waiting to be reunited with their faithless lovers, neither can resist the changes that the passage of time brings. Doña Rosita suffers the fate of the *rosa mutabilis* that inspired her character: she buds, blossoms, withers and dies in the walled garden paradise of her *carmen*, petrified in the moment her lover leaves her with a promise to return.<sup>31</sup> The Joven is held static at the single moment of six o'clock, with both his past and future projected before him (in the figures of Amigo 2 and the Viejo) and his death arriving in the same instant. The Joven makes the fatal mistake of postponing the moment he will join his lover, and in doing so he tries to resist the passing of time; those that do not move forward do not change and do not live. Meanwhile, Mariana finds herself abandoned by her lover don Pedro and chooses the ultimate transfiguration in a martyr's death, subverting the temporality of her earthly love through self-sacrifice, and so exalting and immortalising herself as a symbol of Love.

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<sup>31</sup> With regard to the notion of a whole life lived in a single moment, we think also of El público's *Caballo Blanco* 1 "la noche no es un momento, pero un momento puede durar toda la noche" and "Amor que sólo dura un momento" (III, p. 110-1)

## 2.5 From the carnal to the ethereal

García Lorca conveys Mariana's ascension from the physical to the symbolic realm of martyr by means of his preferred figurative device. As she moves from the visible world to the immaterial realm of the saint, Mariana's transmogrification is represented by the bleaching of colour from her person; her presence as a physical being is symbolically erased and only the white of the void remains. The adjective 'white' carries a range of significations, but as 'white' often means a lack – a lack of colour, pigment, additive or impurity – so, in terms of language, the notion is carried through to the symbolic level. In the lexis of García Lorca's poetry, and especially as we are concerned here with his dramatic poetry, the trope of white represents the absence of the physical, and hence the spiritual, as we have already discussed in relation to Cristo.<sup>32</sup> The poet's stylisation of Mariana de Pineda sees the heroine blanched in every fibre of her being: from the bleaching of her costume, to the paling of her skin, and to the bleeding dry of her body.

Mariana takes the stage at the start of the third scene in the first *estampa* wearing a mauve dress, her hair in curls, with a *peineta* and a rose behind her ear. She looks every bit the embodiment of the "amor magnífico de andaluza" that the poet announces in his letter to Fernández Almagro. Mariana's entrance in Act II sees a costume change from the mauve to a dress of faded yellow, "*un amarillo claro: un amarillo de libro viejo*" (II, 1; p. 143). Finally, in the third *estampa*, she appears in "*un espléndido traje blanco*" (III, 2, p. 185). The fading of colour from her clothing over the course of the play, in terms of a semiotic analysis of costume, communicates her passage from the material to the ethereal, the mundane to the

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<sup>32</sup> We shall refer to the other theatre works of García Lorca's canon and the presence there of this same use of white in symbolic terms. One of the most arresting images is that conjured up by Adela in La casa de Bernarda Alba. In Act III, the young woman, driven to a passionate frenzy by Bernarda's paralyzing grip on her and her sisters' lives, is overwhelmed by the rearing up of the sexually excited stallion, claiming that he was "¡Blanco! Doble de grande", and that his whiteness was "llenando todo lo oscuro".

transcendental<sup>33</sup>. In the text, as Mariana moves inexorably to her death, the ultimate disappearance of her corporeal form is signalled by the progressive whitening of her dress. García Lorca's directions on the colour code of these costume changes are indispensable to any producer in that they are invested with clear symbolic meaning and carry the full import of the author's poetic strategy. Plaza Chillón observes: "En cuanto a los trajes y figurines [García Lorca] se ocupa de elegirlos con gran cuidado, preocupándole, sobre todo el color, siempre con un contenido simbólico".<sup>34</sup>

It is worth reminding ourselves that the symbol of white dominates all of García Lorca's theatre, as we note in La casa de Bernarda Alba. Not only is the house characterised by the blankness of its white-washed walls, but the white (wedding) dress of María Josefa brings a diverting contrast to the black (mourning) garb of the other women. The grandmother's white dress points to her defining role as a symbol of freedom, as she is already beyond Bernarda's control; white denotes the idea of a free spirit, which connects readily with Mariana being the spirit of freedom. Elsewhere in García Lorca's theatre, a white costume is used to signal that the character comes from the otherworldly realm Mariana eventually inhabits. These characters are often those who bring the ultimate transformation in the physical lives of those they visit – they are the bringers of death. In Así que pasen cinco años and El público, the Joven and the Director are interviewed by mysterious visitors, the three Jugadores (de cartas) and the Prestidigitador, respectively. These figures from the two different works are dressed identically in formal evening wear and floor-length, white capes<sup>35</sup>. Strictly with regard to costume, one of the earliest uses of white in the poet's work is the unedited text from his teenage writings, Cristo, with its white-clad angel Gabriel.<sup>36</sup> The scene with Gabriel is a second visitation to reveal to Mary the fate of her son Jesus: the angel allows her to glimpse

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<sup>33</sup> Concha Zardoya notes that "“El traje de Mariana ha ido desmaterializándose, a través de las tres estampas”, “Mariana Pineda: Romance trágico...”, p. 490.

<sup>34</sup> Plaza Chillón, “El teatro y las artes plásticas...”, p. 170.

<sup>35</sup> Also in El público we find the dead Julieta lying in her mausoleum draped in a white opera gown.

<sup>36</sup> Federico García Lorca, Teatro inédito de juventud, ed. Andrés Soria Olmedo, (Madrid: Cátedra 1994), pp. 231-96.

her son's suffering and death. In this sense, Gabriel shares the quality of a deliverer of death with the figures of the Jugadores and the Prestidigitador.

It is, however, not simply a matter of costume in Mariana Pineda. We know that Mariana de Pineda was fair-haired, and this fact does not escape García Lorca.<sup>37</sup> Rather, the poet develops this aspect of the historical figure's physical appearance making use of it for his metaphoric creation. In the text of the play a number of references are made to the features of Mariana's body: "manos blancas" (II, 9; p. 178) and "tu cuello blanco, que tiene luz de luna" (II, 5; p. 153) are exemplary. When Mariana is revealed in the second scene of the final *estampa* in her white dress, we note that "*Está palidísima*" (III, 2; p. 185). In fact, through the eyes of the two young Novicias, "¡[q]ué blanca está, qué blanca!/ Reluce su cabeza" (III, 1; p. 182), we can see how the blanching of Mariana in body and dress gives rise to her reconstitution in the symbolic realm of sainthood with a nimbus about her head. The commentary of the Novicias on Mariana, operating as a dramatic chorus, recalls the intervention of the Gusanos de luz in El maleficio de la mariposa. The eponymous Mariposa is white-winged, and hence the Gusanos could as easily be referring to pale, white-clad Mariana: "tan blanca y solitaria [está] medio muerta", "[s]u cuerpo está todo dormido".<sup>38</sup>

Mariana's pale complexion connects her with the figure of young Luna-Leñador from Bodas de sangre. This creature from a non-earthly domain with his cold, blue-white light is another agent of death come to drain the blood of mortal bodies to warm and colour the whiteness of his face: "que esta noche tengan mis mejillas dulce sangre".<sup>39</sup> The paleness that afflicts Mariana in the third *estampa* follows her declaration at the end of second *estampa* "¡[a]hora empiezo a morir!" (II, 9; p. 179). Mariana's pallid surface is that of one whose life-blood has been given away. Like the young boy in Venice who was visited by the Jugadores of Así que

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<sup>37</sup> See Rodrigo, "Mariana de Pineda...", 53 – "rubios claros sus cabellos". And García Lorca's reference in the September 1923 letter to Melchor Fernández Almagro to "esta viudita rubia y mártir".

<sup>38</sup> Federico García Lorca, Obras IV, Teatro 2, ed. Miguel García-Posada, (Madrid: Akal, 1992), p. 90.

<sup>39</sup> Federico García Lorca, Obras III, Teatro 1, ed. Miguel García-Posada, (Madrid: Akal, 1996), p. 390.

pasen cinco años – “pálido, tan pálido que en la última jugada ya no tenía más remedio que echar el as de coeur. Un corazón suyo lleno de sangre” – she has surrendered her heart full of love.<sup>40</sup> The blood of Mariana’s heart has been poured into her love for Pedro and his liberal cause, as her servant La Clavela warns her: “Desde que usted puso sus preciosas manos/ en esa bandera de los liberales/ aquellos colores de flor de granado/ desaparecieron de su cara” (I, 7; p. 125), and Pedro recognises: “Toda mi sangre es nueva, porque tú me la has dado” (II, 5; p. 148). With the blood gone, her physical form dies and, in the death of the body’s mutable surface, an impermeable exterior is constituted. Mariana becomes the white, shining icon, the ageless representation of liberty, the Mariana in the form of her statue as it stands in Plaza Mariana Pineda in Granada today, as in García Lorca’s day, over which the young poet gazed from the window of his family home on Acera del Casino.

The impervious form of the statue, like the *estampa*, has a crucial dialectical role in García Lorca’s theatre, which is rehearsed most fully in El público. From that work, the figures of Elena, the Emperador, and the Figura de pámpanos are marked by references to their bodies appearing as white as plaster – the lime, sand and water mixture used to fix, finish and seal surfaces. In El público, the trope of the statue – an iconic image that is constant and immutable – serves to represent the notion of an essence of being, a soul that is eternal and everlasting. In Mariana Pineda we have the sacrifice of the temporal body and the generation of an immortal being, in the same manner as don Perlimplín dispatches his old, grotesque, useless soma so that Belisa may gain a soul.<sup>41</sup> The notion of the inviolable surface of the statue, and the immortality that such iconography signifies, is reinforced by the discourse of honour and purity that Mariana uses to justify her resistance and ultimately her self-sacrifice. In her decisive interview with Pedrosa, Mariana determines to hold out against the judge’s pressures: “¡Primero doy mi sangre!/ Que me cuesta dolor, pero con honra”, emphasising that

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<sup>40</sup> Federico García Lorca, Obras V, Teatro 3. Cine Música, ed. Miguel García-Posada, (Madrid: Akal, 1996), p. 264.

<sup>41</sup> For a detailed illustration of Perlimplín’s sacrifice and a discussion of the role of sacrifice in García Lorca’s theatre see Chapter Three on Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín.



she is “de limpia” (II, 9; p. 176, p. 174). During the final visit paid to her by Fernando in the convent Mariana rejects all of her young admirer’s pleas for her to stop protecting the other conspirators who have abandoned her; she insists that she must continue on her way to death so that “¡Mis hijos tendrán un nombre claro como la luna llena!” (III, 8; p. 206). It is for the honour of her children, her legacy and the legacy of her name (which will become immortal) that Mariana must give up her material life. The sense that Mariana in her death, with honour and without blame, will become an eternal symbol of freedom, adorned in white is noted by Concha Zardoya, referring to the whiteness of the gown in which she meets her martyr’s death as: “como acentuando la pureza del sacrificio”.<sup>42</sup>

## *2.6 The Immaterial and the realm of dream/death*

In a 1933 interview which the poet gave before the Buenos Aires premiere of Mariana Pineda, he spoke of the task he had undertaken bringing the image and memory of Mariana to life, “materializando aquella figura ideal”, as he put it. The figures of Mariana, Sotomayor and Pedrosa had taken on in his mind “contornos fabulosos e inmatrimales”. These characters seemed to come from another world, a place far and remote; to him, Mariana and the individuals in her story had descended from the heavens like “una niebla blanca en copos, que venía [...] desde la Sierra Nevada” to populate the imagination of the poet as a child. The artistic goal García Lorca set for himself was to place these otherworldly figures on a stage and give them material form so that he could understand in human terms what it was and how it came to be that Mariana transformed herself into an immortal symbol of liberty. In his text, however, we are always conscious that García Lorca’s Mariana comes from and will return to the other, eternal, transcendent world of the soul. The dialogue we hear on stage is always underwritten by an unspoken discourse of the incorporeal and the unreal, at times only

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<sup>42</sup> Zardoya, “Mariana Pineda: Romance trágico...”, p. 490.

discernible as a silence, like the one we are told that represents the struggle between the souls of Pedrosa and Mariana (II, 9; p. 170).

The relationship between García Lorca's Mariana and this other realm is evident from a coherent line of imagery running through the text. Fernando's sisters, Lucía and Amparo, describe Mariana as she appears in their brother's vision:

“Dijo que en tus ojos/ había un constante desfile de pájaros./ Un temblor divino, como de agua clara/ sorprendida siempre bajo el arrayán, o temblor de luna sobre una pecera/ donde un pez de plata finge rojo sueño” (I, 4; p. 109)

Mariana is compared with an endless flight of birds, a divine tremble and the moon's quivering, reflected light – all of which, firstly, are elements of a heavenly domain and also suggest a series of constant motions. At this early stage of the play, we are reminded that Mariana is already moving toward her final transfiguration and elevation to the cosmos. The references throughout the text to features of the remote and otherworldly are noted by Zardoya as heavenly influences on Mariana.<sup>43</sup> For the Granadine heroine a preoccupation with something intangible that lies beyond her physical sphere is notable from the earliest scenes of the drama, as this direction implies: “*Inquieta por algo que ocurre fuera de la escena*” (I, 4; p. 111). The other realm appears to intervene in Mariana's world at a critical moment when she is being harassed by Pedrosa, and her ring falls off her finger: “Parece que una mano invisible lo arrancó” (II, 9; p. 173). But this is a dissimulation on Mariana's part as she deliberately loosened the ring and let it fall in order to sidestep Pedrosa's questioning – the ‘invisible’ hand was, significantly, Mariana's. By the final *estampa*, with the pale, white Mariana awaiting her fate in the convent, her communion with the immaterial realm is dominant. When the young Fernando comes to plead with her, Mariana, insisting she is already ‘dead’, evokes features of the other world:

“Tus palabras me llegan/ a través del gran río del mundo que abandono./ Ya soy como la estrella sobre agua profunda./ última débil brisa que se pierde en los álamos” (III, 8; p. 206).

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<sup>43</sup> See Zardoya, “Mariana Pineda: Romance trágico...”, p. 492.

The convent, for Mariana, is a point of transfer from her temporal existence to her immortal life, and so we find her adopting the pose of her saintly destiny: “*se sienta en el banco, con las manos cruzadas y la cabeza caída, en una divina actitud de tránsito*” (III, 7; p. 203). At this time the physical world is slipping away from Mariana like “un grano de arena” from her hand, hence the exhortations of the nuns reach her over the great distance between the material and the spiritual worlds: “¡Qué lejanas os siento!” (III, 8; p. 208).

The presence of the other world now pervades Mariana’s existence, but Mariana has not yet met her death and crossed over. She is aware of how close she is to death: “mi muerte acecha [...] que siento muy cerca/ dedos de hueso y de musgo/ acariciar mi cabeza” (III, 4; p. 192).<sup>44</sup> Indeed, the deathly pale and white-garbed Mariana of the third *estampa* has entered the realm of the dead and now views the physical world with the eyes of her eternal soul: “ya estoy muerta [...] el mundo se me acerca/ las piedras, el agua, el aire/ ¡comprendo que estaba ciega!” (III, 2; p. 186). Most significantly, Mariana expresses this new consciousness in terms of its being “[un] buen soñar” (III, 2; p. 187). Just as we are ever aware that the poet’s Mariana is inseparable from the immortal image of the heroine-saint Mariana, we are also aware of a sense of death suffusing the drama, and the spirit of death is, for García Lorca, the state of dream. If in Calderón de la Barca’s drama, life is a dream and the boundary between reality and reverie is indeterminate, then in García Lorca’s theatre death is a dream, or rather a crossing over from the experience of the material into an unending dream-state of sleep. Moreover, in Mariana Pineda, dream continually breaks into reality and so the boundaries of what is real and what is from the dream-world of death are ambiguous.

In several of García Lorca’s later works we observe how the poet conflates death with sleep/dream. El público’s Julieta lies in her mausoleum in Verona lost in “un mar de sueño”

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. El público’s *Caballo Blanco* 1 (to Julieta) “El musgo sin luz. El tacto que devora pequeños mundos con las yemas de los dedos”.

(III, p. 108). Her death-sleep is continually disturbed by “cada vez más gente” (III, p. 108) including the Caballos Blancos who wish to sleep with her. The Caballo Negro comes to call her back (“duerme, duerme, duerme” III, p. 116) to her eternal dream-state (represented by “un mar de tierra blanca y los arcos vacíos por el cielo” III, p. 108). The Madre of the dead Novio of Bodas de sangre, will sleep a cold, empty dream, knowing that her menfolk lie, not in “el camposanto” but, in “[un] lecho de tierra, cama que los cobija y los mece por el cielo”. In Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín, the final words of the play are Marcolfa’s tender reassurance to her dead master, secure in the knowledge that his self-sacrifice to produce a soul in Belisa has succeeded: “Don Perlimplín, duerme tranquilo”. Perhaps the example that is closest in relation to Mariana, is that of the eponymous Mariposa in El maleficio de la mariposa. Just as Mariana seems suspended between two realms of consciousness, so the butterfly fluctuates between states of dream-sleep and corporeality, rebuking the Gusanos de luz: “¿Por qué turbáis mi sueño?” (V, p. 90). Watching her children fall asleep, early in second *estampa*, Mariana confesses: “Que yo también estoy dormida, niños,/ voy volando por mi propio sueño” (II, 3; p. 146). Even when visited at last by Pedro, the reality of Mariana’s emotions is undermined by interference from the realm of illusion: “Pero aunque alegre noto un gran desasosiego que me turbia y enoja” (II, 5; p. 150). Again if we examine the third *estampa* we note the ascendancy of the unreal in Mariana’s domain, in particular the terms of her fantasy that Pedro will come to rescue her “como un San Jorge/ de diamantes y agua negra/ al aire la deslumbrante/ flor de su capa bermeja” (III, 3; p. 190). Indeed in this *estampa*, Mariana seems to have fallen deeper into the arms of Morpheus, as we observe when Pedrosa arrives to interview her, Sor Carmen surprises a distracted Mariana who rises “como volviendo de un sueño” (III, 4 p. 193). Pointedly, Pedrosa warns her “[c]on una pluma y un poco de tinta/ puedo hacerla dormir un largo sueño.” (III, 5; p. 196); death for Mariana will be a displacement from reality to a dream-state, her being will shift to another level of cognisance.

We know that García Lorca was composing his Romancero gitano contemporaneously with, or at least subsequent to, Mariana Pineda in 1923-4.<sup>45</sup> It is not surprising, then, that there should be some cross-pollination of lexis, and some interaction of conception. What is of particular interest to us here is the affiliation of dream and death and this we can perceive, in terms of idiom most evidently in the “Romance sonámbulo” with its unnamed “ella” dreaming on her “baranda”. Regarding the latter, we note Mariana “(*soñadora*) Entre el mar y las estrellas/ con qué gusto pasearía/ apoyada sobre una/ larga baranda de brisa” (III, 6; pp. 198-9), and the further reference to “baranda” (III, 9; p. 211). Of additional interest and apropos Mariana, we witness the attributive elements of “altas”, “verdes” and “de la luna”, and their suggestion of what is remote and unearthly, especially comparing “Entre el mar y las estrellas”<sup>46</sup>. The relationship between the *romance* and the drama becomes explicit in the final verses of the play when Mariana is told by the young Novicia: “En las altas barandas tu novio está esperándote” (III, 9; p. 211). All in all, Mariana’s vision of death, “¡[q]ué largo sueño sin ensueños ni sombras!” (III, 8; p. 207), illustrates that, although she may have been pursued in life by “ensueños” and “sombras” that gave her no rest, in death Mariana will find rest in motionless sleep and will be delivered as the transfigured icon of liberty.

### 2.7 On martyrdom: the sacrifice of the Self

We have explored the series of symbolic oppositions that provides Mariana Pineda with its figurative dialectics: the static image of the *estampa* versus the mobile representation of the

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<sup>45</sup> In a letter to Fernández Almagro from September 1924, García Lorca refers to “[un] romance gitano” that he had previously sent his friend, and promises to send “un *romance sonámbulo* que he terminado”. For more on the dating of the Romancero gitano see also García-Posada’s “Notas al texto” from his edition of the collected works, Federico García Lorca, Obras II, Poesía, 2, (Madrid: Akal, 1989), p. 693.

<sup>46</sup> The verse we quote here follows on from the fragment of a *copla* Mariana remembers and recites to herself. The interpolation of these song lyrics connects with the other metatexts incorporated in the play: the popular ballad of Mariana Pineda (prologue, pp. 98-9 and III, 9; p. 211), the ballad of the Duke of Lucena (II, 1; pp. 142-4), and the early nineteenth-century art song “El Contrabandista” (II, 8; p. 168). The narratives of the latter two access the “Romance sonámbulo” with their accounts of (i) a girl who waits for the lover who will never return (“¡Cuántas veces te esperó!” verse 69 in the *romance*), and (ii) the allusion to the figure of the smuggler (“desde los puertos de Cabra” verse 30).

play; the trope of white signifying immateriality (the condition of Mariana as a popular saint of liberty) against the corporeal form (of a flesh and blood Mariana) that the poet proposes to materialise on stage; and the physical world of existence contrasted with the dream realm of death. In this, one of the poet's earliest stage works, García Lorca rehearses his ideas on the metaphysical discourse of body and soul. From the young poet's unpublished and unedited prose writings, we observe how the concerns of the spirit and the flesh dominate his youthful ponderings.<sup>47</sup> The more mature García Lorca later exercises the same ontological discussion most vividly in Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín.<sup>48</sup> Perlimplín's gambit is to generate an interiority in Belisa by sacrificing his own physical being, achieving a symbolic unity of body and soul. Meanwhile in Mariana Pineda we witness the dramatisation of the material and temporal transmuting into the ethereal and eternal, of body to soul. García Lorca's martyrdom of Mariana de Pineda should not be judged simply as the execution of a selfless individual in favour of a greater good, "un acto de supremo sacrificio" as Zardoya has described it.<sup>49</sup> The Mariana of the poet's creation is not motivated by an altruistic desire to further the cause of the opponents of a despotic regime, nor as one of the Novicias suggests "Porque no quiere al Rey" (III, 1, p. 185), nor is she motivated by the struggle for political freedom. Rather it is from her love for Pedro that Mariana re-invents herself through death as the eternal symbol of Love: "¡Pedro, mira tu amor/ a lo que me ha llevado!" (III, 8; p. 207), "Amas la libertad por encima de todo,/ pero yo soy la misma Libertad" (III, 9, p. 210), "¡Yo soy la Libertad porque el amor lo quiso!/ ¡Pedro! La Libertad, por la cual me dejaste" (III, 9;

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<sup>47</sup> As Christopher Maurer argues in his introduction to the until quite recently fairly unknown prose writings of the young García Lorca: "No es sorprendente que la obra temprana de Lorca esté dominada por este dualismo [de la carne y el espíritu], y que tantas páginas suyas representen un intento de superarlo, logrando el acceso a un tercer reino donde espíritu y carne dejen de ser antagónicos", Federico García Lorca, Prosa inédita de juventud, ed. Christopher Maurer, (Madrid: Cátedra, 1998), p. 22. Aside from designating his collection of meditations as "Místicas (de la carne y el espíritu)", which Maurer highlights, we also note the number of pieces among García Lorca's prose works that refer to the soul, indicating how saturated these early writings are with musings on the theme of this figurative opposition between body and soul. To pick out a few which have a particular focus on the dualism, we look no further than "Mística que trata de la superioridad de espíritu", "Mística que trata del freno puesto por [la] sociedad a la naturaleza de nuestros cuerpos y nuestras almas", "Estado de ánimo de la noche del 8 de enero", "[¿Qué hay detrás de mí...?]" and "Ensayo corto sobre el alma".

<sup>48</sup> In the fourth scene Perlimplín makes their relationship clear to Belisa in terms of the symbolic polarity: "Yo soy mi alma y tú eres tu cuerpo".

<sup>49</sup> Zardoya, "Mariana Pineda: Romance trágico...", p. 479.

p. 211). The love Mariana bore for Pedro is transmogrified by her self-immolation into a transcendent Love, and for her Liberty is freedom from the physical bounds of the body and a release of her immortal soul into the metaphysical realm – “¡Libertad de lo alto! Libertad verdadera,/ enciende por mí tus estrellas distantes” (III, 9; p. 210) – where Love reigns free. Mariana’s martyrdom is a sacrifice of the self, the physical self, and hence the constitution of a new identity as Mariana, the saint of Love and Liberty.<sup>50</sup>

As the poet himself highlighted, for Mariana, Love and Liberty are “dos puñales que se clavaban constantemente en su propio corazón”, the instruments of her passion and sacrifice.<sup>51</sup> The suffering suggested by this continual plunging of daggers into her heart is necessary for Mariana’s sacrifice to be a worthy transcendence of the mundane and transformation of the corporeal into the spiritual. The association of the divine with torment and anguish is of course one of the earliest features of García Lorca and clearly reflects the poet’s appropriation of (Roman) Catholic iconic imagery. Fascinated as the young García Lorca was with the figure of Christ, or rather a secularised Christ and redrawn by the intelligentsia of the Western world as a socialist visionary, Cristo, his stage dramatisation of an imagined teenage Christ, is conceived in terms of Catholic iconography, with its central characters of the holy family and an angel Gabriel<sup>52</sup>. In this work we are offered an insight into the poet’s vision of what it means to be a divine being: “Dios es el Dolor y el Sueño”.<sup>53</sup> For García Lorca, God represents suffering and self-sacrifice, and belongs to the domain of the immaterial and of visions.

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<sup>50</sup> Mariana’s re-invention of herself is comparable to Perlimplín’s in that both transcend the mortal desire each feels for another, and their material lives as the boundaries of that love, through an act of sacrifice and what Perlimplín calls “el triunfo de mi imaginación”.

<sup>51</sup> From the 1933 interview given in Buenos Aires. The image of the daggers immediately suggests the “cuchillo” of Bodas de sangre and the recurrent appearances of this symbolic instrument in all of García Lorca’s work as is discussed below.

<sup>52</sup> For more on the poet’s use of christological figures in his work see Chapter One on Cristo, and the symbolic names of the inhabitants of La casa de Bernarda Alba.

<sup>53</sup> Federico García Lorca, Teatro inédito de juventud, ed. Andrés Soria Olmeda, (Madrid: Cátedra, 1994), p. 246.

Both notions of pain and dream are easily associated with Mariana: her connection with the spiritual world of the dead and the agonies she must endure on her road to martyrdom, her *via dolorosa*. As Sor Carmen reminds her, “Dios está llena de heridas/ de amor, que nunca se cierran”, to which Mariana significantly responds “[n]ace el que muere sufriendo” (III, 2; p. 187). The torments Mariana endures are those of the daggers of Love and Liberty with which she must forever stab into her heart, causing wounds (of love) that don Perlimplín would know well: “Amor, amor, que estoy herido./ Herido de amor huido;/ herido./ muerto de amor” (I, p. 286). Similarly, the Madre of Bodas de sangre is tragically acquainted with the formula: “con un cuchillo [...] se mataron los dos hombres del amor” (III, 2; p. 412). And just as the women who mourn with the Madre invoke “Dulces clavos./ dulce cruz./ dulce nombre/ de Jesús” (III, 2; p. 410), Mariana beseeches “la llaga de vuestro costado” and “las clavellinas de su dulce sangre” (I, 7; p. 125) that her lover be saved. These entreaties to “[el] Santo Cristo del Mayor Dolor” (II, 2; p. 146) are appeals founded on the spilt blood of a saviour, correspondingly Mariana offers her blood “que es [...] la sangre de todas las criaturas” in the sacrificial ritual of her martyrdom (III, 9; p. 210). The trials and miseries of Mariana’s martyrdom, the daggers thrust into her heart, are the sufferings of her physical self necessary for her transfiguration, they are the basis for Mariana’s claims that she is “muy herida [...] / por las cosas de la tierra” (III, 2; p. 187), “[...] herida por los hombres!” (III, 9; p. 211). They are of course the same “herida[s] de amor”, symbolic and real, suffered, in the poet’s work, by Christ, by Perlimplín and the two men of Bodas de sangre.

This suffering gives way to Mariana’s resolution to surrender her material existence and remove her physical self from the Earth. As García Lorca explained to Fernández Almagro in the letter from 1923: “Cuando ella decide morir, está ya muerta, y la muerte no la asusta lo más mínimo”. Sure enough Mariana’s own words confirm her release from mortal life: “[...] ya estoy muerta” (III, 2; p. 186), “[y]a estoy muerta [...]!” (III, 8; p. 206). The confidence she finds in accepting her destiny is a challenge to those who love her (Fernando) and whom she loves (Pedro) to transform likewise their love through sacrifice of Self into a transcendent



Love. Mariana throws down the gauntlet to Pedro: “Me querrás muerta tanto, que no podrás vivir”; and Fernando imagines responding to her challenge: “¡Quién pudiera morir para que tú vivieras!” (III, 8; p. 207). The transformation of Mariana from a woman “herida de amor”, suffering the torments of her earthly existence, to the heroine of Love and Liberty who sacrifices her life “para conquistar el espacio y coronarse con la gloria de la inmortalidad” is an exchange of one form, the mutable physical for the unchanging face of the soul.<sup>54</sup> On this last point, we note that elsewhere in his letter to Fernández Almagro, García Lorca speaks of his desire to create “un drama *procesional*”, perhaps in reference to the *procesiones* of the Andalusian Semana Santa, and compares his Mariana to “una vieja madonna con su arco de querubines”, much like those icons who are paraded by the faithful during the religious festivities. Once again, the Mariana of García Lorca is clearly conceived as an iconic image and his drama is an animation of the vision.

### 2.8 Bodily penetration and separation

In the upstage area of the convent setting of the third *estampa* García Lorca writes that “una Virgen de los Dolores que, con el corazón atravesado de puñales, llora en el muro, cobijada por un inmenso arco de rosas amarillas y plateadas de papel” (III, 7; p. 199).<sup>55</sup> The poet’s use of this icon in his work is supported by historical testimony, as Antonina Rodrigo’s study shows. In the convent of Santa María Egipcíaca, on hearing that her death sentence has been approved by the king, Mariana “se arrodilló ante una Dolorosa, imagen de su devoción, y en voz alta encomendó a la Virgen a sus hijos”<sup>56</sup>. We observe that García Lorca’s Virgin is enveloped by paper roses, echoing the epithet applied to Mariana by the Novicias: “¡Rosa y jazmín de Granada!” (III, 7; p. 200 & p. 203), and also Mariana’s final exit from the stage (of

<sup>54</sup> From the same 1923 letter to Fernández Almagro.

<sup>55</sup> In the Casa-museo Federico García Lorca of the Huerta de San Vicente in Granada, amidst the present-day recreation of the house’s decor, we find an original publicity poster for La Barraca on the walls of the poet’s bedroom. Situated above García Lorca’s bed is an icon of Our Lady of Sorrows with the motif of seven daggers piercing her heart. The same iconic Virgin is also the subject of one of the poet’s drawings.

<sup>56</sup> Rodrigo, “Mariana de Pineda...”, p. 148.

life) garlanded with “un ramo de flores” (III, 9; p. 210).<sup>57</sup> But the connection with Mariana is more direct in terms of the symbolism of the figure. The depiction of the Virgin - her heart pierced by daggers and silently weeping – is, in Catholic iconography, a representation of Christ’s mother who, in her love for her son, underwent the torment of watching him suffer and die. It exemplifies the ideal of womanhood in Catholic ideology – the pure, elevated figure who sacrifices the love of her life knowing it is for a greater Love and that her suffering is nothing compared to that of her beloved son. The fact that the martyrdom is denoted by the image of a heart pierced by daggers points to another of the central symbolic rubrics that configure the theatre works of the poet; this is the penetration of the body, where the body is perceived as symbolising a boundary of the Self that is permeable, implosive, and therefore mutable and contingently constituted in terms of identity.<sup>58</sup>

Concha Zardoya refers to this device by identifying “el cuchillo” as “la primera imagen metafórica que hallamos en la obra”.<sup>59</sup> Indeed, in the opening exchanges of the opening scene our first knowledge of Mariana is figured with the image of the blood-red cut of the “cuchillo”: “Borda y borda lentamente./ Yo lo he visto por el ojo de llave./ Parecía el hilo rojo entre sus dedos./ una herida de cuchillo sobre el aire” (I, 1; p. 102).<sup>60</sup> The “cuchillo” is allied to another blade, the “espada”, which is cited twice in the work (I, 4; p. 113 and I, 5; p. 115), and to the verbs “cortar” (Prologue; p. 99) and “clavar” (II, 9; p. 177).<sup>61</sup> These figures operate as performative devices cutting through the boundary of inner and outer life (of an internally

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<sup>57</sup> We note also Sor Carmen’s appeal to the Virgin “¡Que la Virgen te ampare!” (III, 9; 210).

<sup>58</sup> I take the theory of the body boundary of identity outlined here from Judith Butler’s discussion of Michel Foucault, Mary Douglas and Julia Kristeva in the third chapter of her Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, (London and New York: Routledge, 1990 & 1999), 169-70.

<sup>59</sup> Zardoya, “Mariana Pineda: Romance trágico...”, 490.

<sup>60</sup> This augury of Mariana’s fate serves the same poetic function as the verse of the *canción de cuna* from Bodas de sangre (I,2) containing the image of the horse and “dentro de los ojos/ un puñal de plata”, which foreshadows the bloody knife fight and the tragic climax of the play. It also links to the “puñal de esmeraldas” which Perlimplín uses on himself.

<sup>61</sup> These weapons and the penetrations they perform are especially significant in García Lorca’s later, more challenging theatre pieces where, as in El público they operate as performative devices cutting through the boundary of inner and outer life, and crossing the divide of self and other. Witness the “cuchillo/espada/clavos/bisturí” which pierce the flesh of the multi-persona Gonzalo/Figura de pámpanos/Desnudo rojo/pez luna. We also recall the “flecha” which punctures the heart of the Joven in Así que pasen cinco años.

located psyche or soul and the external, superficial locus of identity, the body), and breaching the divide of what is constituted in terms of identity as the self and what is other.<sup>62</sup>

The notion that subjective identity is stable, impervious, immortal and fixed inside, that is in symbolic terms the figure of the soul, lies in opposition to the perception of the material trappings of the body as what makes the self distinctive, recognisable and discrete. As Judith Butler has demonstrated, the body acts as the limit of what is thought of as the self by ejecting or expelling what it is not or what is 'other' to it.<sup>63</sup> The reverse actions, being discussed here in relation to Mariana Pineda, of piercing and puncturing the body boundary similarly expose the permeability, contingency and temporality of that frontier of identity. The figurative bifurcation of Self and Other is in continual negotiation as identity is tenuously constituted along this penetrable margin. The representational concept of the Soul (the locus of coherent, stable identity) in opposition to the Body (symbol of the fluid, variable self) is equally problematic. What since the Enlightenment are received in Western culture as the *causes* of identity – sex, race, nationality, class – are now in late Modern times considered, through the works of deconstructionist and post-structuralist thinkers, *effects* of culture, or more specifically, of regimes of power/knowledge. In the early twentieth century, those features of modernism (the response to modernity), such as (i) the sense of alienation in the individual faced with industrialisation and its attendant compression of space and time, (ii) the dehumanising consequences of the scale, the quantities and commodities of the advance of industrial capitalist society, and (iii) the subsequent loss of meaning when the knowledge systems of the age of reason are inadequate to the demands of modernity, bring about a

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<sup>62</sup> In a letter to Salvador Dalí, from August 1927, around the time Dalí was working on the sceneography for the Barcelona opening of Mariana Pineda, García Lorca carefully distinguishes his use, in his drawings and sketches of the iconic figure, of the martyrdom of Saint Sebastian, from Dalí's: "tú las [las flechas] ves clavadas, fijas y robustas, flechas cortas *que no descompongan*, y yo las veo largas...en el momento de la herida. Tu San Sebastián de mármol se opone al mío de carne que muere en todos los momentos, y así tiene que ser". In other words, Dalí's saint is an immortal, immutable image of the moment of self-sacrifice, while García Lorca emphasises the transformation of the flesh at the moment the body is pierced by the arrows.

<sup>63</sup> See Butler's discussion of Julia Kristeva's Powers of Horror in Gender Trouble..., chpt. 3, pp. 101-180.

fundamental challenge to the notion of the soul as an interior, essential identity.<sup>64</sup> The most successful of those artists and thinkers of the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries who engaged with the problem, that is those who did not become lost in the darkness of alienation and breakdown of meaning, were to conclude that subjective identity was *only* constituted as a surface, and that the concept of depth that the soul suggested was illusory, that depth was the optical effect of one transparent (and permeable) layer placed upon another, building a sense of dimension but remaining always flat.<sup>65</sup>

Perhaps the most accessible modernist writer to engage with the body/soul dialectic was Oscar Wilde. As a starting point, his epigrams “Those who see any difference between soul and body have neither” and “Only the shallow know themselves” demonstrate the thesis which Wilde rehearses memorably in The Picture of Dorian Gray.<sup>66</sup> In this, perhaps the best known of Wilde’s prose works, from a moment of vanity and egoism the beautiful, young Dorian is granted a wish: all the mutability and temporality of his body is transferred to a portrait of his likeness, or rather all the sins and vices to which he submits himself do not take their toll on his exterior, his body, but instead manifest on the canvas surface of the painting. Dorian’s soul is materialised in the two dimensions of the image, all the ugliness of his lifestyle and all the decay of the flesh are set into the twists and deformations of the graphic. Meanwhile, Dorian’s body is fixed into an unchanging, permanent representation of beauty and youth. What is most significant in the story is the extent to which the moral qualities of

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<sup>64</sup> Of course, nowhere is this more apparent in the work of García Lorca than in his Poeta en Nueva York, his own response to the oppressive inhumanity of the metropolitan hub of the advanced, industrialised, capitalist world.

<sup>65</sup> The American artist Lyonel Feininger (1871-1956) met the formal artistic challenge of how to represent space on a flat surface without blurring the design by using transparent shapes that appear to lie one behind the other. See E. H. Gombrich, The Story of Art, (London and New York: Phaidon, 1972), p. 463.

<sup>66</sup> Dorian’s mentor Lord Henry is quick to point out the flaw in the logic of his young disciple, in a display of the characteristic Wildean play of inversion:

Dorian: “The soul is a terrible reality. It can be bought, and sold, and bartered away. It can be poisoned, or made perfect. There is a soul in each one of us. I know it.”

Henry: “Do you feel quite sure of that, Dorian?”

Dorian: “Quite sure.”

Henry: “Ah! Then it must be an illusion. The things one feels absolutely certain about are never true.”

Oscar Wilde, Complete Works of Oscar Wilde, (London: Collins, 2001), p. 161.

virtue and grace are attributed to Dorian strictly on account of his immaculate appearance, and in contradiction to all information and the facts that emerge about how sordidly and reprehensively he lives his life – surface is all that matters, or rather all matter is surface. It is an illustration of Wilde’s satirical epigram “In all unimportant matters, style, not sincerity, is the essential. In all important matters, style, not sincerity, is the essential”. The discourse that absorbs Wilde in The Picture of Dorian Gray, and which is of great relevance to our discussion, is of an asymmetrical opposition of the immortal, essential self versus the temporal mask<sup>67</sup>. The opposing values of body and soul are clearly articulated by Wilde’s creation: “[Dorian Gray] used to wonder at the shallow psychology of those who conceive *the Ego in man as a thing simple, permanent, reliable, and of one essence*. To him, man was a *being with myriad lives and myriad sensations, a complex, multiform creature* that bore within itself strange legacies of thought and passion, and whose very flesh was tainted with the monstrous maladies of the dead” (my italics).<sup>68</sup>

It is reasonable to point out that we have been discussing two figurative notions of the body, which are interconnecting rather than interchangeable. The first is the body as the boundary of subjective identity, the second is the Body (or contingent, surface identity) as the converse of the Soul (or stable, essential identity). In García Lorca’s work these related ideas are represented on a symbolic level by the metaphors of the “cuchillo”, which publicises the former, and by “cuello”, which announces the latter. The presence of “cuchillo” we have already addressed. The recurrence of references to “cuello”, and to the allied “garganta”, at regular intervals in the three acts of Mariana Pineda, (I, 4; p. 113-4), (I, 5; p. 115), (I, 8; p. 130), (II, 5; p. 153), (II, 9; p. 176), (III, 1; p. 183), (III, 5; p. 195), (III, 7; p. 201), functions on

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<sup>67</sup> This dualism is part of a schematic of cultural systems installed by Enlightenment notions of identity: authenticity/artifice; truth/falsehood; stasis/change; depth/surface; normal/abnormal. We ground this analysis in Jonathan Dollimore’s study of the cultural impact of Wilde in terms of what Dollimore calls “paradox and perversity”, in Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 14-5.

<sup>68</sup> Wilde, Complete Works..., p. 112.

a dramatic level as an incantation of the tragic end to Mariana's life, her execution.<sup>69</sup> It is significant that García Lorca chooses not to represent Mariana's death on stage with a final scene of her killing. The vision of Mariana evoked by the poet is one of the immortal, iconic Mariana that transfixed him as a child, his Mariana never undergoes a moment of death; the transfiguration of the corporeal Mariana into the spiritual is on the symbolic plane and needs no physical representation.<sup>70</sup> Instead, the invocation of "cuello"/"garganta" that pulses through the drama marks, in a poetic way, the received historical facts of Mariana de Pineda's death with her neck encased in "una gargantilla de hierro", as Antonina Rodrigo describes to us.<sup>71</sup> Just as the "cuchillo" reappears as an instrument of self-sacrifice in other works of the poet, so we observe that an alternative means chosen by the poet to dispatch the central figures of his dramas involves various forms focussing on the neck. Adela's self-immolation by hanging

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<sup>69</sup> The repeated references to "cuello" are noted by Zardoya, "Mariana Pineda: Romance trágico...", p. 491.

<sup>70</sup> Looking at the other death/self-sacrifices among the poet's other tragedies something of interest emerges. The moment that Perlimplín (in the guise of the young man in the red cloak) stabs himself (-selves) takes place off stage. He dies on stage but the moment of ritual self-sacrifice is not performed in view. We hear the moment of the deaths of the Novio and Leonardo in *Bodas de sangre*, signalled by the appearance of the death-figure the Luna, then "*se oyen dos largos gritos desgarrados*" and the music of the accompanying violins abruptly stops. But the audience does not witness the knife duel nor the moment in which as we later hear from the Madre "se mataron los dos hombres del amor". More remarkable for the oddness of the scenario, is the suicide of Adela in the last moments of *La casa de Bernarda Alba*. Following the offstage shots Bernarda supposedly fires at Pepe el Romano, which Martirio implies have killed him ("Se acabó Pepe el Romano"), Adela runs off into an adjoining room. From behind a closed door "*Se oye como un golpe*", Poncia pushes the door open, goes inside (offstage) and re-enters immediately. Her direction "*Se lleva las manos al cuello*" and Bernarda's "¡Descolgarlo!" convey to us Adela's fate. What is curious is why García Lorca removes Adela and her last moments from the stage. Of course, it makes life easier for a director of the play who thus avoids any graphic representation of a young girl hanging herself, as well as the logistics of the performer having to carry out the deed onstage in the space of a few lines of dialogue. But a more coherent explanation would be to relate this episode to the other deaths/self-sacrifices that the poet places offstage in his dramas. These are consecrated moments of transformation where the earthly form is discarded for an eternal existence as martyrs to Love. In clear contrast is the death of Juan at the hands of Yerma, not a self-immolation but a murder, which Yerma famously and curiously appears to describe as the killing of 'her son'. (For more on Yerma's strange self-accusation, see Chapter Five). Of further interest is the distance between the deaths in García Lorca's tragedies and those in his experimental works. In *El público*, Gonzalo/Hombre 1 undergoes a symbolic death replacing the *Desnudo rojo*/Christ figure on the 'cross' of the perpendicular hospital bed. The Director/Enrique is 'erased' from the material world by the blotting-out effect of the snowfall, conjured up by the Prestidigitador. Similarly, it is not the Joven's actual heart that is shot through by the card player's arrow in *Así que pasen cinco años* but the image of the heart of the playing card ace. The allegorical performance styles of these vanguard works automatically precludes any 'realistic' renderings of death.

<sup>71</sup> See Rodrigo, "Mariana de Pineda...", p. 161 for an account of Mariana de Pineda's final moments. The phrase "gargantilla de hierro" is employed by García Lorca in the reference to Mariana Pineda found in the puppet play *Tragicomedia de don Cristóbal y la señá Rosita* which from 1922 precedes his version of Mariana's life: Rosita – "Voy al suplicio como fue Marianita Pineda. Ella tuvo una gargantilla de hierro en sus bodas con la muerte" (VI, p. 135).

in La casa de Bernarda Alba and Yerma's strangling of Juan are the prominent examples of deaths which draw attention to the part of the body where the head joins the torso, and where in executions the head is separated from the rest of the body. In his seminal biography, Ian Gibson draws our attention to the poet's preoccupation with the images of his severed head as portrayed by Dalí in a series of illustrations and art works.<sup>72</sup> For García Lorca, I propose that the separation of the head, and with it (i) the identifying features of the face and (ii) the house of the mind, the intellect, the psyche, from the body symbolizes the removal/liberation of identity from the physical form of life. In Mariana Pineda, the figure of the "cuello" signifies the point of conversion in terms of the body/soul dialectic: when Mariana is garotted her mortal existence is transfigured into the immortality of her iconic status. Similarly, for Adela in La casa de Bernarda Alba, as her life is cut off at the neck so the Christ-like self sacrifice for love, of one who would wear "la corona de espinas que tienen las que son queridas de algún hombre casado" (III, p. 399), becomes a metamorphosis of her temporal life into the fixed eternity of existence as the false image of virginal purity that Bernarda invokes with her: "¡Mi hija ha muerto virgen!".

## 2.9 *The force of Love*

Although García Lorca's vision of Mariana sees "el amor y la libertad" as "[los] dos puñales que se clavaban constantemente en su propio corazón", the relationship between Love and Liberty is not a symmetrical one in the drama. The historical Mariana de Pineda's involvement in the liberal cause stemmed from her late husband's sympathies, and her political affinities subsequently led her into affairs with two other men who supported the liberal movement, such as Casimiro Brodett y Carbonell and Francisco Álvarez de Sotomayor.<sup>73</sup> In other words, the real Mariana's politics gave rise to romantic liaisons with associates. For García Lorca's Mariana, the correlation between love and the political struggle

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<sup>72</sup> See Ian Gibson, Federico García Lorca, pp. 145-7.

<sup>73</sup> See Rodrigo, "Mariana de Pineda...", chapters 6 & 7.

for freedom runs in the opposite direction, as Mariana herself makes clear: “¡Yo soy la libertad porque el amor lo quiso!” (III, 9; p. 211). This stage Mariana is associated with the fight for political freedom only as a consequence of her love for Pedro, as Antonina Rodrigo points out, “el poeta somete en la acción el tema político al sentimental”.<sup>74</sup> García Lorca was decided in what motivates his Mariana from the outset, underlining to Melchor Fernández Almagro that “[e]lla se entrega al amor por el amor [...] Resulta mártir de la libertad siendo en realidad víctima de su propio corazón enamorado y enloquecido”. Although the official Mariana de Pineda is commemorated to this day in Granada as the heroine of the cause of freedom, as a woman who gave her life with honour for a noble struggle, García Lorca changes the focus from the political to the romantic with his Mariana making the ultimate sacrifice inspired by love. The poet conjures up his vision of a Mariana who embraces the fight for liberty and converts herself into the martyred symbol of that cause because then she will be loved by the one she loves. Mariana transforms herself into what her lover most desires: “¿Amas la libertad más que a tu Marianita? ¡Pues yo seré la misma Libertad que tú adoras!” (III, 8; p. 205). García Lorca’s intentions for his Mariana were always to elevate what mattered to him, the poetic representation of a woman who loves, over any political message that the historical figure of Mariana carried with her. A letter to García Lorca’s family from December 1924 rejected the political content of Mariana Pineda:

[...] el éxito de la obra, me ha convencido de que no es ni debe, como quisiera don Fernando [de los Ríos], ser político, pues es una *obra de arte puro*, una tragedia hecha por mí, como sabéis, sin interés político y yo quiero que su éxito sea un éxito *poético*.

We can also conclude that the poet’s ambitions for his work were fully realised. As the almost entirely positive response to, and commercial success of, the drama’s Madrid premiere demonstrated, García Lorca effectively communicated his personal vision of Mariana:

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<sup>74</sup> Rodrigo, “Mariana de Pineda...”, p. 207.



su Mariana es un fantasma que borda su bandera, no como signo de libertad, sino como presea de amor, y sólo cuando comprende que en el alma de su enamorado triunfa el amor de la libertad sobre el amor de ella, se transfigura y convierte en símbolo de la libertad misma.<sup>75</sup>

Mariana's transformation of herself into that which her lover most desires reveals the primary question addressed by the poet in all of his works: how to bridge the impossible distance between the self and the object of love. In Mariana Pineda, we observe young Fernando locked into his unrequited love for Mariana – “Prisionero soy de amor” (I, 8; p. 134) – and, in turn, we find Mariana in love with Pedro who ‘loves freedom more than he loves Mariana’.<sup>76</sup> The gap between lover and loved one, one who desires and the object of that desire, is meditated upon by the poet in his lecture on “Canciones de cuna españolas”. García Lorca found himself fascinated by the sense of longing for fulfilment encapsulated in this *nana infantil*:

A la nana, nana, nana,  
a la nanita de aquel  
que llevó el caballo al agua  
y lo dejó sin beber.<sup>77</sup>

The cradle song contains for García Lorca the essence of “una rara angustia misteriosa” that characterises the gap between the subject and object of desire, the same essence which we find tormenting Mariana: “esta angustia de andar sin saber dónde voy/ y este sabor de amor que me quema la boca” (II, 5; p. 149). This ‘mysterious anguish’ is present in all García Lorca's stage works where his protagonists reach to fulfil their desires, and come up against

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<sup>75</sup> From the review cited above printed in *El Sol*, 13.x.27.

<sup>76</sup> The uni-directional chain of unreciprocated love evinced by Fernando-Mariana-Pedro is a replica of El maleficio de la mariposa's Curianita Silvia-Curianito el nene-La mariposa. Similarly, in Así que pasen cinco años, we find that the dynamic between La mecanógrafa-El joven-La novia has desire flowing in a single direction, something that also describes the relationship between Perlimplín-Belisa-El joven de la capa roja. Elsewhere we note as equally relevant the one-sided desires of Esther for Jesús in Cristo, of Gonzalo/Hombre 1 for Enrique/Director in El público (although it could be argued the real schematic is Gonzalo-Enrique-Elena), of Martirio and Angustias for Pepe in La casa de Bernarda Alba, of doña Rosita for her cousin. We also note at this point that those incidences where love is mutual, such as that of Leonardo for La novia in Bodas de sangre and Pepe for Adela, have inevitably tragic consequences, which we will return to later for comment.

<sup>77</sup> Federico García Lorca, Obras VI, Prosa, 1, ed. Miguel García-Posada, (Madrid: Akal, 1994), p. 301.

what for Christopher Maurer is a *lack* of something which is hard to define.<sup>78</sup> The mystery can be better understood thanks to the psychoanalytical theories of Freud and Lacan as the lack at the centre of (material) desire.<sup>79</sup> When it comes to trying to understand the nature of love and desire, i.e. the dilemma facing Mariana (“¡Yo no sé que es amor!” III, 8; 206), the theories of psychoanalysis offer valuable elucidation.

The absence or lack at the centre of desire is the fundamental question that Freud meditates upon in Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920), The Ego and the Id (1923) and to some extent in Civilisation and its Discontents (1930).<sup>80</sup> In these tracts, Freud speculates on how the ego is effectively constituted through the tension between two conflicting drives: the life-affirming erotic impulse of desire and the death instinct. Freud’s project, to understand the libidinal forces and energies that constitute existence, leads to the conclusion that while the Self’s erotic drive moves it toward the Other, the distance between them remains the same and impossible to bridge. This is because it is not about what the other *is* but what the Self *wants* the Other *to be*. As Freud attempted to make a scientific analysis of, and then provide a schematic for, the energies that constitute human existence, so García Lorca with his poetic vision (“norma de amor”/ “No hay más ley que el Amor”) suggests the conclusion that desire is governed by a single rule and principle: physical desire is essentially a self-reflexive, narcissistic affair that may only be exceeded by transcendent Love.

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<sup>78</sup> Bolstered by his more recent researches into the poet’s juvenilia, Maurer is convinced that in García Lorca’s work there is “un tema constante [...] desde sus primeras páginas hasta las últimas que escribiera – es que el hombre es incapaz de satisfacer su deseo, no sólo porque ‘la sociedad’ se lo prohíba, sino porque *no logra definirlo y sólo de modo imperfecto logra nombrarlo*”, Introduction to Federico García Lorca, Prosa inédita de juventud, ed. Christopher Maurer, (Madrid: Cátedra, 1998), p. 35.

<sup>79</sup> The intervention of science to examine the concept of love and desire, may seem an intrusion into what could be considered the domain of poetry; however for García Lorca the pairing of scientific enquiry and the erotic was curiously compatible. In his “Tu infancia en Menton”, from Poeta en Nueva York, García Lorca uses the poetically neat but intriguing phrase “norma de amor”, juxtaposing two seemingly incongruous terms: love, which in an immanent sense eludes circumscription, and the notion of a norm or standard, which implies a process of delimitation, categorisation and regularisation. Using a similar conjugation, Jesús in the poet’s ‘religious tragedy’ Cristo declares that “No hay más ley que el Amor”, Federico García Lorca, Teatro inédito..., p. 254.

<sup>80</sup> See Sigmund Freud, The Freud Reader, Gay, Peter (ed.), London, Vintage, 1995.

Mariana's love, like that of many Lorcan characters, such as Perlimplín, doña Rosita, the Joven of Así que pasen cinco años, is unreciprocated. In this context, we can understand García Lorca's description of Mariana to Fernández Almagro as "una Julieta sin Romeo".<sup>81</sup> Her love has no object, no outlet, like the girl drowned in the water of a well "que no desemboca".<sup>82</sup> Mariana's love is depicted in terms of an uncontrollable force that pulls her towards her death: "Soy una mujer/ que va atada a la cola de un caballo" (II, 8; p. 168), much as the Novia of Bodas de sangre describes her passion for Leonardo: "me arrastras y voy,/ [...] y te sigo por el aire/ como una brizna de hierba" (III, p. 399). But when Pedro deserts her, the cathectic love Mariana bears for him – "¡Pedro, mira tu amor/ a lo que me ha llevado" (III, 8; p. 207) – is turned in on herself and produces a desire for physical death in order to become the iconic reflection of an ideal: "Pedro, quiero morir/ por lo que tú no mueres,/ por el puro ideal que iluminó tus ojos" (III, 8; p. 207). The transformation inspired by a pure, idealised Love is a movement out of the temporal world to a supernatural, other world of immortality (in religious terms, the realm of God, angels and saints) that García Lorca posits as the only answer to a love that has no means of fulfilment. We remind ourselves that in Freudian terms the sacrifice of (physical) being seems to suggest an act of masochism. As he discusses in Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Freud identifies, using contemporary biomolecular science, in the relationships between the cells of organisms a tendency for some cells engaged in sexual propagation to die in order to make way for others.

It is true to say that García Lorca advanced this theory of Love as a transcendent, poetic force for transformation throughout his work, as Concha Zardoya contends in her study of Mariana

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<sup>81</sup> From the letter to Fernández Almagro written in 1923. The poet again compares Mariana to Juliet, "Julieta, su hermana", in the speech given at the dinner held in honour of the opening of Mariana Pineda in Granada, 1929, cited above. Shortly afterwards, García Lorca was to imagine for future productions of his work the figure of a Juliet without her Romeo in the 1930 El público.

<sup>82</sup> "Niña ahogada en el pozo (Granada y Newburg)", from Poeta en Nueva York, Federico García Lorca, Obras II. Poesía, 2, ed. Miguel García-Posada, (Madrid: Akal, 1989), p. 275.

Pineda.<sup>83</sup> The power of love to alter and transform natural states is highlighted by the poet in his persona of the Autor who delivers the prologue to La zapatera prodigiosa:

la poesía se retira de la escena en busca de otros ambientes donde la gente no se asuste de que un árbol, por ejemplo, se convierta en una bola de humo o de que tres peces, *por amor* de una mano y una palabra, se conviertan en tres millones de peces para calmar el hambre de una multitud [...] (my italics)

It is through the force of love that the three fish multiply into millions, a poetic Love that ‘miraculously’ and theatrically transcends physical and material boundaries. García Lorca again suggests such a notion of poetic force in his 1933 lecture “Juego y Teoría del Duende” which links the divine with the state of (poetic) ‘evasion’ of the material world:

En toda la música árabe, danza, canción o elegía, la llegada del duende es saludada con enérgicos ‘¡Alá, Alá!’, ‘¡Dios, Dios!’, tan cerca del ‘¡Olé!’ de los toros, que quién sabe si será lo mismo, y en todos los cantos del sur de España la aparición del duende es seguida por sinceros gritos de ‘¡Viva Dios!’, profundo, humano, tierno grito de una comunicación con Dios por medio de los cinco sentidos, gracias al duende que agita la voz y el cuerpo de la bailarina; evasión real y poética de este mundo [...]

What is important here is the energy that generates a transcendence of the physical world. It is the same as the force of love alluded to by the Autor that produces the ‘miracle’ (property of the mystical and the divine) of the material transforming into the supernatural; the force of corporal, earthly love which transmutes into a pure, spiritual Love. Mariana makes evident her comprehension of the potential of her love for Pedro to obliterate the temporal world: “cuando se quiere/ se está fuera del tiempo,/ y ya no hay día ni noche ¡sino tú y yo!” (II, 5; p. 151). And on her way to execution Sor Carmen reminds Mariana that it is her earthly love which has earned her an immortal life: “Porque has amado mucho, Dios te abrirá su puerta” (III, 9; p. 210). Recalling García Lorca’s measured project to incarnate his vision of “la Mariana amante”, it is therefore only appropriate for Mariana to pronounce her own epitaph

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<sup>83</sup> “García Lorca dejaba constancia, una vez más, de que sólo el amor hace olvidar al hombre su angustia existencial, la agonía causada por el transcurso inminente del tiempo” Zardoya, “Mariana Pineda: Romance trágico...”, p. 485.

in terms of the love that motivated her, and that could not be in material form, with her final declaration “¡Amor, amor, amor, y eternas soledades!” (III, 9; 211).

### *2.10 Conclusion: the problem of identity*

En route to New York in June 1929, García Lorca wrote to his friend the Chilean diplomat, Carlos Morla Lynch, of his anxieties and melancholic spirits: “Me mira el espejo [...] y no me reconozco. Parezco otro Federico”. The poet’s tendency towards depression, as much as elation has been widely testified to and commented on by his friends and critics alike.<sup>84</sup> The predicament of identity expressed by García Lorca in his letter reappears during his stay in New York in the well-known line, “tropezando con mi rostro distinto de cada día”, from his poem “Vuelta de paseo”.

In several key ways, Mariana Pineda also addresses the poet’s struggle with the problem of essentialised, subjective identity. On one level, the play engages in the modernist crisis in the classic dialectic of body and soul. In his attempt to materialise and vitalise his vision of Mariana on the stage, García Lorca finds no alternative but to illuminate a static representation, his *estampas*. The immortal image of Mariana is the only Mariana that exists, what her essence, her soul, has exteriorised. It has eclipsed her corporeal form. In this sense García Lorca anticipates the supposition of late Modernism, that of de-essentialised identity, where what was once considered an internally-housed essence of being or soul, is reconfigured as the surface of the body. Amongst the stratagems García Lorca employs to communicate his engagement with the problem of the mutability of identity are: (i) the presentation of Mariana as belonging to the realm of the immaterial and dream; (ii) the removal of the physical, or the erasure of the Self, as symbolised by the metaphor of

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<sup>84</sup> An excellent illustration is Luis García Montero’s essay “La vitalidad y la tragedia”, which thoughtfully discusses this *desdoblamiento* in García Lorca’s character. In the exhibition catalogue Federico García Lorca (1898 – 1936), (Madrid: Tf. Editores, 1998), pp. 47-53.

blanching/bleeding; (iii) the collapse of the corporal boundary of identity through the symbolic devices of penetration and separation. Out of the “mil Marianas” that confronted the poet when he undertook to write his drama, the Mariana that García Lorca created emerges as Mariana, the icon of Love.

When, in 1923, García Lorca told Fernández Almagro that his Mariana Pineda “está más cerca del madrigal que de la oda” it demonstrated that for the poet Mariana was not the historically-specific figure with political significance on the national stage, who might be exalted in an ode, but rather a timeless sign of pure Love, referred to in the sphere of popular and secular love poetry such as the madrigal. Meanwhile, in a letter written in the summer of 1923 to José de Ciria y Escalante and Melchor Fernández Almagro, García Lorca described the verse he was working on at that time, contemporary to Mariana Pineda, as “estático y sonámbulo”. In this “El jardín de las toronjas de luna”, a sub-section of which is titled “Estampas del jardín”, the poet envisions “el jardín de las posibilidades, el jardín de lo que no es, pero pudo (y a veces) debió haber sido, el jardín de las teorías que pasaron sin ser vistas y de los niños que no han nacido”. García Lorca’s Mariana Pineda is similarly a conception of the Mariana de Pineda who “debió haber sido”, the Mariana who did not come into being, but rather was the Mariana the poet believed in as the Mariana who transmuted herself and her earthly passion into the immortal representation of transcendental Love.

The following chapter describes how the poet takes characters drawn from a different type of printed material, a popular form of cartoon strip, and reinvents these figures. He fleshes the sketches out and animates them into a compact rehearsal of his primary dialectic of the soul and the body. As a result, García Lorca re-imagines the ridiculed protagonist of Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín as a truly honourable martyr to Love in the mould of his Mariana.

## Chapter Three:

### The sacrifice of identity in Amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín

#### 3.1 *Some parameters*

Although Mariana Pineda brought the poet's first commercial success, García Lorca did not then adopt the model of the historical verse drama as an effective strategy for his theatrical work. Instead, the poet appeared to return to his roots of (puppet) farce in the subsequent years of 1925-26 with two forays into comic absurdity: La zapatera prodigiosa and the one-act Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín. But while the happy ending of the former is clear – the doubt-ridden shoemaker returns to his loving and faithful wife –, the latter presents a much more ambiguous picture, in terms of style, content and its position along the trajectory of García Lorca's theatre output.

Margarita Ucelay has characterised Amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín as “[un] escalón de acceso al mundo de sus comedias imposibles”.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, Luis Fernández Cifuentes notes that Perlimplín distinguishes itself from La zapatera prodigiosa, and the puppet farces of Don Cristóbal, by initiating one of two divergent paths in García Lorca's theatre, marking off the “‘irrepresentable’” from the “convencional”.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Enric Bou summarises the critical interpretation of Perlimplín when he says: “parece cerrar un ciclo de lo folclórico y

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<sup>1</sup> Margarita Ucelay, “Introducción”, in Federico García Lorca, Amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín, ed. Margarita Ucelay, (Madrid: Cátedra, 1990), p. 183. All references to the play are from this edition and are included in the body of the text.

<sup>2</sup> Luis Fernández Cifuentes, García Lorca en el teatro: la norma y la diferencia, (Zaragoza: University of Zaragoza, 1986), p. 116. Ever since García Lorca chose Perlimplín to play alongside La zapatera prodigiosa in the 1933 gala performance staged by Pura de Maortua de Ucelay's Club Teatral Anfístora, critics such as Fernández Cifuentes and Pura Ucelay's daughter have interested themselves in the relationship, complementary or contrasting, between the two human (as opposed to puppet) farces. See Fernández Cifuentes, García Lorca en el teatro, p. 115 and his note 29.

abre las puertas [...] a un teatro de ideas y poético”.<sup>3</sup> Such claims for the central importance of the piece must challenge the sidelining of *Perlimplín* as a lesser work of García Lorca, and question its being passed over in favour of the more substantial, ‘heavyweight’ dramas.<sup>4</sup>

Despite his selection of *Perlimplín* as his favourite work,<sup>5</sup> the poet himself may have encouraged the marginalisation of the play, given the relatively few references he made to the piece.<sup>6</sup> Contributing to its lesser profile, *Perlimplín* is amongst the most under-performed of Lorca’s theatre works. The false start the play received in 1929 when its premiere was cancelled in unfortunate circumstances, and the subsequent four-year hiatus before a revival was attempted, could be viewed as a discouraging heritage on which to attempt new productions.<sup>7</sup> Certainly,

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<sup>3</sup> Enric Bou, “Rastros de un rostro: Aspectos visuales de *Don Perlimplín*”, in *Federico García Lorca: clásico moderno, 1898-1998*, co-ords. Andrés Soria Olmedo, María José Sánchez Montes and Juan Varo Zafra, (Granada: Diputación de Granada, 2000), pp. 77-93, esp. p. 80.

<sup>4</sup> We refer here strictly in terms of *Perlimplín*’s comparative brevity and volume. Margarita Ucelay, in her introduction to the play, brushes aside any doubts as to the work’s importance, preferring to judge its quality than size. She describes the piece as “una creación clave” in García Lorca’s work and “una auténtica joya de nuestra literatura”, Margarita Ucelay, “Introducción”, in Federico García Lorca, *Amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín*, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Interviewed in 1935, the poet confesses “si me pregunta usted qué obra mía me gusta más, le diré que es una obra pequeña que por su lirismo verdadero ninguna compañía profesional se atreve a poner y que se llama *Amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín*”. “García Lorca ante el teatro. Sus recuerdos de Buenos Aires” in Federico García Lorca, *Obras VI. Prosa 1*, ed. Miguel García-Posada, (Madrid: Akal, 1994), p. 678.

<sup>6</sup> As Fernández Cifuentes points out, adding that only the ill-fated *El maleficio de la mariposa* was so disregarded by the poet.

<sup>7</sup> The play was to have been premiered in 1929 by Cipriano Rivas Cherif’s experimental theatre group “El Caracol”. Unhappily the opening coincided with the death of Queen María Cristina and all theatres were ordered closed for a period of mourning. Further to this, the play’s first outing was then completely derailed by Primo de Rivera’s censor who closed down the company’s theatre and confiscated the production script. The given reason was that *Perlimplín* presented “un ultraje del ejército español”. As Margarita Ucelay explains, the part of *Perlimplín*, the cuckolded husband, was to have been played by an amateur actor who was also an army officer. Whatever the reason, the combination of the theatre company’s choice of controversial subject matter with the sensibilities of an extreme right-wing and Catholic dictatorship made sure the play’s staging would be postponed for four years until, in more politically favourable times, the script was rescued by Anfistora’s founder, Pura Ucelay. At the instigation of the poet, she succeeded in obtaining a copy of the original production’s manuscript from the censor’s archive of ‘obscene’ material. (See Margarita Ucelay’s chronicling of the play’s history, “Introducción”, pp. 127-180).



over the last seventy years the play has attracted few companies to mount a production.<sup>8</sup> Margarita Ucelay suggests that the play, at least in its earlier years, would have posed considerable difficulties for a professional company. Principally, she points out the problems of the 'taboo' subject of the cuckolded man, the financial expenditure on settings and costume changes for a piece too short to stage on its own, and the elaborate, time-consuming nature of the scenographic changes.<sup>9</sup>

García Lorca also recognised how difficult his play was to stage, but for reasons more philosophical than practical. Interviewed in 1935, and referring directly to Perlimplín, its author laments a lack of courage on the part of theatre professionals: "El poeta dramático tiene obras detrás de cada esquina. Lo que pasa es que nadie se atreve a tirar de los hilos difíciles, porque el hombre teme a verse retratado en el teatro".<sup>10</sup> The poet's comment provides good grounds on which to link Perlimplín with the plays he elsewhere labelled "irrepresentables". The positioning of Perlimplín as precursor to García Lorca's so-called impossible theatre implied by literary critics such as Fernández Cifuentes and Bou also seems justified. However, their contradistinction of the piece from García Lorca's early farces and more 'conventional' dramas suggests a false sense of bifurcating development in the poet's theatre work and progression along two distinct paths. The notion of this play marking a point of stylistic divergence may be seductive, but, as I hope to make clear in this chapter, Perlimplín contains a number of features as common to the earliest dramas and farces as to the later 'conventional' tragedies and to the experimental works.

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<sup>8</sup> Research undertaken by the Grupo de Investigación de Teoría de la Literatura y Sus Aplicaciones at the University of Granada, led by Antonio Sánchez Trigueros, and presented during the centenary year of 1998, examines a whole range of Spanish and foreign productions of García Lorca's theatre since the 1950s. There is but one solitary reference to a production of Amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín, that staged by Bruno Maderna during the 1998 Festival Internacional de Música y Danza de Granada. See "El teatro de Federico García Lorca y su puesta en escena", Grupo de Investigación de Teoría de la Literatura y Sus Aplicaciones, University of Granada in Federico García Lorca: clásico moderno, pp. 254-295.

<sup>9</sup> See Margarita Ucelay, "Federico García Lorca y el Club Teatral Anfistora: el dramaturgo como director de escena" in Lecciones sobre Federico García Lorca: Granada, Mayo de 1986, ed. Andrés Soria Olmedo, (Granada: Comisión Nacional del Cincuentenario, 1986), p. 52.

<sup>10</sup> "García Lorca ante el teatro. Sus recuerdos de Buenos Aires", p. 679.

It may be more appropriate to consider Perlimplín as a lynchpin in the canon of García Lorca's work, unifying themes common to all of the poet's creative writings and presenting them in an experimental Lorcan synthesis of established theatrical forms. The objective of this chapter is to elucidate how the poet achieves such a creative fusion in Perlimplín, and to do so we will first define the terms of enquiry. Above all, the play condenses and crystallises several philosophical notions that motivate and sustain the drive of the poet's theatre: García Lorca contends in his theatre that human existence can be understood as a procession of contingent identities moving relentlessly through time towards transcendence of physical form through Love or death. Also, the experimental nature of the play should be judged not in content, performance or spectacle, but in terms of how it succeeds in drawing on established forms of theatrical art, elaborating, developing and, finally, transcending these forms to produce an unexpected, new form. This new form evolves through a theatre that is self-consciously aware of its own theatricality, in other words a metatheatre. Lastly, it is possible to distinguish a convergence of style and content: the philosophical concerns of the poet, as outlined above, are mirrored in the crafting of a new theatre that transcends established forms.

### *3.2 The play in relation to García Lorca's other theatre works*

As a first step, let us examine the points at which Perlimplín converges with other García Lorca dramas. Foremost, there is the issue of the play's subtitle, *aleluya erótica*. With the exception of Bodas de sangre, classified in appropriate theatrical terms as *tragedia*, it is characteristic of García Lorca to apply more unorthodox designations to his plays. Undoubtedly a dramatic tragedy, Yerma is described as *poema trágico*, blurring the distinction between play and poem, between spoken language and lyricism. La zapatera prodigiosa bears the alarming appellation of *farsa violenta*. Elaborating on the central motif – the *rosa mutabilis* – García Lorca styles the play Doña Rosita la soltera o el lenguaje de las flores as *poema granadino dividido en varios*

*jardines*. Así que pasen cinco años is dubbed *leyenda del tiempo*, adding an epic resonance. In contrast, El público's plunge into a bewildering vortex is merely labelled *drama*.

As Margarita Ucelay has chronicled, Perlimplín's designation, the *aleluya*, was a type of popular cartoon strip, principally enjoyed by, though not aimed at, children, and often sold at fairs and markets.<sup>11</sup> Originating in the eighteenth century as paper prints of holy images, the *aleluya* developed into a cartoon strip, occasionally recounting the lives of saints, but more often popular stories with a range of standard heroes. The figure of don Perlimplín as a protagonist in these cartoons first emerged in the mid-nineteenth century. This popular amusement with its series of printed images offers a connection to other Lorcan dramas such as the 'prints' of Mariana Pineda, which the poet subtitled *Romance popular en tres "estampas"* (my highlighting).<sup>12</sup> It is worth recalling that a month or so after sending him a section of Perlimplín, García Lorca mentions in another letter to Melchor Fernández Almagro that he is thinking of writing a piece whose characters would be "ampliaciones fotográficas"<sup>13</sup>. This curious phrase of the poet's could suggest a 'developing' of the character and scenario of the *aleluya* Perlimplín, mimicking the process of photographic development. The broadening of two-dimensional images, we might say deepening, and hence extrapolating a drama from the three-dimensional scenarios and fleshed-out characters, ought to be considered a favourite

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<sup>11</sup> See Margarita Ucelay, "Introducción", pp. 13-17. Faithful to the derivative doggerel and octosyllabic distich of the *aleluya*, the title, *Amor de Don Perlimplín/ con Belisa en su jardín*, is a clear indicator of the work's pedigree. The poet's addition to the subtitle of the adjective "*erótica*" indicates an elevation of don Perlimplín's tale from the level of children's strip-cartoon to the more serious and more adult terrain of love.

<sup>12</sup> The *estampa* or print/engraving, something which sought to reproduce an image, was a popular and widespread decorative art form in García Lorca's time, at the very least on a par with the photograph. See the *estampas* of Granada, produced on wood, by Hermenegildo Lanz, García Lorca's friend and puppet play set designer from 1928. In the catalogue Federico García Lorca (1898 – 1936), (Madrid: Tf. Editores, 1998), p. 114.

<sup>13</sup> Margarita Ucelay has noted this comment in her "Introducción", p. 133.

theatrical device of the poet.<sup>14</sup> The strategy is clearly present from his earliest works: the theatrical *tableau* of Retablillo de Don Cristóbal is indebted to an original plastic image, as is García Lorca's final completed work, La casa de Bernarda Alba, which the poet felt necessary to qualify as "un documental fotográfico". Enric Bou has drawn a parallel between Luis Buñuel's film theory of "découpage" or "creación por segmentación" and García Lorca's technique of drama as sequencing a series of fleshed-out two-dimensional images.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Ana María Gómez Torres connects the film theory of "montaje ideológico" with García Lorca's film script, Viaje a la luna, and with the fragmentary composition of El público.<sup>16</sup>

The subtitle, *aleluya erótica*, is an uncomfortable juxtaposition in terms, as Margarita Ucelay has emphasised. Nevertheless the poet's reinterpretation of the *aleluya* as erotic points to the fundamental theme of this work: "si el erotismo por tradición había sido un elemento ajeno al mundo de la aleluya, su presencia aquí nos está indicando la clave poética de la obra".<sup>17</sup> The erotic or love element places the play in familiar Lorcan territory. If, traditionally, those *aleluyas* which featured don Perlimplín were styled "Historia de Don Perlimplín" or "Vida de Don Perlimplín", García Lorca's eventual substitution of "Historia" and "Vida" with the Lorcan "Amor" signifies the poet's absorption of a traditional form into his own preoccupation with Love.<sup>18</sup> In Amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín, an ageing bachelor is cajoled into

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<sup>14</sup> Typical of the *verbenas* or fairs, on the holidays of Saints Antonio, Juan and Pedro in the Madrid of the 1920s, were wooden boards painted with an amusing scene and often featuring stock comic characters. The boards had holes cut in them to allow people to substitute the figures' head with their own head and render the image more humorous still. A photograph would be taken while the people were in their pose as a memento of an amusing day out. It is pertinent to note García Lorca's obvious pleasure in this type of fairground amusement as can be seen in three photographs of the poet at various *verbenas* of that time. Accompanied by Santiago Ontañón, the designer and eponymous star of the Club Anfistora production of Perlimplín, in one example García Lorca is a diminutive 'husband' being scolded and roughly handled by his formidable 'wife'. Another has the poet as a gypsy girl dancing *al flamenco*. See the catalogue Federico García Lorca (1898 – 1936), pp. 159-161 and our discussion of the 'photographic drama', La casa de Bernarda Alba, in the final section of Chapter Six.

<sup>15</sup> Enric Bou, "Rastros de un rostro...", pp. 90-1.

<sup>16</sup> Ana M<sup>a</sup> Gómez Torres, "La destrucción o el teatro: El público de Lorca" in Le théâtre de l'impossible, *Hispanística XX*, (Dijon: Université de Bourgogne, 1999), pp. 37-8.

<sup>17</sup> Margarita Ucelay, "Introducción", p. 124.

<sup>18</sup> Two of the fragments of manuscript, studied by Ucelay, containing outlines and initial efforts by the poet, are titled "Casa de Don Perlimplín". It is not until the final fragment, the one sent to Melchor Fernández Almagro, that the poet refers to "Amor de Don Perlimplín".

marrying a beautiful, but vacuous, young girl. In an act of self-sacrifice, Perlimplín kills himself (and in doing so he also kills the dream lover he was pretending to be to the girl) thereby endowing the girl with the spiritual dimension of Love (for the impossible<sup>19</sup>) that her pure carnality lacked.

Time after time in García Lorca's theatre we find characters in thrall to an impossible love.<sup>20</sup> Mariana Pineda shields, protects and puts her life at risk (initially) for the undeserving Pedro, while rejecting the declarations of the young Fernando. The Mecnógrafa of Así que pasen cinco años is hopelessly in love with the Joven, who spends 'five years' devoted to an idealised image of the faithless Novia. The Novia of Bodas de sangre is swept along in the doomed madness of her love for Leonardo, spurning the love offered to her by the Novio. Similarly, Yerma cannot accept the love offered her by Víctor; instead her profound longing for a 'child' inside her, an inner Yerma, concludes with no hope for her fulfilment. Adela sacrifices her physical self for the Love of an invisible, and impossible, Pepe el Romano, while Martirio and the other sisters turn on themselves and each other, twisted and frustrated, in Bernarda Alba's sealed prison-tomb. Doña Rosita spends an agonising thirty years imprisoned in her *carmen* paradise by her commitment to the unconsummated, impossible love she bears for the emigré cousin who never sends for her. El público's Gonzalo sacrifices himself, transforming into the *pez luna* for his lover Enrique, and dies because his Love cannot detain the constantly shifting identity of Enrique; his Love is impossible because the physical object is illusory and elusive.

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<sup>19</sup> Ucelay shows us that Don Perlimplín's self-sacrifice also functions as a punishment for Belisa. Perlimplín's triumph is not only to endow the corporeal Belisa with a soul but to leave her loving that which is gone forever, the invisible Joven, and so now Belisa will comprehend what it is to love the impossible. See "Introducción", p. 202.

<sup>20</sup> The first of García Lorca's dramas to be staged, the unsuccessful El maleficio de la mariposa, is an early example of the tragedy of impossible love with the earth-bound Curianito el nene enamoured of an injured, fallen butterfly, who will eventually recover and fly away.

The impossible loves of García Lorca's theatre are inextricably bound up with the ritual of blood sacrifice and death.<sup>21</sup> The limit and boundary of the physical – the body – is pierced and collapsed, resulting in the transcendence of the material and the constitution of a metaphysical state of existence.<sup>22</sup> García Lorca suggests this transcendence through, above all, the images of whiteness, in the sense of a process where the colours of physical existence bleed away, life dissolves and the sacrifice leads to a pure metaphysical notion of Love. The process reaches its conclusion and is demonstrable in the final act of many of the poet's dramas. Mariana Pineda's evolution is conceptualised in the gradual blanching of her skin and the progressive substitution of a pastel-coloured dress for, first, a paler one, then, a white one. Mariana's physical presence vanishes as she ascends to the spiritual state of martyr for Love. The walls of the eponymous house of Bernarda Alba are distinguished by their whitewashed quality. It begins with the blinding intensity of the first act, "*habitación blanquísima del interior de la casa*" (I, p. 308), and fades to the night-tinged inner patio of the house, with its "*cuatro paredes blancas ligeramente azuladas*" (III, 378).<sup>23</sup> Adela, the sacrificial victim of Bernarda's repression on the cross of impossible love, resists the descending gloom in the house: "¡No quiero perder mi blancura en estas habitaciones!" (I, p. 335). The same darkness is also filled by the cold, bloodthirsty Luna of the third act of *Bodas de sangre*. The young woodcutter/moon seeks to drain the blood of mortal bodies to warm and colour the whiteness of his face. His cold light reaches into every nook and cranny ("mis rayos han de entrar en todas partes" III, p. 391)

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<sup>21</sup> As Miguel García-Posada has noted, "en la concepción de Lorca, el amor total es una ilusión imposible, un ansia inalcanzable". Perlimplín introduces Belisa to this tragic fact of "una imposibilidad sólo conseguible – valga la paradoja – mediante la renunciación, el sacrificio", "Introducción", p. 50.

<sup>22</sup> See the conclusion of this chapter for a restating of these terms. David Johnston sees the ritual of Perlimplín's sacrifice as emblematic of García Lorca's theatre: "all of Lorca's work is full of the love of ritual as an element of theatre... and of the sense that human beings are sacrificial victims, sin-offerings on the altar of the forces of control and death". "Introduction" in Federico García Lorca, *Yerma & The Love of Don Perlimplín for Belisa in the Garden*, tr. D. Johnston, (London, Sydney, Auckland, Toronto: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> For the text of García Lorca's dramas, other than *Perlimplín*, which for the purposes of this chapter we use the Ucelay edition, We refer to García-Posada's edition of the poet's collected works, *Teatro 1, 2 & 3*, Vols. III, IV & V, Madrid, Akal, 1996 & 1992. All page and act numbers are included after the quotations.

searching for the life-force of those who must sacrifice the bodily boundaries of their love.<sup>24</sup> The physical passion of Leonardo and the Novio provides the flat, lifeless disc of the moon with the depth and interiority it lacks, their blood, symbolising a spiritual, metaphysical dimension of Love (as opposed to carnal desire), a Love which needs transcend its flesh-constrained vessels.<sup>25</sup> The cold, blue-white, death-bringing light of the moon returns, in the last act of El público, in the form of the white snow, which is conjured up by the Prestidigitador in his long, white cape, a snow which chills the Director and his Criado into a death-sleep. Their final words are echoed by voices *off*, suggesting through the disembodied speech a further transmutation, in this drama of incessant transformations, from the physical to the celestial; the theatre opens up to “*el cielo de nubes largas, vivamente iluminado*” (V, p. 157). The three Jugadores (de cartas) of the final scene of Así que pasen cinco años arrive dressed in floor-length, white capes, identical to that of El público’s Prestidigitador. They come to play against the Joven, who is in the same position as their previous opponent, a boy in Venice, “pálido, tan pálido que en la última jugada ya no tenía más remedio que echar el as de coeur. Un corazón suyo lleno de sangre” (IV, p. 264). Dealers of death, the Jugadores force the Joven to surrender his “as de coeur”, symbolising the organ responsible for circulating blood around the body. As the Joven’s ace of hearts is penetrated by a dart fired by one of the card players, he passes from the corporeal to the discarnate, a transcendence suggested by the Echo, which emptily repeats his final phrases, like the voices *off* in El público. We also recall, in Cristo, García Lorca’s stage incarnation of Christ who is dressed in a white tunic, has white hands and ‘clear’ eyes. In fact, Jesús’s physical appearance corresponds significantly to that of the angel Gabriel, a heavenly being, who is covered in luminosity: brilliant white robe, silver sandals, golden hair and hands like ‘snow’. The figure of Jesús has an ever-present faraway look in his eyes, gazing into the sky, blinding him to Esther’s

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<sup>24</sup> The intense blue-white light of the Luna recalls the white patio walls, tinged blue by the moonlight, in La casa de Bernarda Alba, as well as the extreme paleness of the white-clad Mariana Pineda.

<sup>25</sup> The same division between Love and desire García Lorca signalled in his Poeta en Nueva York. See “Oda a Walt Whitman” for a rehearsal of this distinction: “Puede el hombre, si quiere, conducir su deseo/ por vena de coral o celeste desnudo”, where “vena de coral” reads as physical desire, and “celeste desnudo” as a perfect Love. Poesía, 2, Obras II, ed. García-Posada, Madrid, Akal, 1994, p. 298.

devotion<sup>26</sup>. Jesús appears to be no more than one of the 'white shadows' his father José perceives in the early dawn light.

It is of some interest, given García Lorca's widespread use of whiteness as a device representing spiritual transcendence of the body, to see how the technique is applied in Perlimplín. Before Belisa appears on stage in the prologue/ first *cuadro*, Marcolfa refers to her as "la blanca Belisa" (I, p. 255). Subsequently, Belisa confesses to Perlimplín that the Joven writes that he is not interested in her soul "¡sino tu blanco y mórbido cuerpo estremecido!" (III, p. 278). Similarly, Belisa's song in the garden, as she waits for her young man to come to her, speaks of her "muslos blancos" (IV, p. 284). The whiteness of Belisa's body is not representative, in the same sense as it is in the case of Mariana Pineda or Cristo, of a gradual negation of physicality in favour of a spiritual form of existence. Rather, Belisa's white appearance reveals her as an empty shell, a surface with no depth, which García Lorca portrays so vividly in El público. The latter 'impossible' drama presents us with the trope of the statue, that is an integral and impermeable surface with no interior dimension. Among the many representations of the statue, we can distinguish the *Figura de pámpanos* as a white, plaster nude; Elena's white, plaster feet and the Emperador's 'classically' white hands; the Pastor Bobo's white *caretas*; the smooth, white face of the *Traje de pijama*, "como un huevo de avestruz" (III, p. 123), and the white harlequin costume. Like the Luna of Bodas de sangre, Belisa lacks the life-constituting blood, symbolising the body's interior depth, the inner existence that is depicted in philosophical terms as the soul. Instead, Belisa is described by her mother as sugar-white on the inside: "si la vieses por dentro... ¡Como de azúcar!" (I, p. 257). This description of Belisa is noted by Perlimplín a few moments later as he muses with the servant Marcolfa on the betrothal: "¡Como de azúcar!... blanca por dentro" (I, p. 259). Perlimplín's self-sacrifice will provide Belisa's vacant body with

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<sup>26</sup> The first of the manuscript fragments which trace the poet's development of his Perlimplín, and which Ucelay has examined in her study, a prose meditation on the "Teatro de aléluas", is interesting in that it provides us with some indication of the dramatic effect he wished to achieve with Perlimplín. The fragment also recalls his stage creation Jesús in his air of distraction with something distant and heavenly: the story of Perlimplín and Belisa "no tiene que tener emoción humana sino una emoción [astral y] lejanísima y petrificada", "Introducción", p. 37.



the life-blood it needs and constitute a new existence with body and soul united: “Belisa, ya eres otra mujer. Estás vestida por la sangre gloriosísima de mi señor” (IV, p. 288). As Belisa is portrayed in two-dimensional terms like an empty shell of a body, so Perlimplín correspondingly is represented in the play in terms of his sole function: the spiritual. These terms are clearly defined by Perlimplín: “¿Entiendes?... Yo soy mi alma y tú eres tu cuerpo” (IV, p. 287). Even when Perlimplín assumes another identity, his function is single-faceted: covered completely by an “*inmensa*” red cape (IV, p. 287), he represents the blood, the soul, which, when spilt, will give Belisa’s body a spiritual dimension to its existence. Perlimplín transforms himself into a young man, whom his own love-object, Belisa, most desires, and, simultaneously, into that which she most lacks: an experience of Love in its purely spiritual form.<sup>27</sup>

The movement between the physical/earthly and the transcendental/otherworldly is especially clear during the second scene with the intervention of the Duendes. Appearing on Perlimplín and Belisa’s wedding night, these “spirits of the house”<sup>28</sup> pull a grey curtain across the stage in order to “*tapar las faltas ajenas*” (II, p. 265). The theatre acquires a dusky light and “*dulce tono de sueño*” (II, p. 265), strongly suggesting a move from one level of reality to another.<sup>29</sup> For Enric Bou, the duende episode is “[una] instancia de desdoblamiento y de superposición de realidades”, as well as being an interruption to the temporal flow of the play.<sup>30</sup> Such a hiatus in

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<sup>27</sup> Belisa comes to this realisation at the end of the final *cuadro*: “le quiero, le quiero con toda la fuerza de mi carne y de mi alma” (IV, 289). We note as well that, with Perlimplín’s death, “*la escena adquiere luz mágica*”, and Belisa is now “*en otro mundo*” (IV, 288). Her life develops a spiritual proportion, suggested by the otherworldly atmosphere of the final moments of the play.

<sup>28</sup> As David Johnston explains, the *duende*, meaning “don de (la casa)”, is “a puckish creature capable of intervention in human affairs. On one hand, duendes appear frequently in the sort of comic strip stories which underpin Lorca’s dramatisation of the story of Perlimplín and Belisa. On the other, as spirits of the house [...] they remind us [...] that human life is circumscribed by mystery”, “Introduction”, p. 112, note 8.

<sup>29</sup> Luis Fernández Cifuentes draws our attention to the ambiguous location of the Duendes. Neither in the action of the play, nor in the audience the Duendes inhabit a place that is “borroso, provisionalmente indefinible”, *García Lorca en el teatro*, p. 123. The Duendes are figures that simultaneously interface with the audience and the stage characters, in other words between reality and theatrical illusion. In this sense they are important go-betweens between what is grounded in earthly reality and the otherworldly realm beyond the physical.

<sup>30</sup> Enric Bou, “Rastros de un rostro...”, pp. 87-8.

the linear progression of the action provides Bou with evidence to link Perlimplín to García Lorca's experimental theatre works such as El público and Así que pasen cinco años in terms of the action's fragmented trajectory. Equally, the poet's stipulation that the Duendes "*deben ser dos niños*" (II, p. 265) makes a connection with García Lorca's more conventional dramas. In Mariana Pineda, for example, the poet uses a chorus of children, who sing the popular Granadine children's rhyme remembering Mariana's sacrifice.<sup>31</sup> During the course of the drama, two episodes stand out as almost Greek chorus-style interventions in the action. Functioning similarly to the Duendes of Perlimplín, the young Novicias of the convent of Santa María Egipcíaca, in the first scene of the third *estampa*, provide commentary and reflection on the action of the play, but from a distance.<sup>32</sup> The childlike innocence and ingenuousness, yet the truth, of their comments, is the source of some humour.<sup>33</sup> Much the same can be said about the washerwomen scene in Yerma, which offers gossip and opinion on Yerma's situation, in terms of its function as commentary on and humorous interlude in the development of the play's narrative.<sup>34</sup> Like the Duendes, the washerwomen have no direct bearing on the course of events; they are distanced from the main action. Furthermore, the comic and childish tone of their squabbling interrupts the intensity of Yerma's unfolding tragedy, allowing the audience to establish some perspective.

Child actors play the Duendes of Perlimplín. The perspective of the Niño in La zapatera prodigiosa allows the shoemaker's wife some release from the constant vigilance and enclosure

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<sup>31</sup> The children's chorus also works as a framing device for the piece, coming at the beginning and end of the drama, and operates to provide historical distancing of the story.

<sup>32</sup> Spying through the keyhole on an unseen Mariana, the Novicias exchange information and pass comment on her predicament: "¿Qué es lo que ha hecho?" / "Bordó una bandera" / "¿Bordar es malo?" [...] / "¿Por qué está presa?" / "Porque no quiere al Rey" / "¿Qué más da? ¿Se habrá visto?" / "¡Ni a la Reina!" / "Yo tampoco los quiero" (III, 1; pp. 183-4). This two-handed exchange matches that of the Duendes for its childish, gossipy tone.

<sup>33</sup> The scene with Clavela, the maid, and Mariana's children, in the second *estampa*, has a related function. The popular ballad that the children persuade Clavela to recite for them tells of a woman embroidering a flag for the nobleman she loves and, as such, closely parallels Mariana's situation.

<sup>34</sup> Witness, as example, the sassy exchange between Lavanderas 1ª and 2ª: "Él tiene la culpa; él: cuando un padre no da hijos debe cuidar de su mujer." / "La culpa es de ella que tiene por lengua un pedernal." / "¿Qué demonio se te ha metido entre los cabellos para que hables así?" / "¿Y quién ha dado licencia a tu boca para que me des consejos?" (II, 1; p. 450).

of her neighbours and the village folk. The Niño is her only friend, bringing her messages and keeping her abreast of village gossip concerning her, while providing her with a diversion from her predicament with his innocent remarks and butterfly chasing.<sup>35</sup> The function of the Niño is to transcend the prison of gossip and lies in which the Zapatera finds herself, provide truthful commentary, and relieve with humour and affection the Zapatera's unhappy existence. In La casa de Bernarda Alba, María Josefa serves in similar childlike fashion. She does not fall under Bernarda's tyrannical control, being a free spirit who is locked in her room to prevent her contaminating the repressive atmosphere of Bernarda's world. She moves outside of and speaks against Bernarda's imposed reality.<sup>36</sup> The old woman in bridal white starkly contrasts with the mourning black of the others, the whiteness connecting her with other Lorcan figures that inhabit a metaphysical plane: the angel Gabriel of Cristo; the Luna of Bodas de sangre; and the Prestidigitador of El público. Like the Niño of La zapatera prodigiosa, the Novicias of Mariana Pineda and the Duendes of Perlimplín, María Josefa's interruptions of Bernarda's realm have a childlike quality and ingenuousness about them that is, at the same time, pointedly truthful.<sup>37</sup> She alone speaks openly of the sexual desire that torments all the women under Bernarda's regime.<sup>38</sup> Bernarda, unable to contain María Josefa in her spatial and verbal transgressions, prefers to dismiss what she chooses not to understand as the ramblings of a madwoman. Rather than being an indication of his coming experimental theatre, as Bou would suggest, the Duendes

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<sup>35</sup> The short scene at the end of Act I finds the Zapatera visited by the Niño. Wondering where her husband has got to, and unaware that he has left her, the Zapatera finds herself caught up in the Niño's game of butterfly chasing. It is only when they stop chasing that the Niño informs the Zapatera of what the whole village already knows, that her husband has gone. The incident of the butterfly chase recalls the plight of Curianito el nene, the ground-beetle in love with, and pursuing, the elusive white Mariposa. Both episodes are suggestive of the vain pursuit of an impossible love.

<sup>36</sup> At the end of the first act, María Josefa literally escapes from the Criada ("¡Se me escapó!" I, p. 338) and invades the stage. Protesting that she wants to go to the shores of the sea and there marry some man, "ya que aquí los hombres huyen de las mujeres" (I, p. 338), María Josefa refuses to be silenced, "No, no callo" (I, p. 339). she has to be dragged off by the others and locked up again, "¡Encerradla!" (I, p. 339).

<sup>37</sup> Childishly, María Josefa wants to keep all her finery for herself, but her reasoning for do so smacks of the truth in its prediction that none of Bernarda's daughters will get married: "Nada de lo que tengo quiero que sea para vosotras: ni mis anillos ni mi traje negro de moaré. Ninguna de vosotras se va a casar" (I, 338). Later, María Josefa indulges in childlike name-calling of Bernarda and Magdalena: "Bernarda, cara de leoparda. Magdalena, cara de hiena" (III, p. 396), the names amusingly spiteful as they are true reflections of the two women's characters.

<sup>38</sup> She points to the fact that all the daughters are consumed by an overwhelming desire for someone, something, larger than their physical lives: "Pepe el Romano es un gigante. Todas lo queréis" (III, p. 396).

of Perlimplín fit comfortably into the entire canon of García Lorca's work, in which the irruptions of the metaphysical into the physical world, of mischievous sprites into the unfolding action of the drama, recur in various guises.<sup>39</sup>

### *3.3 Don Perlimplín: a man of no substance*

#### **3.3.1 Duality**

We proposed above that Perlimplín might be seen as encapsulating the problems of moral science fundamental to the poet's work. The key to the concerns García Lorca raises in his theatre is the problematisation of the Cartesian subject – the post-Enlightenment notion of discrete identity constituting itself through reason and free will. In Perlimplín, we have a sharply focussed discourse on the constitution of human identity and its dependence on the dialectic of the physical and the metaphysical, as represented by the trope of the body and its soul. García Lorca was writing in the early part of the twentieth century, during a time when modernist thinkers were either still grappling with the depth model of existence (the inner life of the soul and the outer existence of the physical), or with the *angst* and alienation consequent on the rejection of the spiritual<sup>40</sup>. Modernist thinkers still viewed the human being as constitutive, a rational and voluntarist subject, with individual identity dependent on the tension of outer and inner space differentiating the Self from the Other. Culture and moral science were moving towards the late-modern deconstruction of the human subject, questioning the notion of an inner essence that fixes identity. García Lorca, in his theatre above all, engaged with the questions

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<sup>39</sup> Perhaps this is one of the aspects of experimentation that Enric Bou is thinking of when he sees such as “una de las características definitorias del teatro lorquiano”, “Rastros de un rostro...”, p. 78. Other examples of impish interventions in Lorcan dramas might be the *Gusanos de luz* in El maleficio de la mariposa, and the three *Manolas* of Doña Rosita la soltera.

<sup>40</sup> For some discussion on the movement from the modern to the post-modern thinking on identity, see Jonathan Dollimore's sub-chapter “Decentred Subjectivity and the Post-modern” in his Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 70-2.

that this destabilising of identity posed.<sup>41</sup> Fundamental to the construction of identity is the sexed and gendered body, and how it sustains itself through the counterpointing of notions that have both physical and metaphysical values (such as the opposition of strength and weakness) ascribed according to sex and gender. García Lorca deals with these issues through his characterisation of Perlimplín and Belisa. It has been our proposition in this chapter to detail how García Lorca with broad strokes and primary colours in his *aleluya erótica* queries the late-modern undermining of human identity. Whilst doing so, we would keep to the fore the contention, which we believe the poet lays out in his theatre, of human existence understood as a procession of provisional forms of identity only discontinued by transcendence of the physical through death to Love. However, we propose an anticipation in the poet of late-modern concerns, of the artifice of existence, identity's constructions and self-referentiality. There is a fundamental recognition in the work of García Lorca of the shift, in philosophical terms, from a modernist crisis over the hidden depth of the soul, onto a late-modern dissolution of meaning and truth in the field of representation. This late-modern fascination with representation and artifice is, for the poet, intuitively the territory of theatre.

As Margarita Ucelay has shown, the debt Perlimplín owes to puppet theatre is particularly evident in the two-hand playing of the action.<sup>42</sup> This in mind, we will examine the many oppositions that form the philosophical nexus of the play through a detailed investigation of the

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<sup>41</sup> Paul Julian Smith cites a recent introductory study of Spanish culture that describes García Lorca as “the paradigmatic Spanish modernist”. The Theatre of García Lorca: Text, Performance, Psychoanalysis, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 14.

<sup>42</sup> Ucelay highlights the fact that at no time in Perlimplín is there dialogue between more than two players. In the prologue, Marcolfa instructs Perlimplín, and Perlimplín speaks with Belisa first then her mother. The dialogue does not become three-sided. Likewise, at the end of the final scene, Marcolfa only takes part in the dialogue when Perlimplín has expired. Ucelay sees the restriction of the dialogue to two speakers at any given time as a necessary feature of the glove-puppet (*guiñol*) drama, the puppeteer only having two hands. The conclusion is that Perlimplín was structured according to the requirements of such theatre.

poet's characterisation of Perlimplín and Belisa.<sup>43</sup> The dualisms we refer to are those which the Enlightenment depth model of identity installed as cultural systems: authenticity/artifice; truth/falsehood; depth/surface; essential self/mask; normal/abnormal.<sup>44</sup> We shall consider how these two characters represent on several levels the oppositions of the physical and the metaphysical, and of maleness and femaleness. These established, we hope to show the tactics of inversion and subversion that the poet employs in his animation of these dialectics as being concurrent with a late-modern outlook on identity.

### 3.3.2 The *monigote*

García Lorca's much-cited declaration to the *Heraldo de Madrid* on the night of Perlimplín's premiere in 1933 defines the piece as "Teatro de monigotes humanos, que empieza en burla y acaba en trágico".<sup>45</sup> His juxtaposition of two concepts in the phrase "monigotes humanos" expresses the essence of the play's drama as much as it illustrates the underlying philosophical concerns in his theatre work. A "monigote" is defined by the dictionary of the Real Academia as "persona ignorante y ruda, de ninguna representación ni valor; persona sin carácter, que se deja manejar por otros; muñeco o figura ridícula hecha de trapo o cosa semejante".<sup>46</sup> Further definition is provided by Perlimplín himself in the final scene of the play, as "monigote sin fuerzas" (IV, p. 287). All three elements of the dictionary's definition can readily be applied to Perlimplín, as we shall see. But, certainly, it is the impression of a figure lacking in substance,

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<sup>43</sup> We recollect that this is, as the title indicates, the drama of Don Perlimplín for Belisa. Ucelay notes the significance of García Lorca's decision to develop the title from *Historia de Perlimplín y Belisa en su jardín*, as it is in the version of the first manuscript fragment "Teatro de aleluyas", substituting the "y" with "con". The former puts the two protagonists on the same level of importance, the change to "con" asserts the primacy of Perlimplín ("Introducción", p. 45). Another significant aspect of the title is the construction "Amor...con". More usually "amores con", 'physical relations with', the poet's transplanting of metaphysical Love into this idiom has Love supplant carnal desire. We also note the poet's careful location of this "Amor...con" in Perlimplín's (and/or Belisa's) garden. This refers to the setting of the final scene's act of self-sacrifice, a fine expression of transcendent Love. Hence a close translation into English of the title might be "Don Perlimplín's Love for Belisa in his/her/their garden".

<sup>44</sup> We base this schematic on Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence*, p. 14-5.

<sup>45</sup> Federico García Lorca, *Obras VI: Prosa I*, ed. Miguel García-Posada, (Madrid: Akal, 1994), p. 529.

<sup>46</sup> Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*, XXI, Vol. 2, (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1992), pp. 1393-4.

in “fuerzas”, that is a basic quality communicated by the term “monigote”<sup>47</sup>. For its unexpected collocation with “monigote”, García Lorca’s qualifying adjective “humano” is therefore of great interest.

Trying to understand the significance of the poet’s choice of words, we should first recall the poet’s well-known statement to Felipe Morales, who interviewed him in 1936, that “El teatro es la poesía que se levanta del libro y se hace humana... El teatro necesita que los personajes que aparezcan en la escena lleven un traje de poesía y al mismo tiempo que se les vean, los huesos, la sangre”.<sup>48</sup> García Lorca’s suggestion is that the stage character should be the physical materialisation of the poetic story. The suggestion goes back to the poet’s vision of dramatic art, discussed earlier, as an animation of the two-dimensional, be that a plastic image or a written verse. By providing an interiority of bones and blood, the poet gives depth, a third dimension, to a flat surface representation. As with the significance of whitening in the poet’s dramas, García Lorca’s use of blood has a symbolic value representing the life-force or ‘soul’ of a human body. With all of this in mind, we might consider Fernández Cifuentes’s belief that with the humanising of the “monigote”, (in its literal dictionary-defined sense), “se añade una fuerza oculta, conciencia o dimensión inmaterial a la que se da el nombre de ‘alma’”.<sup>49</sup> Accordingly, the suggestion of “monigote humano” is of a being whose body is weak and flimsy, its physical existence tenuous and inconsequential, and, as a puppet, of it being directed by outside forces. Yet, the same being is animated by a spirit or soul that manifests itself through that being’s capacity for imagination, inspiration and passion.<sup>50</sup> García Lorca’s comment on Perlimplín

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<sup>47</sup> David Johnston chooses to translate “monigote sin fuerzas” as “a useless rag doll”, “Introduction”, p. 101.

<sup>48</sup> Federico García Lorca, *Obras VI, Prosa I*, p. 730.

<sup>49</sup> Fernández Cifuentes, *García Lorca en el teatro*, p. 129.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Margarita Ucelay’s research as to the possible origin of Perlimplín’s unusual name, the badge of his identity. There seems to be some conclusive evidence that the name derives from a French nonsense word, “perlimpinpin”, used by conjurers as a ‘magic’ invocation. The word turns up in the phrase “poudre de perlimpinpin”, which described a certain ‘magical’ powder used in the conjuror’s act. It is satisfying to note the deep connection Perlimplín has, through his name, to magical forces. “Introducción”, pp. 22-3.

referred to all of the play's characters as being "monigotes humanos"<sup>51</sup>, but, as Don Perlimplín has adopted the term "monigote" to describe himself, for the moment let us confine our assessment to the play's protagonist. We will look at, firstly, the ways in which the physical representation of Perlimplín characterises him as a "monigote", and, secondly, how Perlimplín's 'humanity', his soul, is manifested in the drama.

Ucelay's research on Perlimplín's origins in the mid-nineteenth century *aleluyas* notes that the physical appearance of the protagonist, be it of the *Historia* or *Vida de Don Perlimplín*, typically shows him as short, ugly, hunchbacked, and either snub-nosed or nasally well-endowed.<sup>52</sup> It is this figure with its grotesque body that García Lorca conjures up on the stage with his Perlimplín. In his initial stage direction, the poet indicates that Perlimplín should appear in a green frock coat and a white wig with curls. The cut of the costume is in keeping with the piece's eighteenth century setting. The colouring of green also links the stage character with his *aleluya* predecessors.<sup>53</sup> As Ucelay explains, the typical colour scheme of the *aleluya* is of green or yellow outlined in black.<sup>54</sup> The introductory stage direction in *Perlimplín* also calls for "Paredes verdes con las sillas y muebles pintados en negro" (I, p. 253). The clear pedigree of García Lorca's Perlimplín is the grotesque caricature from the *aleluya*.

The Perlimplín of the *aleluyas* is created as a stock figure of ridicule, bringing us back to the dictionary definition of "monigote", "figura ridícula hecha de trapo [...] ignorante y ruda". There is however in *Perlimplín* a very important development from the stock character. The costume that clothes the body of García Lorca's Perlimplín offers him a mask and the means to

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<sup>51</sup> Ucelay cites one of the poet's letters to Melchor Fernández Almagro, from 1926, in which García Lorca mentions a sketchily conceived play "cuyos personajes son ampliaciones fotográficas", "Introducción", p. 133. This is perhaps a parallel device to the formulation of the "monigote humano", in that both involve manipulation/augmentation of sketchy figures giving them greater life.

<sup>52</sup> Ucelay, "Introducción", p. 20.

<sup>53</sup> For Ucelay the green frock coat is especially significant: "[e]l inocente Don Perlimplín, cuya casaca verde junto con las paredes verdes de su casa, nos sugieren la amarga denominación de viejo verde". "Federico García Lorca y el Club Teatral Anfistora...", pp. 58-9. We also discuss in Chapter Six the significance of Adela's green dress.

<sup>54</sup> Ucelay, "Introducción", pp. 24 & 44.



transform his identity. Indeed, Perlimplín's body attains, through its transformation into the Joven de la capa roja and his act of sacrifice, a new, honourable status.<sup>55</sup> Luis Fernández Cifuentes explains this reinvention of Perlimplín's body as

un proceso inverso al que proponía la farsa bufa y carnalesca: la tendencia ya no es exponer y degradar el cuerpo grotesco, sino encubrirlo y dignificarlo mediante un desdoblamiento, una imagen superpuesta.<sup>56</sup>

It is with interest we note that, during the course of the play, Perlimplín's body is never described directly but is referred to only in terms of his costume. The costume covers, masks and erases the grotesqueness of his physicality.<sup>57</sup> For example, at the end of the second act, the Duendes pull back the curtain to reveal Perlimplín in a most pitiful position, crowned with cuckold horns. His humiliation by Belisa is exposed for all to see, but the stage direction notes that he jumps fully dressed out of the bed, "vestido con casaca" (II, p. 269).<sup>58</sup> The full costume simultaneously exposes Belisa's betrayal of Perlimplín's love for her (they obviously have not joined in carnal union) while preventing his old, weak, ugly body from being exposed. The Duendes are aware of the importance of the costume's double function: "Y sin este tapar y destapar [...] ¡Qué sería de las pobres gentes!" (II, p. 265). Similarly, in the final scene, when Perlimplín masquerades as the Joven, his body is entirely covered "en una amplia y lujosa capa roja" (IV, p. 286). And yet Belisa has fallen in love with this Joven. The voluminous cape has never allowed her a glimpse of the Joven's body but still she can claim to know him physically because "[e]l olor de su carne le pasa a través de su ropa" (IV, p. 285). Perlimplín, in his Joven

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<sup>55</sup> The supreme dignity with which Perlimplín sacrifices his physical existence belies his gleeful repudiation of the socially-codified honour system: "(cantando) ¡Don Perlimplín no tiene honor! ¡No tiene honor!" (IV, p. 282).

<sup>56</sup> Fernández Cifuentes, *García Lorca en el teatro*, p. 130.

<sup>57</sup> Except for one occasion in the second scene when Perlimplín complains "La noche se ha puesto un poco fría" (II, p. 261), the stage direction indicates he rubs his hands together. Perlimplín's awareness of the cold recalls the end of the final act of *El público*, when the Criado complains to the Director of the rapidly encroaching cold. Both the Director and his Criado eventually succumb to the cold of the death-bringing snow, conjured up by the Prestidigitador. Perlimplín begins to feel the cold from the opening of the second scene with his marriage to Belisa. Already, it is the beginning of the end for Perlimplín, the beginning of a process whereby his existence will be sacrificed for the sake of his love for Belisa.

<sup>58</sup> Margarita Ucelay recalls that her mother designed a stiff, green frock coat for Perlimplín, in the play's Anfistora premiere, "[para que] diese la impresión de porcelana a la figura de Don Perlimplín", "Introducción", p. 167.

guise, can offer Belisa every physical delight, “He sentido tu calor y tu peso, delicioso joven de mi alma” (IV, p. 284), as long as he remains corporeally invisible.

### 3.3.3 The puppet

With the ridiculous transformed and his body disguised, it becomes difficult to stabilise Perlimplín's identity. In fact, Perlimplín's identity as an autonomous individual is never established. The first scene, which functions as a prologue to the drama, represents the first of several instances of metatheatre in Perlimplín.<sup>59</sup> The servant Marcolfa directs and stage manages the negotiation of Perlimplín's marriage, with the latter, the Madre and Belisa as the performers in her rite of betrothal.<sup>60</sup> In this performative act, Perlimplín's autonomy of thought, speech and action is denied by Marcolfa's direction. In the first exchange between master and servant, the power relationship is inverted. Perlimplín's speech is restricted to expressions of doubt and uncertainty, couched in the subjunctive: “¿Sí?”; “¿Por qué sí?”; “¿Y si yo te dijera que no?” (I, p. 253). It is Marcolfa, the “doméstica perseverante” as Perlimplín describes her, who affirms, authorises and guides the unspecified subject of their conversation: “Sí”; “Pues porque sí”; “¿Qué no?” (I, p. 253). The doubtful and hesitant tone of Perlimplín's speech continues until, during his interview with Belisa, his uncertainty becomes fear of the strange, new situation in which Marcolfa has placed him: “¿En qué mundo me vas a meter?” (I, p. 258). Marcolfa's prompt, “[h]e decidido que...! ¡Vamos!”, becomes farcically distorted through Perlimplín's fearfulness into “[h]emos decidido que vamos...” (I, p. 257). Perlimplín is incapable of using the first-person singular subject because his identity is conflated with that of his 'director',

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<sup>59</sup> Enric Bou lists three ostensible examples of metatheatre, the play within a play, in his paper on the visual imagery of Perlimplín: (a) the arranging in the prologue of Perlimplín's marriage by Marcolfa; (b) the intervention of the Duendes on Perlimplín's wedding night; and (c) the *desdoblamiento* of Perlimplín as both himself and the Joven in the final scene; “Rastros de un rostro...”, p. 86. We will return to comment on the use of metatheatrical situations in Perlimplín in the next section of this chapter.

<sup>60</sup> David Johnston writes of what he calls García Lorca's “love of ritual as an element of theatre”, “Introduction”, p. 3. It is worth remembering that, for García Lorca, ritual and theatre share the same dramatic principles, as he makes clear in his speech in homage to the actor Lola Membrives: “El santo sacrificio de la misa es la representación teatral más perfecta que se puede ver todavía”, Federico García Lorca, Obras VI: Prosa I, p. 419.

Marcolfa. Perlimplín as an autonomous individual does not exist, but, instead, subsists as a puppet of the puppeteer. Similarly, Perlimplín offers the Madre “nuestro agradecimiento”, which the Madre delightedly and comically interprets as “delicadeza tan extraordinaria, el agradecimiento de su corazón y el de usted mismo” (I, p. 258). The mother’s splitting of Perlimplín’s subjectivity is an important one. It treats Perlimplín’s metaphysical self – his emotional centre of which the heart is a sign – as detached from the physical. This is an early indication of the symbolic function that Perlimplín will represent: one side of the spiritual/corporeal opposition, in his case the spiritual or ‘humano’. Perlimplín starts out as the ‘monigote’ or puppet, manipulated by outside forces, for instance Marcolfa, or by unseen forces, García Lorca the director/puppeteer. Through his Love for Belisa he will transcend the insubstantiality of his corporeal state, and will acquire a soul. The ‘monigote’ will be, literally, animated with a spiritual dimension and therefore achieve the status of ‘humano’.<sup>61</sup>

### *3.4 Belisa: a woman with no soul*

The poet achieves this incarnation of the ‘monigote humano’, his Perlimplín, through a sharp and focussed execution of character development. His original intention was to expand upon this *in camara* version and write a full-length drama exploring the ‘complexity’ of the themes<sup>62</sup>. The longer version never materialised, but the play we have today benefits from the control and economy of composition with which it was written. García Lorca, himself, draws our attention to his punctilious character sketching in an interview given after the Club Anfistora premiere: “El Amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín es el boceto de un drama grande. No he puesto en él más que las palabras precisas para dibujar los personajes”.<sup>63</sup> In the first two scenes of the drama Perlimplín is depicted in terms of: his inconsequential physicality; his lack of

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<sup>61</sup> As Fernández Cifuentes has pointed out, “Cuando García Lorca se refiere a los personajes de Perlimplín como “monigotes humanos”... se añade una fuerza oculta, conciencia o dimensión inmaterial a la que se da el nombre de ‘alma’”, García Lorca en el teatro, p. 129.

<sup>62</sup> From the interview “Una interesante iniciativa. El poeta Federico García Lorca habla de los clubs teatrales” (1933) in Prosa I, Obras VI, p. 531.

<sup>63</sup> “Una interesante iniciativa. El poeta Federico García Lorca habla de los clubs teatrales” (1933) in Prosa I, Obras VI, p. 531.

autonomy; his weak will to match a feeble body; and his diminutive stature, suggesting a regressive development from man to child.

This degenerative development is evident, gramatically speaking, in the frequency with which Belisa addresses Perlimplín in the diminutive during the second scene of the play. Belisa variously calls her husband “caballerito” (II, p. 263), “maridito”, “hijito” (II, p. 264), “Perlimplinito” (II, p. 269), “Perlimplinillo” (II, p. 270), and “chiquitito” (II, p. 271). While in the first scene Perlimplín is ‘directed’ by Marcolfa, once married, Belisa becomes mistress of the household and of Perlimplín’s heart. In her stewardship of the house Belisa is less successful, contending with Marcolfa’s will: “La criada perfumó esta habitación con tomillo y no con menta como yo le indiqué... Ni puso a la cama las finas ropas de hilo que tiene” (II, p. 261). With Perlimplín, however, Belisa has a wholly compliant subject, as in this brief exchange: “¿me das permiso para quitarme la casaca? / Desde luego [...] y apaga la luz” (II, p. 264). Perlimplín’s relationship with Belisa parallels his with Marcolfa in the first scene, reproducing the same dialogue. Perlimplín is again hesitant and unsure of himself, while Belisa has taken over from Marcolfa as the one in control. In this way the inversion of the master/servant, or dominant/submissive, relationship is repeated, and now it is the wife who rules the husband. Her control over him traces itself back to Perlimplín’s heart, or rather his love for her: “Belisa... ¡yo te amo!” (II, p. 262) he tells her. Her reply, “es ésa tu obligación” (II, p. 265), can be read as a reminder of marriage vows as well as an assertion of her power over him. Belisa’s use of the diminutive in addressing her husband appears on the surface to be an affectional ploy. It is, rather, an indication of how insignificant Perlimplín is in terms of identity, his stature so slight. Belisa, and her physical presence, completely dominate in Perlimplín’s house and he exists only as subordinate to her.

The use of the diminutive, in linguistic terms, is often associated with children, whether it be a child’s habit of attaching a diminutive suffix to all objects s/he refers to, or adult custom of addressing a child in the diminutive. In the latter sense, Belisa addresses Perlimplín as one

would a child, especially in her use of “hijito” and “chiquitito”. Belisa’s treatment of Perlimplín as a child gives cause to those critics who speak of Perlimplín’s ‘infantilism’.<sup>64</sup> It might explain how Perlimplín feels in relation to Belisa, as a child before something unknown and incomprehensible feels fear and apprehension: “con tantos encajes pareces una ola y me das el mismo miedo que de niño tuve al mar” (II, p. 261). In the previous scene, Marcolfa had pushed Perlimplín into marriage because she feared he would find himself alone and unable to survive without her if she were to die suddenly: “(llorando) ¿qué será de usted solo en este mundo?” (I, p. 254). Her concern for Perlimplín recognises his total dependence on her, as a child on a mother. Marcolfa’s anxious wish for him to marry is so that he will have someone to look after him. It is hardly surprising that Perlimplín’s attitude towards marriage has a childish complexion, coloured by childhood memories: “Cuando yo era niño una mujer estranguló a su esposo. Siempre he pensado no casarme” (I, p. 254). This childhood memory is the origin of Perlimplín’s fear of Belisa. Marcolfa’s attempts to persuade Perlimplín of the joys of marriage – “No es [el matrimonio] lo que se ve por fuera. Está lleno de cosas ocultas” (I, p. 254) – only serve to deepen Perlimplín’s sense that marriage is an unknown realm, a strange, other world to be feared. Perlimplín’s childhood fear of the sea is also his fear of marriage to Belisa, the fear of a mysterious, unearthly realm.

Perlimplín, faced with Belisa, confronts this other domain. Her arrival in Perlimplín’s house has produced “rumores secretos”, and Perlimplín finds that “el agua se entibia ella sola en los vasos” (II, p. 261). Fearful of this strange, new presence, Perlimplín finds himself moving through the house “*de puntillas*” (II, p. 261) and spying on Belisa through the keyhole. In this activity Perlimplín catches the first glimpse of Belisa’s body, of that “oscura pesadilla” (IV, p. 286) as he later calls it. In the revelation of Belisa’s body, Perlimplín encounters a new level of experience: “Yo no había podido imaginarme tu cuerpo hasta que lo vi por el ojo de la cerradura” (II, p. 263). Perlimplín’s existence has moved into a new sphere. A sense of Love is

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<sup>64</sup> As does García-Posada in the introduction to his edition of the complete works. See “Introducción”, p. 49. David Johnston writes of Perlimplín as “a sexual adolescent”, “Introduction”, p. 4.

produced in Perlimplín, and it cuts through his flesh to an inner dimension that hitherto he did not possess: “entonces fue cuando sentí el amor ¡entonces! como un hondo corte de lanceta en mi garganta” (II, p. 263). It is at this point that a soul is born in Perlimplín, his ‘monigote’ life acquires a ‘human’ aspect.<sup>65</sup>

The Duendes refer to this ‘birth’ while describing the process of development that Perlimplín undergoes on his wedding night: “El alma de Perlimplín, chica y asustada como un patito recién nacido, se enriquece y sublima en estos instantes” (II, p. 266). Perlimplín’s proximity to the body of Belisa while they lie together in the wedding bed nourishes and nurses his newly-formed imagination, that is his capacity to transcend the limits of his grotesque body, in other words his soul. Indeed, “...esta noche ha corrido el aire como nunca” (II, p. 269) and Perlimplín finds that his physical life has been elevated from the plane of corporeal reality to one of imagination and dream: “Casi me parece un sueño” (II, p. 271). Joyful in his new condition, Perlimplín moves to embrace Belisa, “*pero en ese instante se retira bruscamente de ella*” (II, p. 270). Perlimplín is reminded of his unhappy physical form and bodily union seems impossible.<sup>66</sup>

The second scene closes with Perlimplín’s tragic lyric, “Muerto de amor” (II, p. 272). This short verse reveals that, despite Belisa’s insistence to the contrary, Perlimplín knows that it was not he who kissed her during their wedding night. He painfully comprehends that his body could never satisfy Belisa. His love for Belisa cannot have physical expression because Perlimplín has no material substance; his body is insubstantial, a mere outline or sketch formed by his costume. What is more, Belisa will never desire this “viejo verde, monigote sin fuerzas” because as Perlimplín admits “el cuerpo de Belisa era para músculos jóvenes y labios de ascuas” (IV, p. 287). In fact, Perlimplín’s body has been penetrated (“garganta rota”) and obliterated (“y

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<sup>65</sup> Importantly, Fernández Cifuentes believes that “la visión, la imaginación, son atributos del alma, capacidad de traspasar la superficie” *García Lorca en el teatro*, p. 130.

<sup>66</sup> As Cedric Busette has pointed out: “Cuando Perlimplín abraza a Belisa y siente el contacto de su cuerpo, “se retira bruscamente de ella”, porque ello le recuerda sus limitaciones físicas”. *Obra Dramática de García Lorca: Estudio de un configuración*, (New York: Las Americas, 1971), p. 141.

olvido”) by a ‘four-sided blade’ (“Bisturí de cuatro filos” II, p. 272). The blade is the penetrating cut of physical desire that he feels for Belisa, which cuts in every direction. His physical identity is as one who is “muerto de amor”.<sup>67</sup> But Perlimplín has been granted a new knowledge: the sight of Belisa’s body has opened up for him another world of possibility and imagination, which he can inhabit without physical limitations. Perlimplín’s love for Belisa has brought about the need for a transcendence of physical form. Fulfilment of physical desire is impossible; love must become Love. The end of the second scene carries with it for Perlimplín the realisation that his useless physical existence must be abandoned and that he must embrace his soul, his imagination, the metaphysical. Only then will he be able to embrace the somatic Belisa and their complementary identities join together.

It is with this new knowledge and strength of purpose that Perlimplín takes the stage in the third scene. He tells Marcolfa: “He aprendido muchas cosas y, sobre todo, puedo imaginarlas” (III, p. 275). Perlimplín’s newfound imagination has empowered him to act as he never could have, bound by the restraints of his corporeal existence. His relationship to Marcolfa has been reversed and now it is he who directs and instructs: “¿Lo harás como te digo?” (III, p. 274). Perlimplín becomes director of his own destiny and is preparing the stage for a drama which he will both orchestrate and in which he will take the lead role. Perlimplín has disguised himself as a beautiful young man and courts the attentions of Belisa. As the Joven, Perlimplín maintains a certain distance from Belisa, never coming close enough for her to see his face or indeed any part of his body. Moreover, the gestures the young man makes to Belisa are “de una manera un poco despectiva” (III, p. 277); Perlimplín, as the young man, treats Belisa with a scorn equal to the careless way Belisa treated his affections. He sends her love letters that ignore the transcendent qualities of love, instead they concentrate on the physical: “Las cartas de los otros

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<sup>67</sup> In this short poem, Perlimplín connects his death from love with the song of the nightingale: “Decid a todos que ha sido/ el ruiseñor”. With reference to *Perlimplín*, as well as *El público*, *El maleficio de la mariposa*, and two of the *Qasidas* from *Diván del Tamarit*, Ana María Gómez Torres argues the same connection. *Experimentación y teoría en el teatro de Federico García Lorca*, (Málaga: Arguval, 1995), p. 188.

hombres que yo he recibido... [...] me hablaban de países ideales, de sueños y de corazones heridos... pero estas cartas de él...”; “Hablan de mí... de mi cuerpo...” (III, p. 278). The letters deliberately avoid any metaphysical reference because Perlimplín knows that it is the body that produces desire, as it did for him. And like Perlimplín, Belisa’s response to her desire expresses itself in a new sense of imagination. Never having seen the young man, Belisa is able, nonetheless, to *imagine* what the young man is like: “ Tampoco he conseguido verlo... Debe tener la piel morena y sus besos deben perfumar y escocer al mismo tiempo como el azafrán y el clavo” (III, p. 275).<sup>68</sup>

The powerful effects of love and desire have metamorphosed Perlimplín and now transform Belisa. Perlimplín moves beyond the realm of physical passion: “ya estoy fuera del mundo y de la moral ridícula de las gentes” (III, p. 278). This affords him a certain power over and sympathy towards Belisa. Where once Perlimplín feared the unknown mysteries of the body, looking now from a metaphysical vantage point, Perlimplín understands what it means to desire someone in bodily terms, but in the realm of pure Love no longer shares such desire. With a new, sympathetic understanding and strength of character, Perlimplín absolves Belisa of any guilt for her relations with other lovers: “¡Pobre Belisa! Porque comprendo tu estado de ánimo te entrego este papel que tanto supone para ti... Yo me doy cuenta de las cosas. Y aunque me hieren profundamente comprendo que vives un drama” (III, p. 276).

Perlimplín’s remarks are important because he shows that he understands firstly Belisa’s “estado de ánimo”, not so much her excited state, as the condition of her soul. As happened to him in the previous scene, a soul or imagination is conceived in Belisa through her ardent desire for the young man. Secondly, in the same way as Perlimplín was manipulated by Marcolfa and

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<sup>68</sup> With reference to a fragment of an earlier version of *Perlimplín*, Margarita Ucelay compares Belisa’s description of the young man in this early manuscript to that of the finished version. In the early text, Belisa speaks of “un hombre concreto y una experiencia muy vivida. Son tiempos de indicativo los que usa”. In the finished piece the mood is more subjunctive, the young man ‘imagined’ and/or ‘improbable’. Ucelay flags this ‘significant change of tack’ by García Lorca. “Introducción”, p. 114.



Belisa in the previous two scenes, now Perlimplín understands how he controls Belisa's actions in the drama he has staged with his invented young man. Belisa is, as Perlimplín was previously, oblivious to her manipulation in the drama: "¡Qué inocente eres!" (III, p. 277). Perlimplín is able to cause a sharp, sudden movement in her emotions by simply tugging on the string of her desire for the young man. This is clear when he pretends to her that he can see the young man below their balcony, Belisa rushes forward to look and Perlimplín simply tells her that the young man has turned the corner. Belisa is crushed ("*Sofocada*" III, p. 279) and it is apparent how utterly subordinate she is to Perlimplín. In comparison to his position in the preceding two scenes where he was the 'monigote' or puppet, his actions guided by Marcolfa and manipulated by Belisa, Perlimplín now directs the fate of Belisa. While before Perlimplín acted as a child might, chaperoned by Marcolfa in her function as surrogate mother and treated as a foolish infant rather than husband by Belisa, now Perlimplín takes on the role of father to Belisa. When he tells her "[a]hora te quiero como si fuera tu padre" (III, p. 277), Perlimplín not only redefines the relationship of power between him and Belisa, but also transmutes the nature of his love for Belisa. In place of the desire he felt for Belisa's body there is now a father's love, a Love transcendent of the carnal. The fact that Perlimplín is considerably older than Belisa – "Tú eres joven y yo soy viejo" (III, p. 277) – might well have earned the former the epithet of "viejo verde" (IV, p. 287) if it were a case of fleshly desire. But Perlimplín prefers to view the age difference between him and Belisa as the father and daughter relationship. It is this mode of transcendent Love, of the old parent and young child, that prompts Perlimplín's declaration of intent: "Como soy un viejo quiero sacrificarme por ti" (III, p. 279).

### *3.5 The ultimate sacrifice*

The drama within the drama is, of course, brought to conclusion in the final scene. True to his intention, Perlimplín plans a ritual of sacrifice that will complete his task of introducing Belisa to the impossibility of Love. To accomplish this, Perlimplín must provide the carnal Belisa with a Love that does not have the body as its focus. Instead this Love must have an imagined, or

non-corporeal, object. Belisa could then acquire a spiritual dimension or soul. Perlimplín plans to be that imagined love-object, in the guise of the young man, and therefore become the soul that Belisa's body embraces. In this way Belisa will know a transcendent Love such as that which Perlimplín feels for her, and Perlimplín will be united with his own love-object Belisa. The author of the drama being García Lorca, the process of comprehending impossible love will require a blood sacrifice. In Amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín, the sacrifice is Perlimplín's physical existence; his corporeal identity will be surrendered so that Belisa can know a spiritual one. This will be a sacrifice of Self and, as Perlimplín says, "el triunfo de mi imaginación" (IV, p. 285).

The final scene opens with Perlimplín verifying that Marcolfa has carried out his instructions. There is an air of calm expectation about Perlimplín, in comparison with Marcolfa's confused and anxious state. A weeping Marcolfa finds herself both guilty – "¡Yo tengo la culpa!" (IV, p. 280) – and frightened – "¡Me da miedo de oírlo!" (IV, p. 282) – by the present situation where it appears that Perlimplín is encouraging infidelity: "¡Que usted mismo fomenta en su mujer el peor de los pecados" (IV, p. 282). Perlimplín, on the other hand, is enjoying the spiritual awakening that he is undergoing. His previous mundane existence, one where Marcolfa brought him "por las mañanas el café y las uvas" (IV, p. 280), has been left behind. To Perlimplín it seems as though "cien años" have gone by. In answer to Marcolfa's anxious inquiry, "¿[p]ero qué ha pensado mi señor?", Perlimplín's reply is not to the concerns of Marcolfa but an expression of his new life of imagination: "Todo lo que no había pensado antes" (IV, p. 280). He later elaborates on his new experiences: "Antes no podía pensar en las cosas extraordinarias que tiene el mundo". Explicitly, "el amor de Belisa" is the catalyst which opened up this new world of the extraordinary, "me ha dado un tesoro precioso que yo ignoraba". Now Perlimplín is capable of appreciating the things of this world beyond the material, the visible and the tangible: "Ahora cierro los ojos y... veo lo que quiero... por ejemplo... a mi madre cuando la visitaron las hadas de los contornos" (IV, pp. 280-1). Perlimplín, compelled by his new vision of the world, wishes that Belisa be similarly transformed. For this to happen, she must be so consumed by

love that she loses sense of her physical existence, hence Perlimplín tells Marcolfa: “Yo necesito que ella ame a ese joven más que a su propio cuerpo” (IV, p. 281). When Marcolfa informs him of Belisa’s reaction to the news that she will that night meet with the Joven – “se puso encendida como un geranio” (IV, p. 281) – Perlimplín is assured that Belisa has been appropriately enthralled by love: “Su amor debe rayar en la locura” (IV, p. 281). His joy is so unbounded at his ‘triumph’ that he discards the last vestige of the ‘real’ world and “la moral ridícula de las gentes” and gleefully sings “¡Don Perlimplín no tiene honor!” (IV, p. 282). Faced with such morally intolerable behaviour Marcolfa feels compelled to resign from Perlimplín’s service. But it is a measure of how much Perlimplín is in control of events, directing his metadrama, that Marcolfa complies with Perlimplín’s will: “vete y cumplir con tu deber... ¿Harás lo que te dije?” / “¿Qué remedio me queda?” (IV, p. 282).

Perlimplín continues to direct the metadrama of Belisa and her young man, but now the performance has moved up a level. From the farcical deceptions Perlimplín played on Belisa in the third scene, the production is now a staging of a solemn rite of sacrifice. As celebrant of the ritual, Perlimplín must carefully manage every detail of its execution, including the setting, the costume and props, the participants and above all the timing. All the elements of the ritual are familiar to theatre in general, but the rendering of the ritual, especially a sacred rite, must be precisely enacted and re-enacted so that the monotony of repetition might allow its performers to transcend the mundane and reach the spiritual.<sup>69</sup> García Lorca was making a similar point when he compared the Roman Catholic rite of mass – and the spiritual exercise that it implies – with the repetition of ‘physical poses’ that constitutes theatre. In fact, García Lorca insists that the *sacrifice* of the mass is the epitome of theatre, and that it connects to the most essential human concerns:

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<sup>69</sup> Allen Josephs writes of “the obscure, ancient custom of ritual sacrifice from which we suspect theatre began”. “Don Perlimplín: Lorca’s *amante-para-la-muerte*” in Lorca’s Legacy: Essays on Lorca’s Life, Poetry and Theatre, eds. M. Durán & F. Colecchia, (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), p. 95.

el teatro es... un arte que nace con el hombre que lo lleva en lo más noble de su alma cuando quiere expresar lo más profundo de su historia y de su ser, lo expresa representando, repitiendo actitudes físicas. El santo sacrificio de la misa es la representación teatral más perfecta que se puede ver todavía.<sup>70</sup>

Perlimplín attends to every detail of the staging of his sacrificial ritual. The opening exchange of the scene, Marcolfa to Perlimplín “¿[e]s hora ya?”/ “No. Todavía no es hora”, reflects the importance of appropriate timing.<sup>71</sup> Later in the scene, the song of the nightingale signals that the climactic moment has arrived for Perlimplín: “(*Canta el ruiseñor*) ¡Ya es la hora!” (IV, p. 285). The appointed hour is ten o’clock at night, when the moon cloaks the stage in an enigmatic light – “*La luna ilumina la escena*” (IV, p. 284) –, creating an atmosphere tinged with ambiguity and edged with irreality.<sup>72</sup> The lighting changes significantly in the final moments of the scene with the death of Perlimplín and consequent transformation of Belisa. At the moment Perlimplín dies “*La escena adquiere una luz mágica*”, and with the introduction of this ‘magical’ light, the stage is set for Belisa to enter a higher plane of existence, indicated in her direction “*Extrañada y en otro mundo*” (IV, p. 288).<sup>73</sup> As regards the setting – “*Jardín de cipreses y naranjos*” (IV, p. 280) –, for Luis Fernández Cifuentes, the garden of both the title

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<sup>70</sup> Interview cited above in *Prosa 1, Obras VI*, p. 419.

<sup>71</sup> The references to the appointed hour reappear in the fifth act of *El público* in the exchanges between the *Desnudo Rojo* and the *Enfermero*. The latter rebukes the *Desnudo* for saying his line two minutes too early. Importantly, the *Desnudo* defends himself blaming the nightingale: “Es que el ruiseñor ha cantado ya”, offering another example of the nightingale’s function in the rituals of sacrifice. The mistimed line is one of those uttered by the *Desnudo* that repeat Christ’s words spoken on the cross, according to New Testament scripture. The intoning of Christ’s words ritualise his sacrifice, and García Lorca combines this with other elements related to Catholic ceremonies and secular theatrical practice in order to produce a recognition of their deep interconnection.

<sup>72</sup> García-Posada notes “la presencia ambigua de la luna”, which, like the final act of both *Bodas de sangre* and *La casa de Bernarda Alba* removes the action a step from the certainties of daylight and everyday reality. “Introducción”, p. 52.

<sup>73</sup> The lighting state here recalls the magical, otherworldly or transcendent quality created for the deaths of the Director and servant at the close of *El público* by “*un cielo de nubes largas, vivamente iluminado*”, (VI, p. 157); of the Joven in *Así que pasen cinco años* by “*un candelabro encendido*”, (III, p. 271); of Leonardo and the Novio in the “*fuerte luz azul*” provided by the Luna of *Bodas de sangre*, (III, p. 401); of Mariana Pineda bathed in “*una luz maravillosa y delirante*”, (III, 9; p. 211); of Curianito el nene whose funeral at the end of *El maleficio de la mariposa* is “*iluminado fantásticamente de rosa*”, (II, 6; 94). Lighting of a heavenly origin (‘a shooting star or lightning flash’, ed. cit., 388) is referred to by Adela in the final act of *La casa de Bernarda Alba* and serves to signal her imminent death and removal from the material world.

and the location of the final scene is “el espacio sagrado de los sacrificios”.<sup>74</sup> Perlimplín arranges for Belisa to meet her young man there, using Marcolfa as messenger/prompter: “le dije lo que me indicó el señor... que ese joven... vendría esta noche a las diez en punto al jardín” (IV, p. 281). The costume for the ceremony is clearly indicated: the ‘young man’ will be “envuelto como siempre en su capa roja”(IV, p. 281), the red symbolic of the blood sacrifice.<sup>75</sup> We are told that this cape “*debe ser inmensa y cubrirle hasta los pies*” (IV, p. 287), completely obscuring the young man’s body, because of course it is Perlimplín in disguise. Crucial to the execution of the rite is the dagger that Perlimplín uses to end his physical life. More than the common prop of secular theatre, the dagger is highly ornamental (“este puñal de esmeraldas” IV, p. 287) and symbolic in its function. Referred to as “este ramo ardiente de piedras preciosas” (IV, p. 287), this ‘burning branch’ serves to penetrate the bodily boundary and end Perlimplín’s (and the young man’s) corporeal existence. In doing so, Perlimplín becomes pure spirit, unrestricted by the body and he may then unite his soul with Belisa’s body: “para que sea tuyo completamente se me ha ocurrido que lo mejor es clavarle este puñal en su corazón galante” (IV, p. 285).<sup>76</sup>

The ceremony, however, would not be complete without a sung liturgy, and this is provided by Belisa’s song as she awaits the arrival of the young man in the garden. Physically not onstage and therefore unseen by the audience and Perlimplín, the carnal Belisa sings of what is presently

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<sup>74</sup> Fernández Cifuentes, *García Lorca en el teatro*, p. 127.

<sup>75</sup> Supported by Perlimplín’s qualifying “Roja como su sangre...”, which he says with dagger in hand. Cedric Busette supports this interpretation of the cape’s blood-red colouring, *Obra Dramática de García Lorca*, p. 149.

<sup>76</sup> The dagger’s performative role, to pierce the body, destroy the physical and produce the soul, is echoed in Belisa’s threat: “voy a atravesar la garganta de mi marido” with a sword (IV, 286). The penetration of the blade is clearly a significant distinction from the strangling that Perlimplín as a child feared he would suffer at the hands of a wife. Both stabbing and strangling are the forms of death most favoured by García Lorca in his theatre. *Perlimplín* provides an opportunity to juxtapose these two manners of death in García Lorca’s theatre. Potentially, if the difference is that the former punctures the surface of the body, its form and its limits, clearing the way for a transformation to take place, this may be a highly significant distinction. Like Perlimplín and the ‘young man’, Leonardo and the Novio of *Bodas de sangre* kill each other with knife thrusts; the Joven of *Así que pasen cinco años* is killed by a dart that pierces his heart; in *El público*, Hombre 1 is killed several times over in different forms, as the *pez luna*, the *Desnudo Rojo* and as Gonzalo, each time it is by penetration of the flesh with a blade. *Mariana Pineda* is famously executed by the garrotte (or strangulation), leaving her body intact; *Yerma*, of course, strangles Juan; in *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, Adela puts a rope round her neck and hangs herself.

not visible: her body, “Belisa lava su cuerpo con agua salobre y nardos” (IV, p. 283). The focus of the song’s lyric is on the body of Belisa that so bewitched Perlimplín – “Yo [...] amaba tu cuerpo nada más... ¡tu cuerpo!”, (IV, p. 287). Firstly, we have direct references to “los pechos de Belisa” and “tus muslos blancos”. Furthermore, the night itself reflects Belisa’s carnal state in the words of the song: “La noche [...] desnuda” and “La noche de anís y plata”. The latter is reproduced in “Plata de arroyos y espejos/ y anís de tus muslos blancos” (IV, pp. 283-4).<sup>77</sup> The chorus of the song is the verse “Y en los pechos de Belisa/ se mueren de amor los ramos”. The reference back to Perlimplín’s “Muerto de amor” at the end of the second scene is obvious. The significance of the phrase ‘morirse de amor’ has the same resonance in both verses: in Belisa love is intrinsically linked to death. Belisa’s body is the object of Perlimplín/the young man’s desire, but to know Love ‘their’ corporeal existence must be erased. Belisa desires a young man she has never seen, her imaginings of the young man demonstrate the potential for her to transcend the carnal and know Love on a metaphysical level. There is an inextricable connection between Belisa’s body, death and love, and these are the key components of the sacrificial rite being staged. The song Belisa sings offstage transfigures these elements as the holy litany of the sacrifice. Their symbolic importance is magnified by an unseen choir of voices that amplifies Belisa’s chant. The intensity of effect is boosted by the onstage Perlimplín whose recitative punctuates the litany saying aloud the chorus verse “¡Se mueren de amor los ramos!”.

The objective of the ritual is the spiritual transformation of Belisa. But it also results in a series of other transformations as effects of the performative rite. Perlimplín, the “monigote sin fuerzas”, dispenses with his physical form and is transfigured as a metaphysical entity: “Yo soy mi alma”. Similarly, the young man, whose sole material form was circumscribed by the

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<sup>77</sup> The dominance of white (“muslos blancos”) and reflected white light (“plata de arroyos y espejos”) in the spectrum of the song’s imagery, connects strongly with the trope of blanching in García Lorca’s theatre discussed above. Here it is highly reminiscent of the cold, blue-white light of the Luna in Bodas de sangre. The effect on Perlimplín of Belisa’s white body has been that which introduced him to impossible Love.

enormous red cloak, ceases to exist in tangible terms. The young man's identity is inseparable from Perlimplín's, as is shown when the latter uncovers himself in Belisa's arms and answers her distraught "¿quién te dio muerte?" as though he were the young man, "[t]u marido acaba de matarme" (IV, p. 287). The love Belisa had for the young man is now transformed into a more powerful Love that Belisa understands in body and now also in soul: "le quiero con toda la fuerza de mi carne y de mi alma" (IV, p. 289).<sup>78</sup> Belisa is reconstituted through the effects of the ritual as subject with a physical and spiritual dimension. Hence Marcolfa's pronouncement: "Belisa ya eres otra mujer" (IV, p. 288). Perlimplín's gift of a soul to Belisa's body is symbolised by his dying request – that her body embrace him: "Déjame en este último instante, puesto que tanto me has querido, morir abrazado a él [tu cuerpo]" (IV, pp. 287-8).

### *3.6 Identity subversions and gender inversions*

Among the poet's few declarations on Perlimplín, his comments in 1933 as the play was being premiered by the Club Anfístora,<sup>79</sup> presents us with a specification of the drama's protagonist that demands deciphering. When García Lorca says "Don Perlimplín es el hombre menos cornudo del mundo", we must ask how that is possible given that the play makes clear his wife's infidelity and that Perlimplín appears on stage with a cuckold's horns.<sup>80</sup> The poet then continues by suggesting the following inversion: "Su imaginación dormida se despierta con el tremendo engaño de su mujer; pero él luego hace cornudas a todas las mujeres que existen". The logic of the latter statement is more readily comprehended. Following Allen Joseph's theory that Belisa's adultery with five men, the five "representantes de las cinco razas del mundo"

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<sup>78</sup> These words Belisa says in response to Marcolfa's reference to "el hermoso joven al que nunca verás el rostro" (IV, 288). Belisa continues with an urgent inquiry as to the young man's whereabouts. Belisa demonstrates not so much a lack of comprehension as to what has transpired (Perlimplín's deception and self-sacrifice) than a confusion caused by the merging of Perlimplín's and the young man's identities. The force of the Love that Belisa now understands is articulated in Perlimplín's reason for killing the young man, as he states to Belisa: "Ya muerto, lo podrás acariciar siempre... [ ] ...sin que tengas el temor de que deje de amarte. Él te querrá con el amor infinito de los difuntos" (IV, 286).

<sup>79</sup> "Una interesante iniciativa. El poeta Federico García Lorca habla de los clubs teatrales", p. 532.

<sup>80</sup> The cuckolding of Perlimplín was of course the principal reason used by the censors of Primo de Rivera's regime to suppress the work in 1929.

(according to Marcolfa, III, p. 274), elevates Belisa to the level of ‘goddess’,<sup>81</sup> we may view Belisa as everywoman and representative of all women. However, García Lorca’s use of the term “cornudas” and his assertion that Perlimplín turns the tables on his wife requires further investigation.

To begin understanding the poet’s designation of Perlimplín as “el hombre menos cornudo del mundo”, we must recall Perlimplín’s own belief in Belisa’s fidelity to him: “Yo sé que tú me eres fiel y lo sigues siendo” (III, p. 276). It is important to note that Perlimplín makes this statement in the third scene, in his altered condition, and therefore this is not some childish, ingenuous faith of which he might have been guilty in the preceding scenes. Rather, it is a statement of fact. Perlimplín knows that Belisa is in love with the young man, but, as the young man is his alter ego, Perlimplín can be confident that she is in fact in love with him (Perlimplín). The confusing logic of Perlimplín being ‘the least cuckolded man in the world’ stems from the confusion or ambivalence in Perlimplín’s identity. The first indications of the divergence in Perlimplín’s identity come in the prologue and first scene. Marcolfa’s handling of Perlimplín during the marriage negotiation with Belisa and her mother gives rise to Perlimplín’s equivocal use of the first person plural – “hemos decidido que me quiero casar” (I, p. 256). His persistent reference to himself culminates in him expressing “nuestro agradecimiento”, which Belisa’s mother interprets as “el agradecimiento de su corazón y de usted mismo” (I, p. 258).

As we discussed above, this division of Perlimplín suggests the interiority that will be added to Perlimplín’s being through the awakening of his imagination by his love for Belisa. A spiritual dimension is constituted in Perlimplín, which in turn allows Perlimplín to re-represent himself in a new physical form – that of the young man. This “extravagant and unprecedented split” in Perlimplín’s identity, by taking on the guise of the young man, means that Perlimplín becomes

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<sup>81</sup> Josephs, “Don Perlimplín: Lorca’s *amante-para-la-muerte*”, p. 99.



both cuckold and cuckolder, as Allen Josephs contends<sup>82</sup>. The splitting of Perlimplín's identity pursues reconciliation through the play. As Fernández Cifuentes illustrates, in the final scene of the drama, with its sacrificial rite, the split reaches its maximum tension: "Perlimplín opondrá en el último rito un riguroso *desdoblamiento*: el marido viejo y el amante joven, el vengador y la víctima, el cuerpo deseado y el rechazado, son apenas *máscaras* de una sola figura, gestos del único oficiante" (my emphasis)<sup>83</sup>. Perlimplín, in fact, is not the only "oficiante" at the ceremony. The dagger that Perlimplín plunges into his chest has a performative function in the rite.

We base our use of the term 'performative' on Judith Butler's appropriation which serves to describe the construction of gender through the repetition of acts, gestures, desires and cultural signs.<sup>84</sup> Sarah Chinn's helpful sketch of the genealogy of Butler's theory lucidly traces Butler's line of enquiry back through Foucault, Althusser and Derrida to the work of the linguist J. L. Austin and his How to Do Things with Words from 1962.<sup>85</sup> Chinn summarises Austin's description of performative language as "language that does something". This type of language, "speech acts" Austin called them, "interpellate[s] or call[s] us into being". Chinn underlines Austin's conclusion that "speech acts are tied up in social conventions and rituals that seem self-evident but are in fact minutely choreographed", and should be borne in mind while examining the ritual at the heart of Perlimplín.<sup>86</sup> Butler's use of performativity in understanding gender is a more elaborate exercise than Austin's, and we make use of her theory in the following chapter. However, what concerns us here is the concept of performativity *per se*. We argue that the dagger in Perlimplín's rite of sacrifice is performative in the sense that its action causes several effects and Perlimplín is not the author of these effects.

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<sup>82</sup> Josephs, "Don Perlimplín: Lorca's *amante-para-la-muerte*", p. 95.

<sup>83</sup> Fernández Cifuentes, García Lorca en el teatro, p. 128.

<sup>84</sup> As rehearsed in Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, (New York & London: Routledge, 1999, first edition 1990).

<sup>85</sup> Sarah E. Chinn, "Gender Performativity" in Lesbian and Gay Studies: A Critical Introduction, eds. A. Medhurst & S. R. Munt, (London & Washington: Cassell, 1997), pp. 294-308.

<sup>86</sup> Sarah E. Chinn, "Gender Performativity", pp. 295, 297 and 298. As Chinn chronicles, Derrida, Althusser and Foucault expand upon Austin demonstrating not only how performativity works, but that performative acts are not the wilful acts of a coherent human subject, but of, respectively, 'citation/reiteration', 'Ideological State Apparatuses' and 'discourses'.

García Lorca's poetic invocation of "este ramo ardiente" (IV, p. 287) endows the weapon with an active, performative force in the metadrama. The 'burning branch' has the destructive and cleansing properties of fire. It ends Perlimplín's physical life, his status as "monigote", and removes the mask that the young man was. In doing so it constitutes a new existence for Belisa, one with a metaphysical aspect. This new life, or rather new identity for Belisa, is expressed in Marcolfa's pronouncement "Belisa, ya eres otra mujer... Estás vestida por la sangre gloriosísima de mi señor" (IV, p. 288). Belisa is 'dressed' in Perlimplín's blood, that blood, as was discussed above, being symbolic of an interiority, the dressing suggestive of the adoption of another mask or layer of identity.

Fernández Cifuentes's employment of the terms 'desdoblamiento' and 'mask' connects forcefully with Enric Bou's argument that García Lorca's theatre should be considered alongside his plastic work, specifically many of his sketches. Bou emphasises the recurrence of the visual image of *desdoblamiento* in many of the poet's drawings and the deployment of *desdoblamiento* as a metaphor in *Perlimplín*.<sup>87</sup> Among the sketch figures Bou picks out are the clown and the harlequin, which he believes express "el enmascaramiento del yo íntimo".<sup>88</sup> While we might not necessarily go along with the surface/depth-self opposition inherent in his formulation, the device of Mask seems especially relevant to understanding the layers of identity at play in Perlimplín's ritual. Bou also believes that the effect of *desdoblamiento*, the masking of identity, is paralleled in "[el] teatro dentro del teatro – o metateatro". The example of metatheatre illustrates why the opposition of false/true identity that Bou suggests should be considered misleading. In the self-referential dialogue of theatre within theatre there is no true representation, drama within drama is representation within representation. Similarly, neither the young man, whom Bou would have as the mask, nor Perlimplín, Bou would say the original identity, is 'real' – both are masks or provisional identities.

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<sup>87</sup> See Enric Bou, "Rastros de un rostro...", especially his footnote on p. 84, which lists the following of the poet's drawings as visual *desdoblamientos*: "El beso", "Poema surrealista", "El joven y su alma", "Sueño del marinero", "Payaso con cara doble", "Leyenda del jerez" and "Payaso con cara doble y cáliz".

<sup>88</sup> Enric Bou, "Rastros de un rostro...", p. 86.

Nonetheless, Bou's signalling of the importance of metatheatre in Perlimplín is of particular interest. Our principal concern in this examination of García Lorca's Perlimplín is with the sacrificial ritual, the most significant example of drama within the drama, that draws together the fragile constitution of Perlimplín's and Belisa's identities. We should also recall the representative cases of metatheatre already discussed. The first scene has Marcolfa as director of Perlimplín's marriage negotiation, prompting from 'offstage' Perlimplín's every word: MARCOLFA: "Diga usted Belisa", PERLIMPLÍN: "Belisa", MARCOLFA: "Más alto", PERLIMPLÍN: "¡Belisa!", MARCOLFA: "(*Escondiéndose detrás de la cortina del balcón*) Conteste" (I, pp. 255-6). The tables are turned in the third and fourth scenes as Perlimplín, reconstituted by his imaginative love for Belisa, takes charge, orchestrating the metadrama through Marcolfa: PERLIMPLÍN: "¿Lo harás como te digo?" (III, p. 274); MARCOLFA: "[a Belisa] le dije lo que me indicó el señor" (IV, p. 281).

The second scene of Perlimplín contains two prime examples of metatheatre. The first is the intervention of the Duendes, which perhaps, among the other metatheatre elements of Perlimplín, stands in greatest relief from the main drama; the Duendes do not physically participate in the principal action and remain, as indicated in the direction "*Se sientan en la concha del apuntador cara al público*" (II, p. 265), on the edge of the stage between audience and actors. Perlimplín illustrates for us another reading of metatheatre in his wonderment at the sunrise that ends scene two. His exclamation to Belisa, "[e]s un espectáculo que... parece mentira... ¡me conmueve!" (II, p. 271), communicates an awareness of the spectacle of nature, which contrary to the intuitive comprehension of the natural as the non-artificial, nonetheless appears staged, illusory or false. In this awareness of the construct of what appears 'natural' or 'real', in other words a denaturalisation, lies the purpose of the poet's use of metatheatre in Perlimplín. García Lorca's project is to problematise our assumptions of an essential, naturalised identity. Theatre is an ideal arena in which to challenge modernist concepts of what constitutes the human subject because theatre itself is a construct. Metatheatre injects self-consciousness into the theatrical process, which exposes construct upon construct, mask

covering mask and, through its continual self-referentiality, collapses the familiar, comforting notion of a stable, coherent identity.

Luis Fernández Cifuentes would like to persuade us of the uncomfortable juxtaposition of one level of theatre within another, inconsistent species of drama. He believes that “la representación dentro de la representación constituye [ ]...un injerto anómalo, irreconciliable: el de lo trágico dentro de lo grotesco, lo sublime dentro de lo ridículo”.<sup>89</sup> His argument centres on the workings of the play’s metatheatre, and his conclusion points to the inversion of the norm in the playing of the metadrama. For Fernández Cifuentes, the values of the tragic and the grotesque are switched around, providing an unexpected opportunity to reassess what constitutes those modes. A similar argument can be made for the treatment of gender in Perlimplín in that the normative values of masculine and feminine are subject to inversion<sup>90</sup>. Aside, perhaps, from Fernández Cifuentes, critical analysis of the play does not support our proposition of a strategy of gender inversion at work in the play. Allen Josephs casts Perlimplín and Belisa in typical Enlightenment terms as culture versus nature. Perlimplín is “the perfect man of reason” and Belisa is depicted as a primeval figure of femininity, close to nature and untamed by rational thought.<sup>91</sup> Cedric Busette supports Josephs’ specification of Belisa, seeing her as being ruled by ‘natural’, bodily urges: “las imperiosas necesidades físicas de Belisa”.<sup>92</sup> For García-Posada too, Belisa is ruled by her corporeality; he describes her in these terms: “Lujuriosa, sin alma..., el amor sólo tiene para ella una dimensión carnal”.<sup>93</sup> Busette is explicitly

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<sup>89</sup> Luis Fernández Cifuentes, García Lorca en el teatro, p. 128.

<sup>90</sup> The poet declared sex and gender priority concerns in his theatre work, telling one interviewer in 1935: “Hoy no interesan más que dos clases de problemas: el social y el sexual... Yo hago lo sexual que me atrae más”. Federico García Lorca, Obras, VI, Prosa, I, p. 717.

<sup>91</sup> Josephs, “Don Perlimplín: Lorca’s *amante-para-la-muerte*”, p. 99. Margarita Ucelay draws our attention to García Lorca’s depiction of Belisa in one of the earlier drafts of the play. Belisa is sketched in simple terms that strengthen the link between femininity and nature: “[Belisa]... es tierra, cuerpo sin alma”. “Introducción”, p. 116.

<sup>92</sup> Busette, Obra Dramática de García Lorca, p. 139. For Busette, Belisa is reduced by her femaleness to the helpless victim of a biological determinism: “Sus necesidades físicas y el dominio que éstas ejercen sobre sus acciones se contemplan íntegramente en base al determinismo biológico”, p. 140.

<sup>93</sup> García-Posada, “Introducción”, p. 49.

clear, “Belisa es su cuerpo”<sup>94</sup>, while Perlimplín is constrained by “sus limitaciones físicas”.<sup>95</sup> These norms of oppositional gender are indeed referred to in the play when Marcolfa offers this advice to Perlimplín: “La mujer es débil si se la asusta a tiempo” (I, p. 259). But Marcolfa’s invocation of a traditional gender hierarchy, in which the strong male rules the weak female, makes little sense when Perlimplín, the insubstantial “monigote”, is governed in his actions by a woman (Marcolfa) and is in mortal fear of being married to a woman – “¿Será capaz de estrangularme?”, (I, p. 259). The hierarchy of gender values is stood on its head.

Of course, Perlimplín’s fears turn out to be justified in the sense that his love for Belisa will lead to his death, but by his own hand rather than hers. Perlimplín’s taking of his own life resolves the play with another inversion of the gender hierarchy: an inversion of “the so-called ‘Calderonian response’”.<sup>96</sup> For the ironically titled ‘don’ Perlimplín, the honour system represents the façade of socio-historical convention, another surface comparable to the soulless body of Belisa.<sup>97</sup> The death of Perlimplín is the logical consequence of his rejection of this superficial honour code: “¡Don Perlimplín no tiene honor!” (IV, p. 282). The honour code functioned to uphold a gender hierarchy in which the woman had no status except as an attribute, a possession, of the male. Any actual or suggested sexual transgression on her part imperilled the social integrity of the man. Such transgression could only be honourably corrected by her death. Fernández Cifuentes summarises the options Perlimplín has open to him before Belisa’s infidelity: “El marido puede entonces resultar ignorante, consentido o vengador”.<sup>98</sup> Perlimplín’s response to Belisa’s infidelity should have been to correct her

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<sup>94</sup> Busette, *Obra Dramática de García Lorca*, p. 141.

<sup>95</sup> *Obra Dramática de García Lorca*, p. 146.

<sup>96</sup> With reference to *Yerma*, David Johnston describes how Yerma inverts the effects of the honour code (as exemplified in the *capa y espada* plays of Pedro Calderón de la Barca, such as *El pintor de su deshonra* (1645) and *El médico de su honra* (1635)) by killing Juan. “In a country in which the violent retribution frequently visited on the wayward wife has been culturally codified – the so-called ‘Calderonian response’ – and socially and legally accepted, Yerma is turning the ultimate sanction of *machismo* against her husband”, “Introduction”, p. 11. It is significant that Juan suffers the fate Perlimplín feared, of being strangled by his wife. Both Juan and Perlimplín die through an inversion of the sexual hierarchy the honour code worked to maintain.

<sup>97</sup> We return to discuss social façades in Chapter Six on *La casa de Bernarda Alba*.

<sup>98</sup> Fernández Cifuentes, *García Lorca en el teatro*, p. 128.

transgression by spilling her blood, but Perlimplín does not consider her unfaithful to him as he sees Belisa's love for the young man (his alter ego) to be total and integral.<sup>99</sup> The only infidelity is that of Perlimplín's body which has betrayed Belisa in its incapacity to love her. Perlimplín's answer to Belisa's infidelity is an innovative reworking of the honour code, and, as Fernández Cifuentes reminds us, it is "una nueva lógica y desconcertante" that inverts the hierarchy of gender. Perlimplín accepts his status as physically weak and impotent before the youth, strength and beauty of Belisa. He subordinates his desire, his love, to hers.

Perlimplín's debility before his wife – "Belisa... con tantos encajes pareces una ola y me das el mismo miedo que de niño tuve al mar", (II, p. 261) –, is reproduced in his relationship to the young man, as Margarita Ucelay proposes. Perlimplín's alter ego is in many ways his opposite, "El Joven de la Capa Roja, hermoso, potente, fuerte, que desprecia el alma, 'patrimonio de los débiles', para quien el amor es simple posesión de un cuerpo".<sup>100</sup> The young man shares physical beauty and the desire for carnal pleasure with Belisa, values that can be identified, as they are with Belisa, as feminine. In contrast with Perlimplín, he also possesses strength and vigour, which are assigned as masculine values in traditional terms. The young man combines both masculine and feminine qualities in a beguiling physical form, which not only enslaves Belisa's imagination but mesmerises Perlimplín: "su belleza me deslumbró. Jamás he visto un hombre en que lo varonil y lo delicado se den de una manera más armónica" (III, p. 277). The young man occupies the position of embodying the male and the female, which may be placed at the top of an evolutionary scale. We recollect from our discussion in Chapter Two that for medical thought contemporary with García Lorca, man was the human species at its most evolved. Woman and the child were the preceding stages in human development: "la mujer, en su

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<sup>99</sup> García Lorca signalled this inversion of the honour code response in the same interview given to *El Heraldo de Madrid* on the eve of *Perlimplín*'s 1933 première. "El héroe, o antihéroe, a quien hacen cornudo, es español y calderoniano; pero no quiere reaccionar calderonianamente, y de ahí su lucha, la tragedia grotesca de su caso", Federico García Lorca, *Obras*, VI, *Prosa*, 1, p. 529.

<sup>100</sup> Ucelay, "Introducción", p. 201

evolución, es un grado intermedio entre el niño y el hombre”.<sup>101</sup> We might also recall what García-Posada calls Perlimplín’s “infantilismo” argued above, his behaviour and treatment as a child, and place Perlimplín on the first level of human development. Belisa has been cast by the critics as the archetypal woman, and, if so, can be located as the ‘intermediate’ human form, a stage below that of man and therefore devoid of ‘masculine’ qualities. The young man, with his balance of male and female attributes, represents the fully evolved.

The entire trajectory of human development appears to be reflected in Perlimplín’s narrative. However, as the play ends, we find this evolutionary curve has been interrupted, inverted and recast. Perlimplín does not remain in his child-like state of ingenuousness. He is transformed through his love for Belisa, acquiring a capacity for imaginative reflection and transcending the physical impossibility of his desire through a sacrifice that brings him to a spiritual level of Love. His sacrifice rids him of his debilitating body and reconstitutes his existence as a metaphysical entity or soul. Belisa also acquires, through Perlimplín’s sacrificial act, a non-corporeal dimension that belies her supposed feminine carnality. Her desire for the young man is transmuted into a soulful Love without object. The young man, of course, ‘disappears’, though he was never there in material terms. The perfect example of manliness was only ever a product of the childish Perlimplín’s and delicate Belisa’s imagination.

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<sup>101</sup> According to J. Botella Lluisa and J. A. Clavero Núñez’s medical reference volume, this theory of human development was first rehearsed by one of the pioneers of modern Spanish medicine, Gregorio Marañón. The latter was both a contemporary and acquaintance of García Lorca’s. The work of Marañón on female sterility has been utilised to great effect by Paul Julian Smith in order to produce some fascinating analysis of García Lorca’s *Yerma* (“Yerma and the Doctors: García Lorca, Marañón, and the Anxiety of Bisexuality” in Smith, *The Theatre of García Lorca*, pp.16-43). Although Marañón was working in the early part of the twentieth century, his theory is supported by Botella Lluisa and Clavero Núñez in their text from 1979. As they argue, Marañón’s thinking is backed up by contemporary biology which proposes “un sexo básico” and “un sexo diferenciado”, with the ‘basic sex’ (that which is monogametic – made up of one type of chromosome) being female in mammals and reptiles, and male in, for example, birds. Humans are therefore classified as protogyniac, the basic sex being female, whilst birds are protoandriac. “La constitución femenina” in *Tratado de Obstetricia y Ginecología, Vol. III, Enfermedades del aparato genital femenino*, (Barcelona: Editores Científico-Médica, 1979), pp.58-9.

### *3.7 Towards a production of new subjectivity*

A question remains to be answered, which is crucial to understanding the importance of García Lorca's project in Perlimplín. We have seen how Perlimplín and Belisa exchange one representative form for another, the physical for the non-corporeal, the body for the soul. The flimsy desires of the material are traded for sublime transcendent Love. We have also looked at the effects of gender role reversal, where the values of the masculine are interchanged for the feminine. The male protagonist of the play is depicted initially as feeble and insubstantial, he is dominated and played for a fool by his female servant and by his wife. He only gains strength and independence by doing exactly the opposite of what a man cheated on by his wife should do, negating himself for her. The 'natural' order is overturned. But, is this inversion of the cultural, social, sexual and moral hierarchy, this subversion of the normative, successful in displacing the dominant term in each opposition and does it allow the creation of new styles of existence? In theatrical terms, does the poet's redeployment of established dramatic forms, open up for humanity new and provocative styles of staging "lo más profundo de su historia y de su ser"?

It is quite feasible for the exchanges to take place on the levels cited above without the structure of dominant/subordinate cultures being threatened. A simple case of inversion does not attack the structure but works within it, hence the masculine trading roles with the feminine still makes sense in the terms of the binary opposition. The male may behave as the female or vice versa, but the two terms male and female continue to exist, the position changed rather than the substance. To help us to see how the effects of inversion might still offer the opportunity for displacement, and with it the possibility for new ways of being, Jonathan Dollimore has proposed Derrida's argument that inversion is a necessary step in a displacement process:

Derrida has insisted that metaphysics can only be contested from within, by disrupting its structures and redirecting its force against itself. He defines the binary opposition as a 'violent hierarchy' where one of the two terms forcefully governs the other, and insists



that a crucial stage in the deconstruction of binaries involves their inversion, an overturning, which brings low what was high.<sup>102</sup>

It is the punitive and disruptive effects of 'lowering what was high' that recommend the tactic of inversion as part of a process to carve out new space for new identities. García Lorca finds himself firmly engaged with modernist concerns over depth identity, of the relationship of the soul to the body, and over doubts about the very existence of the soul. In the latter sense, the poet foreshadows the late-modern loss of belief in depth, truth and essence.

The series of transformations which proceed from the ritual dagger penetrating Perlimplín's chest realise a whole new set of identities in the play. Perlimplín is reconstituted on a metaphysical level as the soul that Belisa's carnality lacked. Belisa is introduced to impossible Love and her being is reconfigured with a spiritual dimension that literally animates her empty corporeal form. The handsome, strong, vibrant young man is revealed as a theatrical mask, the costume that outlined his physical form collapsed and discarded. The provisional and contingent constitution of these identities, the insubstantiality of form and the mutability of their existence all point to late-modern concerns in their de-essentialising, de-centering, of the subject. And yet García Lorca, a writer of his time, concerns himself with the very modernist depth-model of identity. Amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín is, if anything, a focussed meditation on the modern idea of the soul. Not the medieval Christian soul that is part of some divine scheme of sin, punishment and forgiveness, rather, the modern soul of Foucault's memorable phrase "the prison of the body", forged out of political and social regulation of the body.<sup>103</sup>

Perlimplín's transformation of identity from "monigote sin fuerzas" to "monigote humano", from the corporal to the spiritual, does not seek to border and limit the body; instead the transformation takes place by transgressing the body's boundaries. There is, like the Christian

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<sup>102</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, Sexual Dissidence, p. 65.

<sup>103</sup> See Jonathan Dollimore, Sexual Dissidence, p. 97-8, for an elaboration of this assessment of Foucault's concept of the soul. Foucault's words are from Dollimore's citation of his work Discipline and Punishment.

conceptualisation of the soul, a transcendence of the material, but, unlike the medieval notion, Perlimplín is reconstituted as another Self. This relates to Foucault's enterprise of self-styling, as articulated by David Halperin:

“to cultivate oneself [...] is not to explore or experience some given self, conceived as a determinate private realm, a space of personal interiority, but instead to use one's relation to oneself as a potential resource with which to construct new modalities of subjective agency”<sup>104</sup>

The sacrifice Perlimplín makes is of desire for Love and of one self for another, and with this sacrifice he is the forerunner of El público's Gonzalo who gives up his physical life, his corporal identity as an attempt to bring depth, truth and an essential fixity to the constantly changing form of his lover Enrique.

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<sup>104</sup> The theories of self-cultivation, or *askesis* as the Greeks called it, are those to which Foucault devotes much time exploring in volumes two and three of The History of Sexuality. See David Halperin, Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography, (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 76.

## Chapter Four:

### El público: struggling with identity

#### 4.1 *The 'impossible' drama: homosexuality, text and structure*

In April 1936, just three months before he left Madrid for Granada for the last time, García Lorca was interviewed by Felipe Morales for the journal *La Voz*.<sup>1</sup> Asked about his theatre, Federico designated unequivocally his “primeras comedias” as “irrepresentables” and “imposibles”.<sup>2</sup> With the first Spanish professional productions of Así que pasen cinco años, El público and Comedia sin título taking place in 1987 and 1989,<sup>3</sup> respectively, what the poet once considered quite impossible to produce has now triumphed on the stage of his native land.<sup>4</sup> However, the epithet of “impossible” lives on. It has been mobilised and extended by a succession of critical voices to classify a section of García Lorca’s theatre, including El público, and various dialogues such as “La doncella, el marinero y el estudiante” and “El paseo de Buster Keaton”.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Federico García Lorca, Obras, VI, Prosa, 1, ed. Miguel García-Posada, (Madrid: Akal, 1992), pp. 728-733. On García Lorca’s last few months in Madrid, see Ian Gibson, Federico García Lorca, A Life, (London: Faber & Faber, 1989), pp. 425-445; for this interview, pp. 431-2.

<sup>2</sup> Federico García Lorca, Obras, VI, Prosa, 1, p. 731

<sup>3</sup> As M<sup>a</sup> Angeles Grande Rosales has summarised in “El público: la verdad de las máscaras” in La verdad de las máscaras: teatro y vanguardia en Federico García Lorca, Imprévue, 1 (1999), p. 117.

<sup>4</sup> In an interview he gave to José S. Serna, in Albacete, 1933, García Lorca assured his readers that all of his work to date would be published shortly. As well as a new “exquisita” edition of Mariana Pineda, the poet lists his theatre works, La zapatera prodigiosa, Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín, Así que pasen cinco años and Bodas de sangre. He also mentions El público, but distinguishes this piece by saying that “no se ha estrenado ni ha de estrenarse nunca, porque no se puede’ estrenar.” El público is, thus, singled out as being ‘impossible’.

<sup>5</sup> These are the texts chosen by García-Posada for the fifth volume of his 1992 edition of García Lorca’s complete works, and which he subtitled “Teatro imposible”. Since Rafael Martínez Nadal published the copy of the manuscript of El público, Autógrafos II. El público, (Oxford: Dolphin Book Co., 1976) the term “teatro imposible” has denominated a range of critical works dedicated to El público, in particular. The University of Lyon publication, Organon in 1978 released a collection of essays styled Lorca, Théâtre Impossible. A compilation of criticism issued by the Università degli Studi di Salerno, in 1989, went under the name of L’impossible/posible di Federico García Lorca. Julio Huélamo Kosma’s study of El público, which he called El teatro imposible de García Lorca, was published by the University of Granada in 1996. As recently as April 1999, the journal of the Centre d’Etudes et de Recherches

What is it, we might speculate, about these works that continues to qualify this theatre as impossible? To begin, we propose to narrow the scope of this inquiry to El público, following García Lorca's own lead.<sup>6</sup> The briefest perusal of the critical studies of this play yields two clusters of concurring thought. Firstly, the play is concerned thematically with homosexuality, and, secondly, the very condition in which the text has reached us, allied with the internal structure of the piece, renders its reading problematic and demanding. On the first point, Gwynne Edwards is quite plain: "The Public deals with the theme of homosexuality, and does so in a particularly powerful and uncompromising way".<sup>7</sup> Equally explicit is García-Posada: "La obra nos instala en un universo homosexual".<sup>8</sup> María Ángeles Grande Rosales believes that the text might be considered "una suerte de danza trágica de amor homosexual".<sup>9</sup> For Julio Huélamo Kosma, there is the personal drama facing the play's protagonist, the Director, who is "urgido [...] a mostrar su verdadera inclinación homosexual".<sup>10</sup> María Estela Harretche adds an embellishment to the Director's erotic interest: "el amor del Director es un amor homosexual, amor oscuro".<sup>11</sup> While the former readers view the principal theme in terms of physical (homosexual) love, Marie Laffranque makes an important distinction, treating the subject of love as a metaphysical question, "Amor" rather than "amor". But Laffranque still grounds this more spiritual notion of Love by circumscribing it within the frame of male homosexuality: "la cuestión primordial, más que el tema, de El público, [es...] el Amor, visto a través de la homosexualidad masculina".<sup>12</sup> In sum, the majority of critical opinion supports the idea of a homosexual love theme, as Juanjo Guerenabarrena contends.<sup>13</sup>

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hispanique du XXème siècle of the Université de Bourgogne published a corpus of essays with the title Le Théâtre de l'Impossible.

<sup>6</sup> We refer again to the poet's statement, setting apart El público from his other dramas as 'unstageable', cited above.

<sup>7</sup> Gwynne Edwards, "Introduction" in Federico García Lorca, Plays: Three: Mariana Pineda. The Public. Play Without a Title, (London: Methuen, 1994), p. xxiv.

<sup>8</sup> Miguel García-Posada, "Introducción" in Federico García Lorca, Obras, V. Teatro, 3. (Teatro imposible), Cine, Música, ed. M. García-Posada, (Madrid: Akal, 1992), p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> Grande Rosales, "El público: la verdad de las máscaras", p. 96.

<sup>10</sup> Huélamo Kosma, El teatro imposible, p. 27.

<sup>11</sup> M<sup>a</sup> Estela Harretche, Federico García Lorca: Análisis de una revolución teatral, (Madrid: Gredos, 2000), p. 28.

<sup>12</sup> Marie Laffranque, "Poeta y público" in Cuadernos El Público, Madrid, 20 (January 1987), p. 32.

<sup>13</sup> Juanjo Guerenabarrena, "Primera noticia de un estudio apasionante" in Cuadernos..., pp. 58-9.

Ian Gibson, characteristically, has shed some light on García Lorca's own statements regarding the homosexual theme of El público. Referring to Federico's stay in Buenos Aires, Gibson claims: "The poet was as careful as he had been in Spain not to be explicit about the theme of The Public, and [he does not] seem to have hinted (at least in public) at its homosexual content".<sup>14</sup> Perhaps not in public, but in a private letter to Rafael Martínez Nadal, written on his return from Cuba and from his drafting of the play there, García Lorca describes El público as being "francamente homosexual".<sup>15</sup>

As regards the structure of the play, the source of the difficulties in a reading of El público lies in the condition of the text that has reached us. Huéllamo Kosma maintains that the most serious textual problem facing the reader is "su presunto carácter incompleto".<sup>16</sup> Since he published a transcribed, edited version of the manuscript copy in his possession, Martínez Nadal has held that a fourth act exists but is missing<sup>17</sup>. García-Posada,<sup>18</sup> following María Clementa Millán,<sup>19</sup> prefers to view the manuscript as complete, hypothesising that the poet intended breaking up the third section of the script, entitled "Muro de arena" (comprising 44 pages versus the 20 pages of *Cuadro I*, 18 pages of "Ruina romana", 24 pages of *Cuadro V* and 14 pages of *Cuadro VI*<sup>20</sup>) in order to make sense of the numbering of acts five and six. Huéllamo Kosma throws further doubt on Martínez Nadal's contention. The former's recollections of the composition of El público are, at best, contradictory. He describes how Martínez Nadal stated in his 1970 study of the play that the version he recalled García Lorca reading in 1936 was divided into three acts: three

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<sup>14</sup> Ian Gibson, Federico García Lorca, p. 365.

<sup>15</sup> See Ian Gibson, "Ausencias lorquianas" in the Catalogue to the exhibition mounted in the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in 1998, Federico García Lorca (1890-1936), (Madrid: Editores Tf., 1998), published on behalf of the Comisión Nacional Organizadora de los Actos Conmemorativos del Nacimiento de Federico García Lorca, pp. 65-7. As Gibson points out, this is the only documented occasion when García Lorca is known to have used the word homosexual in any of his writings.

<sup>16</sup> Huéllamo Kosma, El teatro imposible, p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> As Huéllamo Kosma, El teatro imposible, pp. 18-9, reminds us, since he first put forward the idea in his joint introduction with Marie Laffranque in Federico García Lorca, El público y Comedia sin título, (Barcelona: Editores Seix Barral, 1978). Martínez Nadal has frequently reiterated his belief.

<sup>18</sup> García-Posada, "Introducción", p. 495.

<sup>19</sup> "Introducción" in Federico García Lorca, El público, ed. M<sup>a</sup> Clementa Millán, (Madrid: Cátedra, 1987), p. 109.

<sup>20</sup> According to Huéllamo Kosma's enumeration of the manuscript. El teatro imposible, p. 22.

scenes in the first, two in the third, the second being the *cuadro* that is now 'missing'. Then, in his edition with Millán, from 1978, Martínez Nadal recalls the reading the poet gave in 1930 or 1931 where the work comprised three acts with two scenes apiece.<sup>21</sup>

The question of whether or not the text is complete may, however, be deceptive. Francisco Ruiz Ramón does not go along with either editorial position:

desde que fuera editado por Rafael Martínez Nadal [...] tratamos [el borrador] como si fuera el texto acabado y cabal en sí, que no tenemos, es decir, como un todo orgánicamente cerrado, acabado ya por su autor el proceso textual.<sup>22</sup>

Sensing that the structure may be an unsolicited restriction on the reader, Ruiz Ramón believes it is important to ask “¿Pero es esa estructura real o virtual?”<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, the position that the Pastor Bobo's poem should occupy in the text is another significant point of disagreement among editors and critics. Both the editions of Millán and García-Posada are faithful to Martínez Nadal's location of the speech between fifth and sixth *Cuadros*. On the other hand, both Rosanna Vitale and Ana María Gómez Torres have argued that the piece belongs at the opening of the drama as a type of *introito* following the style of the *auto sacramental* in the sixteenth century.<sup>24</sup> As Ruiz Ramón has observed,<sup>25</sup> the defining 1987 production of Lluís Pasqual in Madrid eschewed both the initial and penultimate positions, playing the scene at the end of the third section, “Muro de arena”, and before *Cuadro V*.

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<sup>21</sup> Huéllamo Kosma, *El teatro imposible*, p. 20. In the course of this thesis, we follow as faithfully as possible the numbering (or lack) of the play's acts according to García Lorca's manuscript. Thus we refer in the body text of this chapter to the first section as *Cuadro I*, the unnumbered second as *Cuadro* “Ruina romana”, similarly the long third section as *Cuadro* “Muro de arena”, the fourth section (as it has come to us) as *Cuadro V*, and the fifth and final section as *Cuadro VI*. The only exceptions to our scheme are the bracketed references to act and page numbers. For this purpose we refer to *Cuadro* “Ruina romana” as II, and *Cuadro* “Muro de arena” as III. All such references to the text of *El público* are taken from Federico García Lorca, *Obras, V, Teatro, 3, Cine, Música*, ed. García-Posada, (Madrid: Akal, 1992), pp. 71-157.

<sup>22</sup> Francisco Ruiz Ramón, “Sobre la ‘imposibilidad’ del ‘teatro imposible’: *El público*” in *Le théâtre de l'impossible*, *Hispanística XX*, 1999, p. 10.

<sup>23</sup> Ruiz Ramón, “Sobre la ‘imposibilidad’”, p. 12. We return to questions on the structure, such as this, in Section 7, below.

<sup>24</sup> See Rosanna Vitale, *El metateatro en la obra de García Lorca*, (Madrid: Editores Pliegos, 1991), and Ana M<sup>a</sup> Gómez Torres, *Experimentación y teoría en el teatro de Federico García Lorca*, (Málaga: Editores Arguval, 1995), pp. 37-43.

<sup>25</sup> Ruiz Ramón, “Sobre la ‘imposibilidad’”, p. 13.

Effectively, this situating of the piece suggested a pretender to Martínez Nadal's missing scene. It seems that the dislocation of the Pastor Bobo poem offers an opportunity to the stage director to communicate a vision of the play through an interpretation of text, crafting the ideas of the poet's words into an effective stage practice. Therefore, Ruiz Ramón believes that the mobilisation of the Pastor Bobo speech is quite acceptable, given the right director, as "todo, si está bien hecho, si no pierde su coherencia interna, [...] todo es posible en el teatro".<sup>26</sup>

Unfortunately, the internal coherence of the play in structural terms is very much at stake. Rafael Martínez Nadal envisioned the structure in the form of a downward spiral.<sup>27</sup> He saw a gradual descent taking place from the setting of *Cuadro I* in the Director's office to the, partially buried, partly exposed, ruins of *Cuadro* "Ruina romana" and down through the *Cuadro* "Muro de arena" to Julieta's tomb. The sequence is defined as *superficie-semientierro-espacio soterrado* by Andrés Neuman.<sup>28</sup> An ascent to *Cuadro V* follows, with the action arriving back at the Director's office for *Cuadro VI* and a circular motion established. As is suggested by Martínez Nadal's structuring, María Estela Harretche is convinced that "hay evolución en la obra y hay linealidad en la evolución".<sup>29</sup> In much the same voice, Julio Huéllamo Kosma asserts: "el drama posee un desarrollo lógicamente progresivo".<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the latter takes the proposition of a linear evolution to a sensible conclusion and maps out a schematic of the play's structure, complete with figurative drawings.<sup>31</sup> His structure advocates a double plane on which the action unfolds progressively and in parallel, with one level manifest and the other occluded. The plan becomes rather more complicated when dimensions other than the spatial and temporal, such as the erotic and the social, are added. Huéllamo Kosma uses the simile of "cajas chinas" to

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<sup>26</sup> Ruiz Ramón, "Sobre la 'imposibilidad'", p. 13.

<sup>27</sup> Rafael Martínez Nadal, *El público: Amor y muerte en la obra de Federico García Lorca*, (Oxford: Dolphin Book Company, 1970), p. 71.

<sup>28</sup> Andrés Neuman, "Desnudo rojo, rojo desnudo" in *Extramuros*, III 11-12 (October 1998), pp. 67-71, esp. p. 69.

<sup>29</sup> Harretche, *Federico García Lorca*, p. 75.

<sup>30</sup> Huéllamo Kosma, *El teatro imposible*, p. 27.

<sup>31</sup> Huéllamo Kosma, *El teatro imposible*, p. 88 & p. 144.

visualise his conceptualisation and goes on to propose “una configuración simbólica de espacio” where action moves up and down, forwards and back, and occurs inside and out.<sup>32</sup>

Not everyone is persuaded by the claims of an apparent structure. Luis Fernández Cifuentes has deconstructed Martínez Nadal’s pre-emptive analysis of the play, one that has had a constant stranglehold on all subsequent research. The former’s conclusion is that the many references to episodes occurring outside of the action of the play, which Martínez Nadal does not account for in his formation of time and events, render the latter’s examination flawed.<sup>33</sup> In opposition to Harrette’s linear evolution and Huélamo Kosma’s configurations, there is the view of María Angeles Grande Rosales, who emphasises

la fragmentariedad estructural de la pieza, el escaso nexo lógico de las escenas, la manera abrupta y arbitraria en que aparece la mezcla de personajes mitológicos y reales que a su vez desdoblan, [...] en general la contaminación onírica de la acción, [...] y la ausencia prácticamente absoluta de trama, de lógica discursiva y psicologismo.<sup>34</sup>

Ana María Gómez Torres believes the key to understanding the fragmented, volatile composition of El público is to be found in García Lorca’s film script, Viaje a la luna, a contemporary work of El público. In this silent movie play García Lorca employs “la técnica del llamado ‘montaje ideológico’, sobre la que teorizaron los directores Eisenstein and Pudovkin”.<sup>35</sup>

The structure of the drama, therefore, is not an easy matter to categorise. Nor do the concomitant textual problems make the play a straightforward read. But do they make the reading of, or even performing of, El público impossible? Ruiz Ramón’s instinct is that they do not: “leer El público [...] puede ser [...] una lectura de funambulista, peligrosa y arriesgada, pero

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<sup>32</sup> Huélamo Kosma, El teatro imposible, p. 99, & p. 104.

<sup>33</sup> Luis Fernández Cifuentes, García Lorca en el teatro: la norma y la diferencia, (Zaragoza: Universidad de Zaragoza, 1986), pp. 285-6.

<sup>34</sup> Grande Rosales, “El público: la verdad de las máscaras”, p. 97.

<sup>35</sup> Gómez Torres, “La destrucción o el teatro: El público de Lorca” in *Hispanística XX*, pp. 37-8. Her theory of the ideological montage is supported by García-Posada’s comments in his “Introducción”, p. 24. It is interesting to consider the devices of montage, as Gómez Torres describes it, in relation to the type of theatre production García Lorca envisions in El público: “las sobreimpresiones, el fundido y la doble y la triple exposición”.



no mortal”.<sup>36</sup> While Gómez Torres writes of “el teatro imposible hecho posible”,<sup>37</sup> there is also the issue of the homosexual love theme and whether this is what García Lorca was referring to when he told the journalist José S. Serna, “ [El público ] ‘no se puede’ estrenar”. For Gwynne Edwards the theme of homosexuality provides both an “explanation for the reaction of Lorca’s friends to the play’s initial reading [at Carlos Morla Lynch’s house in 1930 or 1931 – a reaction of disbelief and incredulity] and the family’s subsequent reluctance to see it published” and the reason for “Lorca’s observation to Martínez Nadal that the play was ‘for the time being impossible to put on’”.<sup>38</sup> Miguel García-Posada puts forward the notion that El público is “un drama de hombres [...que] viven en una sociedad en que la homosexualidad está proscrita”. His introduction of the word “proscrita” suggests why the play’s theme makes it impossible to stage. However, since the play’s premiere in 1986, staged as a ballet by the “Grand Théâtre of Geneva”, there is no longer any doubting the possibility of performing El público. Perhaps now, but what of García Lorca’s times? Was it not the case, as Edwards contends, that the poet was convinced of the impossibility of its production?<sup>39</sup> Perhaps so, but not necessarily because of its ‘homosexual theme’. In 1929, Cipriano Rivas Cherif and his company *Caracol* had mounted a production of the latter’s play, El sueño de la razón, which treated the subject of love between two women, and, as Ian Gibson reports, the play was “well received by its critics, who considered Rivas’s treatment of the theme dignified and humane”.<sup>40</sup> With regard, then, to the structure of the play, its principal theme and its supposed impossibility of production there is some uncertainty on the part of its critics. These doubts are compounded when we consider the

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<sup>36</sup> Ruiz Ramón, “Sobre la ‘imposibilidad’”, p. 15.

<sup>37</sup> Gómez Torres, Experimentación y teoría, p. 45.

<sup>38</sup> Edwards, “Introduction”, pp. 24-5.

<sup>39</sup> Edwards refers to the reactions reported by Martínez Nadal of those who had attended the 1930/1 reading in Morla Lynch’s house. One comment was, “Estupendo, pero irrepresentable”, another, “yo, la verdad, confieso que no he entendido nada”, El público. Amor, teatro y caballos, p. 20 & p. 255. According to Martínez Nadal and his memory (Gibson comments, with more than a pinch of salt, on “su tendencia a recrear con inexplicable precisión conversaciones mantenidas cuarenta años antes”, “El insatisfactorio estado de la cuestión” in *Cuadernos El Público*, p. 16), García Lorca responded to the comments of the reading’s audience with the remark: “No se han enterado de nada, y lo comprendo. La obra es muy difícil y por el momento irrepresentable, tienen razón. Pero dentro de diez o veinte años será un exitazo, ya lo verás”. Accepting Martínez Nadal’s recollections as accurate, it would be another fifty or so years before the play was performed with the success the poet predicted.

<sup>40</sup> Ian Gibson, Federico García Lorca, p. 294.

ambiguous treatment of the “homosexual” theme, and the disparity of critical thought as to the style of the play.

#### 4.2 'Pansexualism': a dilution of the margins

“Si cuando Lorca quiere elogiar la belleza de jóvenes gitanos pinta un Antoñito el Camborio, o un San Gabriel; si cuando quiere defender la legitimidad del amor homosexual escribe la *Oda a Walt Whitman* o *El público*”.

Thus Martínez Nadal defends García Lorca from accusations that he disguised as women the men that were his true erotic interest.<sup>41</sup> But just as Martínez Nadal advances the stridency of García Lorca's homosexuality, so he retreats from such bold statements and adopts a more ambiguous position: “lo que le mueve [a Federico] es el amor por todas las víctimas de la sociedad y de la vida”.<sup>42</sup> He writes with indignation of what he calls “obsesión pro o anti homosexual”. When asked directly by María Remedios Casamar if he believed García Lorca to be homosexual, Martínez Nadal again sidesteps into ambiguity: “No. No era un homosexual como la gente lo entiende. No había en él nada afeminado. Yo diría que era pansexual”.<sup>43</sup>

Francisco Umbral has criticised Martínez Nadal's equivocal stance:

después de admitir la temática homosexual en Lorca, parece arrepentido de esta osadía para con el amigo, y en segunda parte de su libro trata de probarnos, por ejemplo, que Lorca nunca utilizó 'Albertines'. Es decir, que no disfrazó a los hombres de mujeres, en su teatro o en sus poemas. En todo caso, está aplicando juicios morales a la obra maravillosamente amoral de Federico García Lorca.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Martínez Nadal, *El público. Amor, teatro y caballos*, p. 139.

<sup>42</sup> Martínez Nadal, *El público. Amor, teatro y caballos*, p. 134.

<sup>43</sup> “En Londres con Rafael Martínez Nadal” in *Extramuros*, III 11-12 (October 1998), pp. 79-80.

<sup>44</sup> *Revista de Occidente*, 32 (1971), p. 221. Cited by Angel Sahuquillo, “García Lorca y la cultura de la homosexualidad” in *Cuadernos El Público*, p. 63. Umbral adopts here a contrary tone to his chapter on “Los homosexuales” in his *Lorca: poeta maldito*, (Barcelona: Editores Bruguera, 1977), (first published 1968), pp. 134-141, where he echoes Martínez Nadal by clearly stating: “Creemos que pansexualismo, y no homosexualismo [*sic*], es la palabra necesaria para entender la libido lorquiana”.

Martínez Nadal is not, however, the only reader to attenuate the play's proposed theme of "homosexual love" with his use of the term "pansexualismo". In his introductory analysis of the play, from his edition of the collected works of the poet, García-Posada finds that "el Caballo Blanco 1 proclama su pansexualismo".<sup>45</sup> Marie Laffranque disagrees with Guy Dumur's use of the term in his review of the 1979 French translation of the complete works for *Le Nouvel Observateur*, suggesting instead that "la cuestión primordial [...] de El público, no es el 'pansexualismo', sino el 'Amor' [...] el amor humano en todos sus planos o modalidades y bajo todas sus formas". But we find Laffranque's logic a little confusing. On one hand she appears to identify Love, in its symbolic, sublime sense, as the focus of the play, and yet her definition of this "Amor" encompasses all forms of 'human' love, including presumably physical love. Furthermore, her point appears to be aimed at rejecting the notion of 'pansexuality' on the grounds that the poet's concern with Love only has a bearing on human relationships.<sup>46</sup> Elsewhere, and while not using the term 'pansexuality', Julio Huéllamo Kosma, at a certain point in his 1996 study changes the focus, from 'homosexual' love, to (all forms of physical) love in general, which sounds much like the hypothesis of 'pansexual' love: "el amor homosexual [...] debería ser aceptado por todos [...] en la medida en que es amor sin adjetivaciones posteriores".<sup>47</sup> García-Posada views this liberal proposition as "la apología del amor homosexual".<sup>48</sup>

The difficulty with the 'homosexual love' theme is that it is too narrow to encompass the range of challenging questions the text advances, and hence the attempts to broaden the scope with the term "pansexualismo". Luis Fernández Cifuentes views concentration on 'homosexual love' as reductionist:

cuando Martínez Nadal reduce el 'problema-drama' al 'amor homosexual' proporciona una sola respuesta a la cuestión del Estudiante 2 '¿Es que Romeo y Julieta tienen que ser

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<sup>45</sup> García-Posada, "Introducción", p. 12.

<sup>46</sup> Laffranque, "Poeta y público", p. 32.

<sup>47</sup> Huéllamo Kosma, *El teatro imposible*, p. 62.

<sup>48</sup> García-Posada, "Introducción", p. 8.

necesariamente un hombre y una mujer?”. Pero el texto [...] propone [...] una serie de combinaciones arbitrarias.<sup>49</sup>

A way out of this awkward ‘homosexual’ or ‘pansexual’ muddle would be to conclude that attempts to classify and define are in conflict with the spirit of deconstruction and disintegration that haunts the play. It would also do García Lorca the justice of viewing the concern he shows for philosophical questions in the drama as legitimately universal, rather than sideline and contain, that is limit the impact of, his ideas as the obscure preoccupations of someone on the margins of dominant sexual culture. In terms of the drama’s deconstructive ethos, what is recognisable in the text, at necessarily contingent and dispersed moments, is the pursuit of a coherent, stable identity, that nevertheless remains elusive and phantasmic. The question of identity is brought under interrogation in El público through the treatment of gender and sex as provisional and constructed categories. This movement from a central theme of ‘homosexual love’ to the philosophical terrain of subjective identity is summarised by María Ángeles Grande Rosales:

leer El público como alegato de defensa del amor homosexual resulta simplista y distorsiona lo que desde otro punto de vista puede parecer el mayor hallazgo de una obra tan paradójica e incomprensible para su tiempo: la problematización de la identidad sexual, de las categorías conflictivas de lo masculino y lo femenino y, en último término, la disolución metafísica de la noción de identidad.<sup>50</sup>

The same critics who classify certain theatre works of García Lorca as “teatro imposible” also term those works as experimental or “vanguardista”<sup>51</sup>. The dividing line between the experimental and the traditional has been examined by Antonio Sánchez Trigueros. He offers this assessment of García Lorca:

es un artista que simultáneamente tantea entre muy diversos estilos, y a la vez que está reafirmando el teatro de la tradición [...] perfila un tipo de *comedia imposible* que no

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<sup>49</sup> Fernández Cifuentes, García Lorca en el teatro, p. 283.

<sup>50</sup> Grande Rosales, “El público: la verdad de las máscaras”, p. 109.

<sup>51</sup> García-Posada, for example, “Introducción”, p. 5.

sólo pone en entredicho a aquel teatro sino que realmente propone su absoluta destrucción.<sup>52</sup>

In the same sense as Sánchez Trigueros indicates that the poet tried out diverse styles in his theatre concurrently, so the range of critical opinion differs as to the genre of El público. Above all, the categorising of the drama as experimental helps to marginalize and contain the work's impact, just as the supposed 'homosexual love' theme demotes the poet's promotion of transcendent Love over any form of carnal desire.

#### *4.3 Poetic logic: surrealism, expressionism and other questions of style*

Given that there are those such as Huéllamo Kosma who contend that El público is “un proceso onírico”,<sup>53</sup> it is not surprising that a surrealist influence has been detected in the play. Grande Rosales points out that “se han escrito [...] ríos de tinta sobre la cuestionable asimilación de la poética de Lorca a la ortodoxia surrealista”.<sup>54</sup> Millán is a notable proponent of a surrealist scheme, but with important reservations. Considering the play to be a representation of “el mundo interior”, Millán writes of this inner world as fracturing into “perspectivas distintas, obedeciendo en gran parte a la tendencia que se ha ido adueñando de la poesía moderna, hasta culminar en el movimiento superrealista”. It is because of the resulting complexity in the work that she attributes difficulties in “la comprensión de la obra [...] que ha sido asociada [...] con el movimiento superrealista”; however, “la influencia no es excesiva, ya que hay poco en ella de onírico o subconsciente”.<sup>55</sup> In general, there is, she believes, a marked difference between those Spanish poets influenced by surrealism (García Lorca, Alberti, Cernuda) and their French counterparts (Cocteau, Jarry). While the latter display a sensibility that is “irónico y burlón”, the Spanish have “un carácter trágico de enfrentamiento con la propia existencia”<sup>56</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup> Antonio Sánchez Trigueros, “Texto de tradición y espectáculo de vanguardia. (A propósito del teatro de Federico García Lorca)” in La verdad de las máscaras, p. 21.

<sup>53</sup> Huéllamo Kosma, El teatro imposible, p. 89.

<sup>54</sup> Grande Rosales, “El público: la verdad de las máscaras”, p. 102.

<sup>55</sup> Millán, “Introducción”, p. 22.

<sup>56</sup> Millán, “Introducción”, p. 19.

Clearly there are differences, as María Estela Harretche would have it, between traces of a surrealist influence in the work of García Lorca and his wholehearted commitment to the tenets of the Movement. Harretche cites a letter to Sebastià Gasch where García Lorca argues forcefully against submitting to one particular artistic philosophy:

¡Dejad que corra el aire! ¿No te angustia la idea de un mar con todos los peces atados con cadenas a un solo punto, sin conciencia? No discuto el dogma. Pero no quiero ver el punto donde se acabe *ese dogma*.<sup>57</sup>

The surrealist label is only one attempt to come to terms with the irrational, oneiric imagery of the play.

Richard Cardwell prefers to situate the piece within the school of European expressionist thought, believing this would account for the exteriorisation of the inner world. His outline of expressionist theatre demonstrates how the style is consonant with the irrationality and the ‘impossibility’ of *El público*: “el teatro expresionista [...] ofrece estructuras que parecen llevar a los personajes a un fin imposible a través de caminos circulares y laberintos sin salida”.<sup>58</sup> However, Grande Rosales, for one, views the expressionist designation of the play as problematic.<sup>59</sup> Millán, in opposition to the surrealist categorisation, sees the representative capacity of the spoken word as crucial to the play.<sup>60</sup> Gómez Torres does not believe the word is paramount, pointing instead to the significance and expressiveness of both the verbal and non-verbal:

como la flauta y su música en ‘Ruina romana’; [otras veces la función referencial del lenguaje es sustituida por otras formas expresivas,] como los parlamentos invertidos, especulares de los Caballos.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Harretche, *Federico García Lorca*, p. 53.

<sup>58</sup> Richard A. Cardwell, “‘Mi sed inquieta’: Expresionismo y vanguardia en el drama lorquiano” in *La verdad de las máscaras*, pp. 41-66.

<sup>59</sup> Grande Rosales, “El público: la verdad de las máscaras”, p. 102.

<sup>60</sup> Millán, “Introducción”, p. 22.

<sup>61</sup> Gómez Torres, “La destrucción o el teatro”, p. 32.

For Fernández Cifuentes, the word becomes a transgressive signifier, which is liberated from the signified, generates the irrational and constitutes the performance:

el discurso rompe los límites del hablante, concediendo la palabra a los caballos y los vestidos; rompe los límites del sentido y la necesidad con la interferencia de fragmentos irreductibles; rompe los límites de la mera *comunicación* oral para servir sobre todo a la *creación* de un espectáculo.<sup>62</sup>

In effect, the negation of the word and reason demonstrates an anticipation in El público of the Theatre of the Absurd.

The absurdism or irrationality that lends the play its oneiric quality has also led some critics to look to interpret the dream-like drama in the style of Sigmund Freud. As Ángel Sahuquillo recalls, the first to undertake a study making use of Freud's theories was Carlos Feal Deibe in his Eros y Lorca (1973).<sup>63</sup> Julio Huéllamo Kosma's El teatro imposible de García Lorca is a wide-ranging account of Freud's influence on the play. In the same way as Freud in his "Interpretation of Dreams" (1900) and "On Dreams" (1911) imposes structures on the dream with his denominated elements of dream-thoughts, dream-work, and dream-content, Huéllamo Kosma sets out to analyse the disparate characters and irrational events that constitute the representation of the play.<sup>64</sup> Availing of the terminology Freud proposes in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (1920) and "The Ego and the Id" (1923),<sup>65</sup> Huéllamo Kosma figures the contents of the drama into the scheme of the ego, the superego and the id, a reconceptualisation of the early conscious, unconscious and pre-conscious.<sup>66</sup> The resulting interpretation has influenced other readers, notably García-Posada, with its persuasive, systematic ordering of the

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<sup>62</sup> Fernández Cifuentes, García Lorca en el teatro, pp. 292-3.

<sup>63</sup> Ángel Sahuquillo, "García Lorca y la cultura...", p.62.

<sup>64</sup> We have consulted Sigmund Freud, A Freud Reader, ed. Peter Gay, (London: Vintage, 1995).

<sup>65</sup> Amongst other essays including "The Unconscious" (1915) and "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917).

<sup>66</sup> Huéllamo Kosma provides a breakdown of the contents of each scene in the play, using Freud's abstractions, based on the assumption that the ego is personified in the Director (and a series of transformed figures of the same), the superego in the Emperador and the id by the Caballos, hence: "Cuadro 1 – Contenido: enfrentamiento del yo consciente a los instintos (logos/inconsciente)" p. 28; "Cuadro 2 – Contenido: enfrentamiento del inconsciente al superyo (instintos/censura moral)" p. 32; "Cuadro 3 – Contenido: el universo del Ello" p.42. Also drawn on is the dialectic of *eros* and *thanatos*, with which Freud concerned himself in, especially, tracts such as "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" and much of his later work.

irrational.<sup>67</sup> Harretche defends the contention that García Lorca would be at least familiar, if not guided by, Freud's work, suggesting that the poet may have been present at the lecture entitled "Aprendizaje del psicoanálisis y transformación psicoanalítica del carácter", given by Sandor Fereczi at the Residencia de Estudiantes in October 1928.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, Harretche is satisfied the Granadine poet would have been acquainted with Freud via Salvador Dalí. Fellow students witnessed the impact of the Viennese professor on the Catalan.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, the fact that some productions of other Lorcan dramas have emphasised a quasi-Freudian reading of the text make it clear that the belief in Freud's influence on García Lorca is not restricted to literary critique, and holds possibilities for performance.<sup>70</sup> The structure and order Huélamo Kosma's reading offers the reader is seductive, but does not convince everyone. His study of El público is "quizá excesivamente fascinado por las posible contaminaciones freudianas de esta pieza", according to Grande Rosales.<sup>71</sup>

Regardless of the attempts to define the play's style as Freudian, expressionist or surrealist, García Lorca himself expressed a compulsion to move constantly between traditional and experimental forms. Sánchez Trigueros notes the poet's own declaration: "Yo comprendo todas las poéticas; podría hablar de ellas si no cambiara de opinión cada cinco minutos. No sé... Quemaré el Partenón por la noche, para empezar a levantarlo por la mañana y no terminarlo nunca".<sup>72</sup> In his lecture "Imaginación, inspiración, evasión", García Lorca refuses to be drawn

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<sup>67</sup> García-Posada acknowledges his debt to Huélamo Kosma in his introductory remarks on El público in "Introducción", p. 9, note 3.

<sup>68</sup> Harretche, Federico García Lorca, p. 36.

<sup>69</sup> Harretche, Federico García Lorca, p. 45. Harretche cites the testimony of José Moreno Villa from his memoirs Vida en claro, (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1944), who recalls that Dalí was always buried in a collection of Freud's work. Concurring with Huélamo Kosma's psychoanalytic scheme, Harretche views the three Hombres as projections of the Director's ego and have their counterparts in the instinctual forces of the Caballos (p. 72).

<sup>70</sup> Sánchez Trigueros, "Texto de tradición y espectáculo de vanguardia", p. 32, writes of Angel Fabio's productions of La casa de Bernarda Alba from 1972 and 1976 where a 'Freudomarxist' interpretation had Bernarda as "una especie de animal asexual, monolítico, rígido, inflexible, implacable, destructivo" fulfilling the role of the authoritarian superego.

<sup>71</sup> Grande Rosales, "El público: la verdad de las máscaras", p. 102.

<sup>72</sup> Sánchez Trigueros, "Texto de tradición y espectáculo de vanguardia", p. 21. The author does not indicate his source of García Lorca's words. Regarding our discussion here of the traditional versus experimental, we draw attention to Sánchez Trigueros's argument that despite strongly traditional



on the question of “la ‘verdad poética’”, because “es una expresión que cambia al mudar su enunciado. Lo que es luz en el Dante puede ser fealdad en Mallarmé”.<sup>73</sup> Instead, the poet explains how the ‘poetic imagination’ possesses its own ‘logic’:

la imaginación poética viaja y transforma las cosas, les da su sentido más puro y define relaciones que no se sospechaban; pero siempre, siempre, siempre opera sobre hechos de la realidad más neta y precisa. Está dentro de nuestra lógica humana, controlada por la razón, de la que no puede desprenderse. Su manera especial de crear necesita del orden y del límite.

Poetic imagination is thus bound by the rational structures of human logic; whereas “la inspiración poética tiene una lógica poética”.<sup>74</sup> In its summary of the same lecture delivered in Madrid, February 1929, *El Sol* reports García Lorca’s thoughts concerning “la evasión poética”:

puede hacerse de muchas maneras. El surrealismo emplea el sueño y su lógica para escapar... Pero esta evasión por medio del sueño o del subconsciente es, aunque muy pura, poco diáfana. Los latinos queremos perfiles y misterio visible. Forma y sensualidades.<sup>75</sup>

María Clementa Millán takes up the poet’s proposed ‘poetic logic’ as a possible structural and stylistic device: “[No] podemos señalar en El público incoherencia ni ilogicismo en su configuración interna, sino una gran lógica poética”.<sup>76</sup> Unlike Millán, Gómez Torres asserts that “El público es el resultado de una ruptura consciente de los moldes lógicos y estéticos, en una búsqueda subversiva de libertad artística”. But despite this, she contends that “Lorca crea un diálogo dramático ceñido a la *lógica poética* que preside la obra”.

Does ‘poetic logic’ offer a way to come to terms with the, much traversed, critical debate on style and structure? It does if we understand poetic inspiration as resistant to stable, coherent

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elements in the text, there have been many, and there continues to be an increasing number of, experimental productions of García Lorca’s plays; pp. 35-6.

<sup>73</sup> The text according to *El Defensor de Granada* as delivered on 11 October 1928, in Federico García Lorca, Obras VI, Prosa 1, p. 279.

<sup>74</sup> Federico García Lorca, Obras VI, Prosa 1, p. 280 & p. 282.

<sup>75</sup> Federico García Lorca, Obras VI, Prosa 1, p. 284. We return to consider these remarks in Section 4. 4., with reference to the need for ‘form’ and identifiable shapes.

<sup>76</sup> Millán, “Introducción”, p. 24.

identity and, instead, as conducive to contingent and transitory forms. Gómez Torres is correct in finding a conscious attempt on the part of the poet to break with artistic and rational templates. And it is through poetic logic that this ambition is fulfilled. Incidental and ephemeral shapes rather than the 'dogmas' the poet rejected constitute poetic logic and, likewise, this logic transcends the strictures of rational logic. Both style and structure in the play are impossible only in terms of their resistance to categorisation. Earlier in this chapter we considered the play's supposed 'homosexual love' theme. Such a narrow theme fails to convince because its premise of essential identity, of there being such a thing as 'a homosexual', runs counter to the wide-ranging metaphysical questioning in the play of the concept of stable, essential identity. Similarly, the critical efforts to classify the style and to sketch out the structure of El público produce disparate and ambiguous versions because the poetic logic of the play runs counter to the idea of definable schemes and identities. In fact, poetic logic performs in the same way as the play's philosophical exploration of identity by suggesting theatre as a process of ever-changing forms, just as identity is portrayed as constantly shifting appearance.

If El público offers an impossibility, it is not the reductionist theme of 'homosexual love', nor even the structure that Huéllamo Kosma calls "un ajustado rompecabezas".<sup>77</sup> Rather, it is the impossibility of finding a true identity, (be it aesthetic, constitutional or personal), when such an interior essence is a theatrically performed illusion. The intention of this chapter is to examine the imperfect text, not for some impossible answer, but in the hope of recognising the questions amid the free-flowing shapes and patterns. One of those questions we hope will become apparent is the dialectic of truth and illusion, particularly as represented by depth and surface, and whether or not the opposition is tenable, or even existent. We want to investigate the representation of gender, the problematising of the dualism of masculine/feminine, as well as its relationship to power. We wish also to look at the portrayal of the body and the category of sex to comprehend its authority over identity. Finally, we expect a relationship to emerge between

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<sup>77</sup> Huéllamo Kosma, El teatro imposible, p. 25, second chapter heading.

these binary concepts and we will consider whether the binaries continue to make sense or if it is only possible to work within them. As rational progression is contrary to the poetic logic of the play, any tendency towards linearity in the analysis we recognise as being inevitable in a narrative document.

#### 4.4 "Un lago son mil superficies"

Luis Fernández Cifuentes warns that the text offers an unsustainable number of differing interpretations of "la verdad".<sup>78</sup> In *Cuadro* I, Hombre 3 declares that they have come to the theatre "para que se sepa la verdad de las sepulturas" (I, p. 79). In the section entitled "Muro de arena", Hombre 1 confronts the Caballos with the accusation: "tenéis miedo de la verdad"; he asserts: "yo sé la verdad, yo sé que ellos no buscan a Julieta" (III, p. 117). Among the Estudiantes who enter in *Cuadro* V, there is Estudiante 4 who reports: "El tumulto comenzó cuando vieron que Romeo y Julieta se amaban de verdad" and "la revolución estalló cuando se encontraron a la verdadera Julieta amordazada" (V, p. 134). Estudiante 3 on the other hand contends that the audience rose up in revolution because "la letra era más fuerte que ellos y la doctrina [...] puede atropellar sin miedo las verdades más inocentes" (V, p. 139). Referring to the boy-actor Julieta, Estudiante 2 suggests: "vamos a ver la última Julieta verdaderamente femenina que se verá en el teatro" (V, p. 136). The metaphysical dialogue sustained by the Director and the Prestidigitador in the final *cuadro* produces some further variations of the use of the word 'truth'. Defending his theatre, the Director reflects: "si hubiera levantado el telón con la verdad original, se hubieran manchado de sangre las butacas desde las primeras escenas" (VI, p. 150). Similarly, the Director proposes that his theatre is one "donde se ha sostenido un verdadero combate que ha costado la vida a todos los intérpretes" (VI, p. 153). In contrast to a performance where the actors 'die' to resuscitate again when the curtain falls, the Director

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<sup>78</sup> Fernández Cifuentes, *García Lorca en el teatro*, p. 286.

promises that his theatre shall be one where his actors “queman la cortina y mueren de verdad en presencia de los espectadores” (VI, p. 151).

The play's concept of truth is elaborated by a second line of inquiry into the proposition of an 'inner' truth, a depth reality, a true identity beneath the surfaces. Upon the arrival of the Director and Hombre 1 in Julieta's crypt, Caballo Blanco 1 announces: “ahora hemos inaugurado el verdadero teatro. El teatro bajo la arena” (III, p. 116). This 'true theatre' is located beneath the sand, in the depths like Julieta's tomb, the whole act taking place on the other side of the “Muro de arena”, as María Estela Harretche confirms.<sup>79</sup> Depth is also interpreted through the dichotomy between the outward clothed appearance of the body and the truth of naked flesh, as invoked by Hombre 1: “mi lucha ha sido con la máscara hasta conseguir verte desnudo” (III, p. 118). With a similar reference to nakedness, the Figura de cascabeles instructs the Figura de pámpanos: “Llévame al baño y ahógame. Será la única manera de que puedas verme desnudo” (II, p. 91). At the end of the act, the latter reveals its naked body by divesting itself of the vine leaves (II, p. 97). *Cuadro V* opens with the figure of “*un Desnudo rojo coronado de espinas azules*” centre stage (V, p. 129). In “Muro de arena”, the three Caballos Blancos command Julieta to strip naked (III, p. 115) while the members of the audience “estaban desnudando [a Romeo y Julieta]” before murdering them during the revolution (V, p. 133). With reference to the Director who is consorting with Caballo Blanco 1, Hombre 1 declares: “No ha llegado la hora todavía de que los caballos se llevan un desnudo que yo he hecho blanco a fuerza de lágrimas” (III, p. 120). Hombre 1 pursues the exposition of truth, beyond the naked body, to the interior frame: “Desnudaré tu esqueleto” (III, p. 119). Harretche suggests that “todo marcha hacia un teatro desnudo: los personajes, la acción, el lenguaje, el espacio”.<sup>80</sup> For Grande Rosales the layers upon layers of clothing to be stripped off indicate that “es imposible averiguar la

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<sup>79</sup> “El teatro de la verdad, el teatro profundo como la profunda verdad que intenta representarse, el teatro bajo la arena”, Harretche, Federico García Lorca, p. 84.

<sup>80</sup> Harretche, Federico García Lorca, p. 69.

existencia última de un último estrato de ‘desnudez’ o ‘verdad’”.<sup>81</sup> Harretteche further proposes that the search for the truth in El público “está dramatizada [...] como un intento desesperado de llegar a lo más íntimo y esencial del ‘yo’”.<sup>82</sup>

There is much evidence of Fernández Cifuentes’s claim that in El público the meaning of “la verdad” varies from speaker to speaker. Foremost, there is the inconsistency in the way the concept is applied: Estudiante 4 speaks of “la verdadera Julieta”, referring to the original actor, while Estudiante 2 of “la última Julieta verdaderamente femenina”, referring to the boy-actor. The variation in what ‘truth’ signifies is more of a contradiction: how can the boy-actor Julieta be more truly feminine than the true (real) woman-actor Julieta? The question is: what do we mean by truth in the theatrical context of the play? Which performance is more real? In fact, both Julietas are being performed; so which performance of gender is more convincing and does that gender have any connection to the body (sex) of the performer? The relationship between gender and body has been analysed, although not exclusively in a theatrical context, by Judith Butler in her study of gender and identity.<sup>83</sup> Butler provides some means of addressing the latter question. The transvestite performance of the boy-actor of a female character queries the connection between sex and gender, that the feminine proceeds from the female, the masculine from the male. Butler also queries the notion of gender identity as some internally located psychic agent by asking: “How does the body figure on its surface the very invisibility of its hidden depth?”<sup>84</sup>; and she provides the answer in terms of a summary of how gender functions through

acts, gestures, and desire [which] produce the *effect* of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organising principle of [gender] identity as a *cause*.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Grande Rosales, “El público: la verdad de las máscaras”, p. 113.

<sup>82</sup> Harretteche, Federico García Lorca, p. 70.

<sup>83</sup> Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, (London & New York: Routledge, 1990, second edition 1999).

<sup>84</sup> Butler, Gender Trouble, p. 171.

<sup>85</sup> Butler, Gender Trouble, p. 173, my italics.

What Butler is proposing is that gender is not a natural essence but a cultural production maintained by

acts, gestures, enactments [...which] are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means.<sup>86</sup>

Two Julieta's are referred to in the play: one anatomically male (The boy actor who plays the part of Julieta in the Director's production of "Romeo y Julieta"), the other ("la verdadera Julieta" (V, p. 134), by contrast, anatomically female. Both are theatrical representations of an invented female character. The latter is described as the true (real) Julieta, but in what sense true? The original actor chosen to play the part? The original Shakespearean Juliet? The authentically female Julieta? The boy actor is described as the last, truly feminine Julieta (V, p. 136). Compared to whom? To the 'true' Julieta, who is anatomically female? The very notion of an authentic femininity is challenged by the theatrical construct of Julieta. There is an incongruity apparent in the example of the boy-actor Julieta between the boy's psychic gender identification, the body of the performer (male), the cultural performance of gender (masculine), and the theatrical persona portrayed (feminine). What is impossible to ascertain is which level of identity is true and which is false. However, as Butler suggests, if inner gender (the psychic level of identification) is a fabrication then "genders can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity" (p. 174). There is also the issue of the (male) body of the performer: is the category of sex a fixed, coherent identity? This question we will look at extensively below. For now, it is important to focus on the problematising of the concept of truth implicit in the unsettling of identity brought to light in the cultural and theatrical performance of gender.

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<sup>86</sup> Butler, Gender Trouble, p. 173.

With further regard to the boy Julieta, the Elizabethan tradition of not allowing women to appear on stage in England meant that the first productions of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, had boy actors playing the role of Juliet, as Grande Rosales reminds us.<sup>87</sup> The production staged by the Director in El público, which causes the audience to revolt, is faithful to the original tradition (the 'true' tradition?) of a Juliet in drag. Stephen Orgel elucidates for us the subversive effects of boy-actors in female roles on the seventeenth-century English stage. Firstly, according to the anti-theatrical moralist (Puritan, for the large part) discourse of the time, boys who played women on stage would be psychically transformed into 'women', believing themselves to be women in reality.<sup>88</sup> Secondly, the effect of these boy-women masquerades would be to seduce the male viewer; that the men in the audience will

los[e] their reason [and] will become effeminate, which [...] means that not only will they lust after the women in the drama, which is bad enough [all sexual desire was seen, misogynistically, as emasculating], but also after the youth beneath the woman's costume, thereby playing the woman's role themselves.<sup>89</sup>

Equally disturbing, for the dominant sexual hierarchy, is the transvestite performer's twisting or queering of the linear coherence between the body's sex, the gender culturally demanded by that body and the signifying apparel of the drag costume. The drag performances in El público (the boy Julieta, the Director as Guillermina and Dominga "de los negritos") provide clear examples of Butler's theory in practice:

[it] plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed [...] If the anatomy of the performer is already distinct from the gender of the performance, then the performance suggests a dissonance not only between sex and performance, but sex and gender and gender and performance [...] *In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself, as well as its contingency*".<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Grande Rosales, "El público: la verdad de las máscaras", p. 110.

<sup>88</sup> Stephen Orgel, Impersonations: The performance of gender in Shakespeare's England, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 26.

<sup>89</sup> Stephen Orgel, Impersonations, p. 27.

<sup>90</sup> Butler, Gender Trouble, p. 175.

It is apparent that there is another element that connects closely with the concept of “la verdad”. Many of the references to ‘truth’ and depth (“desnudo”) cited above contain a further reference to death. Hombre 1 makes an explicit connection between truth, depth and (his own) death: “Tendré que darme un tiro para inaugurar el verdadero teatro, el teatro bajo las arenas” (I, 80). While Hombre 3 wants “la verdad de las sepulturas” to be known (I, p. 79). Like Hombre 1, the Director may also be connecting death and truth when he says “el teatro verdadero tiene un profundo hedor de luna pasada” (VI, p. 151). Moreover, the Director suggests to the Prestidigitador that the seats would have been stained with blood if his drama had begun with “la verdad original” (VI, p. 150). He points out that his production cost all of the performers their lives, while further promising that his theatre would be one where the performers “mueren de verdad” in front of the audience. The audience revolution started when they discovered that Romeo and Julieta “se amaban de verdad”. The first shot of the revolution took off the head of the Professor of Rhetoric (V, p. 131) and the uprising claims the lives of Romeo and both Julietas (V, p. 135 and p. 139). Before murdering Romeo and the boy-actor Julieta the audience strip them naked (to see the ‘truth’ of their sex), they and the ‘real’ Julieta are then physically killed “para ver lo que tenían dentro” (V, p. 140). The Figura de cascabeles instructs the Figura de pámpanos “llévame al baño y ahógame”, as it would be the only way of seeing its naked ‘truth’. *Cuadro V* sees the Desnudo rojo undergoing a lengthy Christian Passion which culminates in the death of Hombre 1. Elsewhere, Hombre 1 tells the Director “desnudaré tu esqueleto”; in order to do so the Director would have to die physically, and, of course, being the last material to decompose after death, the skeleton has become a symbol of death.<sup>91</sup> Finally, the second part of *Cuadro* “Muro de arena” takes place underground, through (or under) the ‘wall of sand’, in the deep ‘truth’ of Julieta’s death-chamber.

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<sup>91</sup> We remind ourselves that, in Spanish-speaking culture, the graphic representation of the *Parcas* is of three skeletons.



The juxtaposition of truth and death points to the conclusion that only in death is the ultimate truth revealed. But, as Huéllamo Kosma suggests<sup>92</sup>, death is not the definitive ending of all illusion, of the dream of life, rather as Julieta in her sepulchre has discovered, another “mar de sueño” of endless “arcos vacíos” (III, p. 108). Death brings about another transformation (following life’s continuous procession of changing forms) rather than a laying bare of truth. This is suggested by the exchange of the *Desnudo rojo* at his point of death for *Hombre 1* (V, p. 139), and, with the death of *Hombre 1*, his subsequent metamorphosis into the “pez luna” reported by the *Señora* in the final *cuadro*, (VI, p. 154). *Cuadro VI* also sees the *Director* visited by the *Prestidigitador* (“*viste de frac, capa blanca de raso que le llega a los pies y lleva sombrero de copa*” VI, p. 149). This conjuror is widely interpreted as one of the forms death takes in the play.<sup>93</sup> The *Prestidigitador* does not reveal truth but, instead, offers illusion, the lie of appearance and the trick of disappearance, as Marie Laffranque and Huéllamo Kosma have pointed out.<sup>94</sup>

Death, in the guise of the *Prestidigitador*, “convierte la vida de los hombres en pura ficción, en una representación, otorga a la existencia un carácter apariencial e ilusorio”.<sup>95</sup> The fictitious, constructed façades of life are communicated in the play through the term “máscara”, which operates on a physical level through costume and properties, and on a symbolic level, representing the metaphysical notion of ‘putting up a front’, i. e. disguising one’s ‘true’ self. The *Mask* will later find its place of crucial importance in the poet’s theatre works when he explores the *Mask*’s implication of façade in *La casa de Bernarda Alba*. In *El público*, the

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<sup>92</sup> Huéllamo Kosma, *El teatro imposible*, p. 123.

<sup>93</sup> For Huéllamo Kosma, he is like death “la gran transformadora”, the agent who makes people disappear, *El teatro imposible*, p. 71 & p. 243. Simone Saillard, for their matching formal dress and floor-length white capes, identifies the *Prestidigitador* with the three *Jugadores* of *Así que pasen cinco años*, who in turn are associated with the three *Parcas*, “*El público, Así que pasen cinco años: un viaje de ida y vuelta*” in *Hispanística XX*, p. 104. Marie Laffranque describes him as the character “que trae la solución final de la muerte física, de la mentira moral, y de la anulación más absoluta, “*Poeta y público*”, p. 32. For Gómez Torres, he is simply “el artista de las apariencias que esconden su vacío”, “*La destrucción o el teatro*”, p. 34. Harretche depicts him as “ese oscuro hacedor que todo lo destruye” and, we note with interest, “todo lo crea”, *Federico García Lorca*, p. 67. Death is also identified with the *Caballo Negro* (by Harretche for example), and with *Elena* (Millán).

<sup>94</sup> See note 93 above.

<sup>95</sup> Huéllamo Kosma, *El teatro imposible*, p. 71.

clearest physical devices of “máscara” are the “caretas” and costume accessories that are employed at various points in the drama, and made explicit by García Lorca in the stage directions. Hombre 3 makes use of “*una careta de ardiente expresión*” trying to seduce Julieta (III, p. 122), which he then places on Julieta’s face when she returns to her recumbent position in her mausoleum. After having been discarded by the Director, the Traje de arlequín enters “*con una careta amarillo pálido*” and, similarly, the discarded Traje de pijama returns with its face “*blanca, lisa y comba como un huevo de avestruz*” (III, p. 123); the latter costume takes up a position on the stairs and slowly beats its featureless, non-identifying ‘face’ until the end of the act. Hombre 2’s transformation into the woman in black pyjama trousers equips him with “*unos impertinentes cubiertos por un bigote rubio que usará poniendo sobre su boca en algunos momentos del drama*” (I, p. 84). All three Hombres make their initial appearance wearing dark beards (I, p. 77), which are referred to by Hombre 1, indicating their theatricality: “¿Le parece a usted obra más nueva que nosotros con nuestras barbas?” (I, p. 81). Hombre 2, meanwhile, has his pyjama-trousered woman costume stripped from him in *Cuadro* “Muro de arena” and is revealed without the beard but in the initial evening-dress costume (III, p. 123). The Traspunte apologises to the Enfermero for his tardiness, citing the loss of Joseph of Arimitha’s beard as the reason (V, p. 136). For the first entrance of the three Hombres, the Director “*cambia su peluca rubia por una morena*” (I, p. 77). The Señora of the final act enters in black mourning clothes with “*la cara cubierta con un espeso tul que impide ver su rostro*” (VI, p. 154). On his return from a brief exit with the herald-boy, the Emperador removes first a pair of black, then a pair of red gloves to reveal “*sus manos de una blancura clásica*” (II, p. 96). Most significantly, the stray poem of the Pastor Bobo presents us with “*un armario lleno de Caretas blancas de diversas expresiones*” portraying a mini-universe of disembodied faces, with frozen countenance, devoid of depth<sup>96</sup>.

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<sup>96</sup> Commenting on this scene, Huélamo Kosma asks pertinently: “¿Es posible, en último extremo, un teatro en donde la careta, en donde la “máscara”, no sea ya más que el recuerdo de su propia ausencia, de su hueco? - ¿es posible un teatro de verdad?”, “Pastor y Arlequín dos personajes paralelos en el teatro imposible de García Lorca” in *Hispanística XX*, p. 69.

The dialectic of depth versus surface, sustained between Estudiante 4 and Estudiantes 1 and 2 in *Cuadro V*, offers an apposite reflection on the implications of costume. Discussing the performance of Romeo and the boy Julieta, Estudiante 2 suggests: “se amaban los esqueletos [...] pero no se amaban los trajes”, but Estudiante 4 insists that “la gente se olvida de los trajes en las representaciones” (V, p. 134). Estudiante 2 imbues the sartorial appearance of the performers, the Mask, with importance, suggesting that love is not an inner-located true emotion of skeletal depths but rather a relationship of material surfaces, (he views the interior of the body as but another mutable surface). Estudiante 4 dismisses the significance of surface (which attitude unfortunately runs counter to the ethos of theatre as representation) and falls in line with the search for depth-truth. In *El público*, costume plays a meaningful rôle quite literally, in the shape of the Trajes de arlequín and de bailarina. The former of these costumes first emerges on stage as a transformation of the Director when he is forced to pass behind the folding screen by Hombres 2 & 3 in *Cuadro 1*. The resulting metamorphosis produces “*un muchacho vestido de raso blanco con una gola blanca al cuello*” (I, p. 83). The bailarina costume is a further change of appearance for the Director, which is revealed when he removes the harlequin dress (III, p. 120), and with the new costume the Director adopts a different sobriquet, “Guillermina de los caballos”. Almost immediately, Guillermina is stripped off and joins the harlequin costume as a figure capable of speech and movement independent of the Director. The latter is now dressed in a one-piece woman’s bathing costume covered in tiny little bells and calls h/erself “Dominga de los negritos” (III, p. 121). Both Hombre 2 and Hombre 3 are subjected to radical changes of appearance by means of the same folding screen. The former emerges having changed not only costume but body as well: “*aparece por el otro extremo del biombo una mujer vestida con pantalones de pijama negro y una corona de amapolas en la cabeza*” (I, 84). The latter loses his beard and gains leather wrist bracelets with gold studs and a whip, while his face has turned extremely pale (I, 85).

Towards the end of the first *cuadro*, Elena enters. García Lorca pays particular attention to describing how her costume should be: “*Viste de griega. Lleva las cejas azules, el cabello*

*blanco y los pies de yeso. El vestido, abierto totalmente por delante, deja ver sus muslos cubiertos con apretada malla rosada*" (I, 84). The Greek reference makes an essential point, suggesting a link to Helen of Troy, while the description of her body (white hair, plaster feet, blue eyeshadow) is reminiscent of the appearance of the young woman representing Death in Jean Cocteau's *Orphée*.<sup>97</sup> Awakening from her death-sleep in the section of the play headed "Muro de arena", García Lorca's Julieta is dressed in a white opera gown and, curiously, "*lleva al aire sus dos senos de celuloide rosado*" (III, p. 108). An interesting choice of adjectival qualification, "celuloide", according to the dictionary of the Real Academia, comes from the Latin *cellula*, meaning "hueco" (an archetypal Lorcan trope which we discuss in Chapter Six) and is defined as "sustancia fabricada con pólvora de algodón y alcanfor. Es un cuerpo sólido, casi transparente y muy elástico".<sup>98</sup> This particular material, then, suggests something hollow, transparent, flexible and artificial; very little in fact that is permanent, durable and integral.

It may be relevant to ask what function Julieta's artificially constituted breasts serve? Are they intended to mask a corporeally male sex or feign femaleness in a plastic form? It should also be noted that the colour scheme of Julieta's dress, white with the exposed pink of her breasts, is closely related to Elena in white with pink thighs showing. In stark contrast to the white dresses of Julieta and Elena, the Señora in Cuadro VI is head-to-toe in mourning black, her face obscured with a heavy tulle (VI, p. 154). Her appearance brings to mind García Lorca's own costume when he appeared on stage for La Barraca in 1933, during their production of Calderón de la Barca's *La vida es sueño*. He played the role of La Sombra, and, as can be witnessed in the brief film footage recorded of the production, was dressed entirely in black with a kind of

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<sup>97</sup> Millán notes the Cocteau connection to support her theory of surrealist influence in *El público*, "Introducción", 25. Harrette adds that the 1928 production of *Orphée* in Madrid, directed by García Lorca's close friend Cipriano Rivas Cherif and therefore undoubtedly witnessed by the poet, would also have exposed García Lorca to images of a huge white horse with human legs and feet, *Federico García Lorca*, p. 66, note 13. Marie Laffranque, among others, has remarked upon the evocation of Helen of Troy, 'the face that launched a thousand ships' and many more men to their deaths or "la hermosa griega de sangrienta memoria", as she puts it, "Poeta y público", p. 32. For both reasons, Elena is widely viewed as a representative of Death, akin to the Prestidigitador.

<sup>98</sup> Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*, XXI, Vol. 1, (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1992), p. 453.

tricorn hat from which hung thick black material. Obviously, the Señora from El público precedes García Lorca's stage incarnation, but the suggestion, in the character of the Señora, of a figure symbolically shadowy, insubstantial and unidentified is very probable. The costumes in El público are not as 'forgettable' as Estudiante 4 would contend.

Responding to Hombre 1's call for a "teatro bajo las arenas" in the first act, the Director baulks at the idea of removing the barriers between performance and audience: "¿Qué hago con el público si quito las barandas al puente? Vendría la máscara a devorarme" (I, p. 80). With this remark, the Director avails of the theatrical device of "máscara" as a metaphor and, initiates a discourse that he sustains through the course of the play, on the metaphysical significance of the carefully constructed façades employed by individuals in order to negotiate their relationships with others. He firstly relates how all-consuming the mask can be: "Yo vi una vez a un hombre devorado por la máscara... Los jóvenes más fuertes de la ciudad, con picas ensangrentadas, le hundían por el trasero grandes bolas de periódicos abandonados" (I, p. 80). The man described by the Director is so completely taken over by the mask that he was nothing more than mask, a surface, and an empty shell to be stuffed, violently, with old newspaper, in itself an insubstantial and inconsequential material<sup>99</sup>. Secondly, the Director expresses his fear of revealing the artifice of the mask on stage, displaying for the audience what the mask has been covering: "No me supondrá usted capaz de sacar la máscara a escena"; "¿Y la moral? ¿Y el estómago de los espectadores?" (I, p. 81). But Hombre 1 insists that by not removing the mask, the Director is culpable, not of making unpleasant truths more palatable or presentable, but of deception with the intention of avoiding the truth. With images that evoke the inner truth being externalised, Hombre 1 explains, in metaphoric terms, that it is possible to dress up difficult 'realities' using plaster, tin, mica or cardboard, but that this strategy should not be seen as duplicitous: "Hay personas que vomitan cuando se vuelve un pulpo del revés y otras que se ponen pálidas si oyen pronunciar con la debida intención la palabra cáncer; pero usted sabe que contra esto existe la

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<sup>99</sup> Huélamo Kosma writes: "las gentes se asimilan a la "máscara" de tal modo que entre ellos y la "máscara" tras la que se esconden ya no hay ninguna diferencia", El teatro imposible, p. 68.

hojalata, y el yeso, y la adorable mica, y en último caso el cartón... Pero usted lo que quiere es engañarnos" (I, p. 81).

The dialectic continues in *Cuadro* "Muro de arena" with the positions of Hombre 1 and the Director becoming more polarised. The former contends "Yo no tengo máscara", while the Director develops his examination of "máscara" from *Cuadro* I and proposes that "[n]o hay más que máscara" (III, pp. 117-8). The Director's invocation of the word "máscara" is echoed by Julieta, "(*llorando*) ¡Máscara!" (III, p. 118); her tears a recognition of both the fear provoked by the mask, described earlier by the Director, and of the validity of the Director's statement. The Caballo Blanco 1 complements Julieta's cry with an alternative term, "Forma". Both these terms are related to one another in *Cuadro* V by Estudiante 2: "Es cuestión de forma, de máscara" (V, p. 135). This suggestion supports the Director's proposition that there is nothing else but mask and surface, no inner truth to be revealed and that depth is an illusion constituted by layer after layer of surface. The latter point is articulated by the Caballo Blanco 1 who/which takes up the Director's dispute with Hombre 1: "(*burlón*) Un lago es una superficie"; [Hombre 1] "(*irritado*) ¡O un volumen!"; "(*riendo*) Un volumen son mil superficies" (III, p. 118). Behind each mask there is only another mask. Each surface just conceals another surface. Hombre 1's struggle with the mask to reach the naked truth of the Director's being ("para conseguir verte desnudo") is in vain, as the Director demonstrates to him by removing his harlequin suit, and revealing the bailarina costume, and then throwing the former away crying "¿Enrique? Ahí tienes a Enrique" (III, p. 120). Equally, Hombre 3 disowns Hombre 2 in his guise of the woman in pyjamas, denying any identity with Hombre 2 beyond his form: "Ésta no es mi amiga. Ésta es una máscara, una escoba, un perro débil de sofá" (III, p. 123). The Director drives his point home to Hombre 1 by accusing him of duplicitous conduct in his need to perform the 'truth' in the constituent presence of others: "No me abracés, Gonzalo. Tu amor vive sólo en presencia de testigos. ¿No me has besado lo bastante en la ruina? Desprecio tu elegancia y tu teatro" (III, p. 118).

On the Director's exit from the scene, Hombre 1 cries out after him: "¡En pez luna; sólo deseo que tú seas un pez luna! ¡Que te conviertas en un pez luna!" (III, p. 122). The reference to the "pez luna" is both an admission from Hombre 1 of the mutability of forms, and a presage of his own transformation into a "pez luna", as reported by the Señora in *Cuadro VI*. This concession to the Director on the part of Hombre 1, and his subsequent sacrifice of metamorphosis into a "pez luna", is reminiscent of several Lorcan protagonists, such as don Perlimplín, the Mecnógrafa of *Así que pasen cinco años* and the Novia of *Bodas de sangre*. Hombre 1 displays his willingness to change into the form that his lover desires while proclaiming the 'authenticity' of his love for the Director, and in this sense resembles those other figures in García Lorca's plays who transform themselves for the sake of love.<sup>100</sup> The call to change into a "pez luna" links the struggle between the Director and Hombre 1 to the engagement between the Figuras de cascabeles and de pámpanos. Huélamos Kosma sees the episode as a 'dramatic conflict', stemming from an attempt to reconcile "el instinto masculino y el femenino" within their "relación homoerótica" and within themselves<sup>101</sup>. Gómez Torres prefers to describe it as "una comunicación amorosa" using dance and music to express "su violencia erótica"<sup>102</sup>. For Harretche, "la danza de amor entre la Figura de Pámpanos y la Figura de Cascabeles expresa la crisis de la identidad sexual"<sup>103</sup>. Moreover, Harretche believes this to be a staging of García Lorca's own "crisis personal". Leaving aside such questionable speculation, the dance between the two Figuras presents a highly fluid verbal exchange that involves a series of hypothetical changes of form being issued as challenges from one to the other:

FIGURA DE CASCABELES:	¿Si yo me convirtiera en nube?
FIGURA DE PÁMPANOS:	Yo me convertiría en ojo.
FIGURA DE CASCABELES:	¿Si yo me convirtiera en caca?
FIGURA DE PÁMPANOS:	Yo me convertiría en mosca.
FIGURA DE CASCABELES:	¿Si yo me convirtiera en manzana?

<sup>100</sup> As Huélamos Kosma has suggested, *El teatro imposible*, p. 72, note 30.

<sup>101</sup> Huélamos Kosma, *El teatro imposible*, p. 36.

<sup>102</sup> Gómez Torres, *Experimentación y teoría*, pp. 164-5.

<sup>103</sup> Harretche, *Federico García Lorca*, p. 81.

FIGURA DE PÁMPANOS:	Yo me convertiría en beso.
FIGURA DE CASCABELES:	¿Si yo me convirtiera en pecho?
FIGURA DE PÁMPANOS:	Yo me convertiría en sábana blanca...
FIGURA DE CASCABELES:	¿Y si yo me convirtiera en pez luna?
FIGURA DE PÁMPANOS:	Yo me convertiría en cuchillo. (II, 89-90)

The flow of the exchange is interrupted by the introduction of the ‘knife’, discontinuing a series of images that present the bodily senses of sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing, respectively as a poetic coupling of complementary forms. The “pez luna”, offered by the Figura de cascabeles, expects a response from within the range of the five senses, if it is to fit into the pattern, but instead the “cuchillo” violently disrupts the dancing flow of the exchange of metaphor. The Figura de cascabeles proposes “una bolsa de huevas pequeñas” (II, p. 91) as a complement to the “pez luna”, but the Figura de pámpanos refuses to comply. Instead the ‘knife’ suggests penetration of the body, of the surface, perhaps looking for the inner depth, “la oscura raíz del grito” of *Bodas de sangre*.<sup>104</sup> The verbal exchange is attempted again, with the Figura de cascabeles again taking the lead. “Hormiga” is met by “tierra”, “tierra” taken up and answered by “agua”, “agua” with “pez luna”, and when the Figura de cascabeles offers back “pez luna”, the Figura de pámpanos again interrupts with “cuchillo” (II, pp. 90-1). There is a subtle shift between the first interchange and the second. In the latter, the Figura de cascabeles picks up the form with which the Figura de pámpanos replies and adopts it as its next position; in this way “tierra”, “agua” and “pez luna” are forms selected by the Figura de pámpanos, which are then appropriated by the Figura de cascabeles. The first trade of forms comprises interrelated, but distinct, elements.

The importance of these two dialogues lies in the conceptualisation and expression of identity they imply. The active verb in these speeches is “convertirse” and not “ser”, since the question could easily have been “¿[s]i yo *fuera* una nube?”. Instead, the verb used by García Lorca implies an action or a ‘*trans*-formation’ rather than a new identity. The changes are not of

<sup>104</sup> We return to the metaphor of bodily penetration in Section 4. 6.



essentialised nature but of temporary form, with an emphasis on the process of change, rather than the substitution of one state for another<sup>105</sup>. The metaphysical import of this concept cannot be over-emphasised, especially as it leads to a fuller comprehension of the play. In El público, the continual movement of one form to another proposes the thesis that theatre is process, and by extension through the notion of *theatrum mundi*, life is process, or, rather, the process constitutes existence.<sup>106</sup> Of course, this is the same idea as is contained in Butler's use of the word "performative". The identity of the subject is not an abiding, eternal essence, unalterable and permanent, but a construct "tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts".<sup>107</sup> The process of theatre, or the continual change of mask and form, is articulated by the Director in the final act: "El verdadero drama es un circo de arcos donde el aire y la luna y las criaturas entran y salen sin tener un sitio donde descansar" (VI, p. 153). In this context, the 'truth' is recognition that "no hay más que máscara" (III, p. 118).

The Caballo Blanco 1 and Julieta take up the discourse of process and form in the third section of the play. Julieta is not interested in talking about 'love' or 'theatre' as these substantives suggest immobile states, with Julieta opposing the proposition of theatre's constant process: "A mí no me importan las discusiones sobre el amor ni el teatro" (III, p. 108). Julieta would prefer to engage with the subject of 'loving', the verb denoting the process of love: "Yo lo que quiero es amar" (III, p. 108). The juxtaposition between verb and noun that Julieta initiates is reinforced by the Caballos Blancos in their refrain "Amor. Amar. Amor", which they repeat on three occasions (III, pp. 111-3). The Caballo Blanco 1 restates the "amor"/"amar" comparison with "Amor que sólo dura un momento" (III, p. 111), offering another way of defining the verb.

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<sup>105</sup> This exchange between the Prestidigitador and the Director illustrates the contrast of change in appearance with replacement: "Quitar es muy fácil. Lo difícil es poner"; "Es mucho más difícil sustituir". Regarding the Prestidigitador's comment, it is also worth recalling that the costume changes in El público all involve a removal of clothes rather than a putting on. The only complete substitution is that of Hombre 1 for the Desnudo rojo in *Cuadro V*.

<sup>106</sup> Harrette writes: "El uso de la máscara y la transformación y consecuente paradoja que provoca nos recuerda que el constante estado de cambio no es una anomalía de la personalidad, sino algo inherente a ella", Federico García Lorca, p. 59.

<sup>107</sup> Butler, Gender Trouble, p. 179. We will return to this concept when we look at the temporal and spatial mechanics of El público in Section 4. 7.

Additionally, the dialogue between the Caballo Blanco 1 and Julieta concerning 'day' and 'night' redrafts the temporal concepts underlining the contrast between action and state, between contingency and stability: "La noche es un momento, pero un momento puede durar toda la noche" and "un sólo día para amar todas las noches" (III, p. 111). The intervention of the Caballo Negro in this scene serves to link the discourse of the Caballo Blanco 1 and Julieta with that of the Figuras from *Cuadro* "Ruina romana". The Caballo's comment articulates the discourse again in terms of 'form': "Forma, ¡forma! Ansia de la sangre" (III, p. 113). The desire in life's blood for constitution is never satisfied but remains in constant revolution generating "hastío de la rueda".<sup>108</sup>

A distinction exists between the two dialogues of the Figuras and the way in which their identities are expressed. In the first discourse, the Figura de pámpanos rejoins with a complementary form, the form proffered by the Figura de cascabeles. The former runs through a series of forms that correspond to, but do not coincide with, those put forward by the latter. However, in the second dialogue, the Figura de cascabeles imitates the forms proposed by the Figura de pámpanos. In this way, the former's hypothetical and contingent identities are subsumed into the latter's. The ready negation of the Figura de cascabeles's identity is unsurprising considering it is simply constituted as a figure, merely distinguished by the surface adornment of bells. And the Figura is not alone in its insubstantiality. *El público* presents a number of personalities who undergo, sometimes multiple, transformations. The Director and Hombres 2 and 3 experience respective changes in appearance. Hombre 1, as well as mutating into the "pez luna", is, arguably, an alternative representation of the *Desnudo rojo*. The central question of who or what is 'real' (if anyone or anything) is exhaustive, not because, as García-Posada suggests, the drama is taking place in the head of the Director and all the characters are

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<sup>108</sup> The Caballo Negro carries a wheel in its hand (III, p. 112).

aspects of his personality. Instead, and at the risk of overstating an obvious point, theatre is all about representation, the play is a play, not a 'truth'; it presents imitation, not authenticity.<sup>109</sup>

If the latter may be said about theatre, then in *El público* García Lorca recognises and engages with the same philosophical proposition about the nature of existence. The metaphysical engagement between the Director and the Prestidigitador in *Cuadro VI* finds the first of the two proposing that it is either necessary to destroy theatre or to live in it (VI, p. 151). In other words, life must be accepted as the process of representing insubstantial forms or the artifice must be destroyed and the 'truth' revealed. The Prestidigitador attempts to show the Director that the option of 'living in the theatre' is the only valid one: "si avanzas un escalón más, el hombre te parecerá una brizna de hierba" (VI, p. 151). The human being is an indistinguishable form of no substance and no discrete identity. The Director does not respond to the prompting and persists with his championing of 'true' theatre. To no avail, however, and the end of *El público* sees the Director overcome by the freezing snowfall conjured up by the Prestidigitador. The Director tries to dismiss the snow as "un truco" and "un elemento dramático" (VI, p. 156), but, in doing so, finds himself 'living in theatre'. Death relentlessly continues the process of life, producing another change in form.<sup>110</sup>

#### 4.5 "Un hombre, tan hombre, que me desmayo"

The engagement between the two Figuras of "Ruina romana" has been interpreted by María Estela Harretche as an attempt to express 'homosexual love', which founders in conflict because the protagonists are two men and "siempre hay uno que para satisfacer la mutua necesidad debe

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<sup>109</sup> Huélamo Kosma suggests: "en todos los planos de la realidad, el único hallazgo cierto es la simulación, la teatralidad en su sentido más peyorativo, el deseo de aparentar lo que no se es o lo que se quiere ser, el engaño de las formas, la persistencia del disfraz, de la máscara", *El teatro imposible*, p. 119. We return to a discussion of theatre's authenticity, or rather reality, in Chapter 6.

<sup>110</sup> Cardwell summarises the play's process: "García Lorca nos revela una visión glacial, desolada. Todo es incierto: el amor, la identidad individual, las relaciones humanas, el habla, las palabras, las acciones. Las apariencias se revelan como engañosas, falsas, traicioneras; la realidad está en un flujo continuo", "Mi sed inquieta", p. 60.

“jugar el papel femenino, que se complementa con el masculino-hombre que lo satisfaga”. Her view is, at the very least, problematic, as it is based in the first instance, on the assumption that the two Figuras are male (to say nothing of her derivative view of ‘homosexual love’). The text does not indicate the sex of the Figuras. For Huéllamo Kosma, the ‘duel’ between the Figura de pámpanos and the Figura de cascabeles manifests “el drama del homosexual”, which “deriva de una falta de identidad sexual”. The consequence is that each figure is made to

oscilar en el papel que ha de desempeñar en su relación amorosa. Se debate entre ser y actuar como hombre (dominador y activo) o representar el papel femenino (dominado y pasivo). Sucede que tal ambivalencia se muestra en la práctica como una inevitable fluctuación entre ambas posiciones, aunque ello pueda chocar directamente con el ideal que el individuo posea de su propia identidad sexual.

The importance of gender representation Huéllamo Kosma makes clear, but his analysis presumes a simplistic movement back and forth between two polar absolutes of gender. Furthermore, his Freudian study forces him to qualify the categories of gender with traditional, stereotyped values. The difficulty is that these attributes, dominant/submissive, active/passive, suffer from an exhausted hierarchical model of power along, what would be in political terms, Marxist lines.

Judith Butler has offered a reformulation of power, following Michel Foucault’s model in which power both produces as well as regulates<sup>111</sup>:

If power is not reduced to volition [...] and the classical liberal and existential model of freedom is refused, then power relations can be understood [...] as constraining and constituting the very possibilities of volition. Hence, power can be neither withdrawn nor refused, but only redeployed.<sup>112</sup>

In these terms, power cannot be ignored, avoided or acquired through a revolutionary inversion of relations because power is not essentially separate from its subjects. Rather than viewing

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<sup>111</sup> See Tamsin Spargo’s analysis of Butler’s use of Foucault’s thinking in her *Foucault and Queer Theory*, (Cambridge: Icon Books, 1999).

<sup>112</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 158.

power as a monolithic force weighing down on and repressing, some free, primitive energy, Foucault reconceptualised the relationship with the idea that notions of selfhood are produced in terms of culture, society and language as the regulatory power effect of knowledge. Foucault illustrates the operation of power that, in Butler's words, is generative, rather than juridical (like the Marxist model), taking as a case-study the way in which the discourse of sexology in the nineteenth century produced a new category of being: 'the homosexual'. Thus a means (the language and identity) was also produced through which 'homosexuals' could engage in, what Foucault termed, a reverse discourse. Butler mobilised Foucault's paradigm to explain the way in which the binary of gender is a production of its regulation. Butler goes on to illustrate how power can be engaged in a way that is recognisably employed in García Lorca's drama:

the normative focus for gay and lesbian practice ought to be on the subversive and parodic redeployment of power rather than on the impossible fantasy of its full-scale transcendence.<sup>113</sup>

In El público, the restrictive binary of masculine and feminine is not cast off; there is no proposition of a 'third gender' or other forms outside the terms of the binary, nor a rejection of the binary. Instead, gender is performed to excess, and is made to work against the coherence of anatomical sex. Gender moves inside the dualistic concept of masculine and feminine, but it expands, distorts and mocks the terms so that they lose legitimacy.

The text of the Figuras scene contains a dissertation on masculinity (from which Harretche presumes a sexual identity for the figures) that crystallises the treatment of gender in El público. The characterisation of gender contained in the respective speeches of the two Figuras does not conform to the traditional (with respect to gender) hierarchical structure of active/passive, dominant/submissive, dualisms that are bound up with an up/down model of power.<sup>114</sup> Instead,

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<sup>113</sup> Butler, Gender Trouble, p. 158.

<sup>114</sup> Grande Rosales points out that in El público there is "una indiferenciación de los códigos de lo masculino y lo femenino frente a la tendencia común en que las identidades de género confluyen en una reducción tipológica, en el esencialismo que tiende a defender en cada uno de los géneros un solo signo con un solo referente", "*El público: la verdad de las máscaras*", p. 113.

masculinity is pushed to exaggeration, and the binary of polar gender is inverted, rendering its portrayal as parodic and disruptive.

FIGURA DE PÁMPANOS: porque soy un hombre, porque no soy nada más que eso, un hombre, más hombre que Adán, y quiero que seas aún más hombre que yo. Tan hombre que no haya ruido en las ramas cuando tú pases. Pero tú no eres un hombre. Si yo no tuviera esta flauta, te escaparías a la luna... cubierta de pañolitos y gotas de sangre de mujer. (II, p. 90)

FIGURA DE CASCABELES: porque no eres un hombre. Yo sí soy un hombre. Un hombre, tan hombre, que siento un dolor agudo en los dientes cuando alguien quiebra un tallo, por diminuto que sea. Un gigante. Un gigante, tan gigante, que puedo bordar una rosa en la uña de un niño recién nacido. (II, p. 93)

The Figuras accuse each other of not being men, and assert their own maleness. But they qualify their maleness with augmentatives: “más hombre que”; “tan hombre”. In order to be masculine, one has to exaggerate: to be more than just a man, to be “un gigante”, and, in effect, not be simply a man.<sup>115</sup> These speeches include several metaphors that feature a juxtaposition of extreme opposites, which describe actions that run contrary to logic, (but not poetic logic, of course): one of comparative size, a giant who can perform the minutest operation; one of force, strength versus weakness, where the snapping of the smallest flower stem can cause the sharpest of pain in the teeth; and one combining both size and force, where a giant of a man can move through trees without causing the slightest noise. The exaggerated male depicted by the Figuras displays sensitivity and delicacy in direct proportion to his size and strength.

These attributes can be both physical and metaphysical, but biomedical science assigns them according to the posited difference between the sexes, and the metaphysical is seen to proceed from the physical. In the work of medical scientists from the nineteenth century to García Lorca's times and as recently as the 1980s, for his physical strength, his muscular mass and his physiology, man is accorded mental and moral strength, while woman, compared on the same

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<sup>115</sup> We recall María Josefa's vision of an impossible Pepe el Romano as “un gigante [...] os va a devorar” (III, p. 396)

terms, is deemed weak. During the nineteenth century, in Europe, biomedical science viewed woman as biologically underdeveloped men, childlike in constitution, prone to nervous disorders, physically, morally and intellectually weak:

La mujer es casi siempre infantil en relación a su constitución corporal [...] tiene una sensibilidad viva y, por esta razón, extremadamente variable, incapaz de perseverar largamente en las mismas sensaciones [...] se adhiere a los hombres por su debilidad, tiene necesidad de apoyo y de protección. Ellos las reclaman por [...] el encanto de la inocencia y de la debilidad [...] Es el vigor físico de los hombres lo que le hace superior a sus debilidades.

The conclusion of this particular tract summarises masculine and feminine qualities in a succession of oppositions:

El carácter masculino imprime pues la energía, la actividad para el cuerpo, la razón para el entendimiento; el femenino produce la gracia, la dulzura física, el espíritu moral. El uno es activo, el otro pasivo, uno es cálido y seco, otro húmedo y más frío, el primero manda y triunfa, el segundo sucumbe y suplica.<sup>116</sup>

By García Lorca's time (and beyond) medical opinion had become a little more sophisticated, but maintained both a hierarchical character with regard to the qualities of each sex, essentially strength versus weakness, and an extrapolation of the metaphysical from the physical. In his proposal of a dualistic catabolic/anabolic composition of the metabolism, the eminent doctor and acquaintance of García Lorca, Gregorio Marañón, follows the model of sexual differentiation. He concludes that the final determining factor in defining the metabolism is whether or not the subject follows 'general type':

como tipo general, [la mujer es] lenta en sus movimientos, tímida y emocionable en la esfera activa y poco energética y rutinaria en su mentalidad; mientras que el hombre es, por los motivos opuestos, vivo en el ejercicio físico, más impasible ante las emociones y más pronto y original para el acto mental.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Adelon, *et al.*, *Dictionnaire des sciences médicales*, vol. 14, (Paris: Panchouke, 1812-1822), pp. 546-7.

<sup>117</sup> Gregorio Marañón, *Biología y feminismo*, (Madrid, 1920), p. 11.

Tamsin Spargo confirms the legacy of biomedical discourse on sexual differentiation with her reading of the cultural construction of sex and gender. The man/woman opposition is “antagonistic” and “hierarchical” because of its “association with others: rational/emotional, strong/weak, active/passive and so on”.<sup>118</sup> The language of masculinity articulated through the two Figuras presents an image of maleness so exaggerated that it is no longer sustainable. From a socio-cultural and biomedical standpoint, the traditionally ‘feminine’ attributes of sensitivity and delicacy are being associated with a masculinity of impossible size and strength.

In *El público*, the dialectic of gender is intimately linked to the hierarchical opposition of strength/weakness. Hombre 1 describes himself as weak, while Hombre 3 is called strong by the Director (III, p. 103). The other men and the Director try to bully Hombre 3 into attempting to kill the Emperador, but without his whip he balks at the idea, buries his shamed face in his hands, crumples into a chair and begins to cry (III, p. 104). Hombre 1 resolves to attempt to kill the Emperador instead “sin cuchillo, con estas manos quebradizas que me envidian todas las mujeres” (III, p. 104). Why do women envy Hombre 1’s hands? Are they slender or delicate? Could they be described as ‘feminine’? The adjective “quebradizas” certainly implies a fragility and delicacy in physical terms. It is with his bare, weak, delicate hands that Hombre 1 proposes to kill the Emperador; an act surely requiring considerable physical strength. The femininity of Hombre 1’s hands is juxtaposed with the supposed masculine qualities of courage, compared to Hombre 3, and of strength, necessary to engage in physical violence. A surface layer of gender representation is removed when Hombre 2 undergoes a transformation, behind the folding screen, into the woman in pyjamas in the first act. But, as he makes clear in the “Muro de arena” scene, his gender identity is not a matter of being superficially masculine and concealing an inner femininity. Rather, Hombre 2 underlines his ambiguity as someone who consciously adopts masculine qualities and behaviour, and displays a male physiology when it suits him:

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<sup>118</sup> Tamsin Spargo, *Foucault and Queer Theory*, p. 46.



Te olvidas de que soy fuerte cuando quiero. Era yo un niño y uncía los bueyes de mi padre. Aunque mis huesos estén cubiertos de pequeñísimas orquídeas, tengo una capa de músculos que utilizo cuando quiero. (III, p. 107)

For Hombre 2, his masculine body possesses “una capa de músculos”, a surface layer, while his bones, an internal depth, have a ‘feminine’ flower pattern. Initially, this appears to be a statement of a surface/depth binary, with the ‘inner truth’ of Hombre 2’s gender identity, a femininity. Instead, the speech reveals a ‘playing’ with gender in a performative sense, as Hombre 2 shows through being aware that he is consciously using the properties of masculinity. The reference to the anatomical inner structure of bones decorated with orchids is not as straightforward as the initial interpretation of a metaphor for inner femininity implies. The “pequeñísimas orquídeas” cover the surface of the bones; if the “capa de músculos” define the naked body as one layer of identity, then the orchid-defined bones constitute another level of representation.

The discourse of masculinity engaged in by the two Figuras puts forward an exaggerated masculinity that appropriates ‘feminine weakness’ as its “corporeal style”.<sup>119</sup> In a parallel encounter, the three Caballos Blancos confront Julieta intent on sleeping with her. The Caballos offer a representation of gender, which employs an apparent masculinity, tenuously constructed. They each carry a hollow, black baton, which, at one moment, they grip and aim at Julieta, and from which three jets of water spout: “Te orinamos... como orinamos a las yeguas, como la cabra orina el hocico del macho y el cielo orina a las magnolias” (III, p. 116). For Huélamo Kosma (and given that they produce urine) the batons represent phalluses, but they are not “viril y generador”, rather, they are “un añadido artificial con una finalidad de apoyo”.<sup>120</sup> Huélamo Kosma’s point is that the three Caballos are feigning a heterosexual reproductivity that misrepresents their homosexuality. While accepting that the batons may represent phalluses,

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<sup>119</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 177: “Consider gender [...] as a *corporeal style*, an “act”, as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where “*performative*” suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning.”

<sup>120</sup> Huélamo Kosma, *El teatro imposible*, p. 53.

what is more significant than speculation on their sexuality is the artificiality of the batons, i. e. that these theatrical props represent the sex of the Caballos. A sexual dominance is attempted by the Caballos: “queremos acostarnos [...] con Julieta [...] (*furiosos*) ¡Queremos acostarnos!”, “porque somos caballos verdaderos, caballos de coche hemos roto las vergas de madera de los pesebres y las ventanas del establo” (III, p. 115). The assertion of their dominance is expressed in terms of physical strength, breaking the wooden panels of their stalls and the shutters of the stable, and of authenticity, being ‘real’ horses. On the latter point, the claim to be ‘real’ is clearly at odds with their theatricality, they being ‘horses’ interpreted on a stage by players in a drama. Even allowing for the contract of conventional theatre to suspend disbelief and accepting their appearance to be ‘reality’, horses in a realistic drama would not be played by actors nor be capable of speaking. With regard to their claim to physical vigour, their strength and resolve instantly dissipate before Julieta’s counter assertion: “No os tengo miedo. ¿Queréis acostaros conmigo? ¿Verdad? Pues ahora soy yo la que quiere acostarse con vosotros, pero yo mando, yo dirijo, yo os monto, yo os corto las crines con mis tijeras” (III, p. 115). Julieta, outwardly female in appearance, inverts the gender binary and appropriates the associated opposition of strength and weakness; she declares herself fearless, claims sexual dominance, and threatens to dominate physically. Her warning that she will cut off the Caballos’ manes is reminiscent of the biblical tale of Samson and Delilah. It is worth recalling that the dramatic project that became *El público*, was originally begun as *Sansón. Misterio poético en cuarenta cuadros y un asesinato*<sup>121</sup>. Perhaps this would also have been, like *El público*, a meditation on gender and identity? Julieta thus usurps the apparent maleness of the Caballos, ‘performing’ a strength and dominance at odds with her female appearance. While the Caballos, ultimately, offer an ambiguous sexual identity, their urinating batons as much a female as male attribute: “como orinamos a las yeguas, como la cabra orina el hocico del macho”.<sup>122</sup> The Caballo Negro’s interjection, “¿Quién

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<sup>121</sup> As Ian Gibson records, “El insatisfactorio estado...”, p. 15: “Se supone que estamos ante el primer atisbo de *El público*”.

<sup>122</sup> Grande Rosales suggests: “no se llega a la completa feminización de los personajes, cuya identidad genérica y sexual se convierte en espacio de posibilidad, de terceridad, negada por la transcendencia de una tradición metafísica dualista”, “*El público*: la verdad de las máscaras”, p. 113.

pasa a través de quién?”, suggests that the struggle for dominance, for the opportunity to assert masculine strength over the other is trapped in the instability of gender identity and its coherence with sexual identity.

Another episode that includes a struggle over gender identity occurs between Elena and Hombre 3 in the first *cuadro*. The latter passes behind the folding screen and emerges very pale, a whip in hand and gold studded leather bracelets on his wrists. Despite the costume, the whip of a sexual dominator and bracelets typical of sadomasochistic paraphernalia, Elena offers complete resistance to his attempts to dominate, showing greater strength and resolve:

Podías seguir golpeando un siglo entero y no creería en ti. (*El Hombre 3 se dirige a Elena y le aprieta las muñecas.*) Podrías seguir un siglo entero atenazando mis dedos y no lograrías hacerme escapar un solo gemido. (I, p. 85).

It is quite clear that Hombre 3 intends presenting a dominant, masculine image of himself, but instead he proves to be weak and emotionally dependent, a conventional femininity Elena chides him for: “¿Pero por qué me quieres tanto? Yo te besaría los pies si tú me castigaras y te fueras con las otras mujeres. Pero tú me adoras demasiado a mí sola” (I, p. 85). This episode, with its depiction of an emasculated man’s relationship to a woman, recalls the weak males of other Lorcan dramas, especially José, Mariana’s Pedro, Perlimplín, and Yerma’s Juan. Consistently weak before Elena, Hombre 3 achieves the masculine, dominant position only in his relations with Hombre 2. Arriving in Julieta’s crypt, Hombre 2, in his guise of the woman in pyjamas, is on Hombre 3’s arm. Julieta addresses the transformed Hombre 2 as “amiga”, but Hombre 3 is anxious to dispel the illusion: “Ésta no es mi amiga. Ésta es una máscara... (*Lo desnuda violentamente...*)” (III, p. 123). Hombre 3 explains: “Lo traía disfrazado para defenderlo de los bandidos”; and demands subservience from Hombre 2: “Bésame la mano, besa la mano de tu protector”. At different points in the play, then, Hombre 3 performs a strong, ‘masculine’ role and displays weak, ‘feminine’ characteristics. The lack of consistency in his gender identity points to its contingent performativity. Hombre 2 experiences a similar fluidity of gender but the expression of such is primarily in costume change. Coming out from behind

the screen, Hombre 2 is now a woman dressed in black pyjama trousers, who the Director mocks as “¡Maximiliana, emperatriz de Baviera! ¡Oh mala mujer!” (I, p. 84. We recall the description of Bernarda Alba as “¡Mala, más que mala!” III, p.316). S/he also carries a lorgnette with a blond moustache “*que usará poniendo sobre su boca en algunos momentos del drama*”. García Lorca presents Hombre 2 as a series of masks, a man in formal, public evening dress, sometimes with a false beard, also a woman in informal, private housewears, sometimes with a false moustache. There is no suggestion as to which is the original or ‘real’ identity because the suggestion is the opposite, that true identity is an invalid concept, all being temporary artifice.<sup>123</sup>

The Director is subject to a series of changes of appearance, which reveals the semiotics of costume and gesture as the basis for gender identity. As Hombre 1 points out, “[el Director] se puso dos rosas en las orejas el primer día que descubrió el peinado con la raya en medio” (I, p. 82). From that early demonstration of femininity, the Director develops a range of masculine and unmasculine adornments that, in their construction, signal the performativity of gender. After his dark and blond wigs, the Director employs a pierrot-style harlequin costume that points to a certain gender ambiguity or, as Grande Rosales suggests, “la posibilidad de subversión [...] de las categorías unidimensionales de lo masculino y lo femenino”.<sup>124</sup> The harlequin outfit is exchanged for “un sutilísimo traje de bailarina” (III, p. 120), and, subsequently, a body stocking decorated with tiny bells (III, p. 121). The Director assumes feminine names corresponding to each costume, Guillermina and Dominga, but the names are masks to accompany the costume, they are identities assumed by the costumes and not the Director. In the same manner, the Director discards the harlequin costume and with it the name Enrique. Pointing to the cast-off clothing, he declares: “¿Enrique? Ahí tienes a Enrique” (III, p. 120). The Director, thus, undergoes a number of changes that affect his gender appearance, and

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<sup>123</sup> This notion, especially clear with regard to the Director’s successive costume changes, is noted by Grande Rosales: “si existen múltiples estratos de vestido... es imposible averiguar la existencia última de un último estrato de ‘desnudez’ o ‘verdad’”, “*El público: la verdad de las máscaras*”, p. 113.

<sup>124</sup> Grande Rosales, “*El público: la verdad de las máscaras*”, p. 107.

moves between masculine and feminine with a fluency that underscores the contingency and artifice of gender.

A complete indifference to dissonance between represented gender and sexual identity colours the feelings of Estudiante 5. Laughing at Estudiante 4's po-faced reaction to the discovery that "la Julieta que estaba en el sepulcro era un joven disfrazado, un truco del Director" (V, p. 140), Estudiante 5 engages Julieta's artificial gender as the only significant 'reality', dispassionate about the anatomical sex: "¡Pues me gusta! Parecía muy hermosa y si era un joven disfrazado no me importa nada" (V, p. 141). His description of her as "muy hermosa", using the feminine form of the adjective, reflects his acceptance of the surface representation (her costume, gestures and actions) as the only meaningful identity.<sup>125</sup>

The confrontation, between Estudiantes 1 and 2 with Estudiante 4, represents the discourse of truth versus illusion, inner reality versus surface form, as we have seen. Estudiante 1 defends the thesis of form and illusion in theatrical terms, pointing out that it serves no purpose for the audience to look to penetrate the surface presentation. Using the example of the Director's production of Romeo y Julieta, in which "Romeo era un hombre de treinta años y Julieta un muchacho de quince" (V, p. 139), Estudiante 1 proposes that "Romeo puede ser un ave y Julieta puede ser una piedra. Romeo puede ser un grano de sal y Julieta puede ser un mapa. ¿Qué le importa esto al público?" (V, p. 134). Estudiante 1's suggestion is that the form is unimportant, it is the effect produced that counts. As Estudiante 2 adds in support of the first's proposition, "e]n el último caso, ¿es que Romeo y Julieta tienen que ser necesariamente un hombre y una mujer para que la escena del sepulcro se produzca de manera viva y desgarradora?" (V, p.

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<sup>125</sup> Grande Rosales follows Antonio Monegal in viewing the fluidity of movement between masculine and feminine as, firstly, unidirectional, male bodies disguised in femininity and, secondly, as "indicios de la verdadera identidad oculta bajo traje masculino", "*El público: la verdad de las máscaras*", p. 112.

135).<sup>126</sup> All representative forms are irrelevant, including those of sex and gender, with only the effect produced by those structures being of any meaning.

#### 4.6 "¿Quién pasa a través de quién?"

Estudiante 2's rhetorical questioning of whether Romeo and Juliet need to be a man and a woman presumes that anatomical sex is another category of identity to be regarded as insubstantial as any other surface representation. The presumption seems to be counter-intuitive: if these two characters are to be human, what else could they be but male and/or female? But, as Monique Wittig has explained, the human being is recognised as such only after her/his gender is constituted through 'marking' the subject with gender.<sup>127</sup> (The awkward possessive pronoun splitting is a symptom of the linguistic difficulties in trying to speak of humanity, in hypothetical terms, outside of the gender binary). When an infant is born, the surface anatomy of the body is taken as the primary indicator of biological sex. Therefore, the body serves as the locus for sexual identity, but why should this be so? How does the body come to signify identity?

To begin with, Judith Butler examines Julia Kristeva's work Powers of Horror and finds in her discourse of abjection some important thinking on how the body forms the human self:

The 'abject' designates that which has been expelled from the body, discharged as excrement, literally rendered 'Other'. This appears as an expulsion of alien elements, but the alien is effectively established through this expulsion. The construction of the 'not-me' as the abject establishes the boundaries of the body, which are also the first contours of the subject.<sup>128</sup>

The process of bodily identity begins with an ejection of the inner, serving to fix the outer and, in effect, the boundary between the two:

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<sup>126</sup> As Dama 2 of the audience group making their way around the theatre in Cuadro V opines: "Las voces estaban vivas y sus apariencias también. ¿Qué necesidad teníamos de lamer los esqueletos?" (V, 133).

<sup>127</sup> See Butler's discussion of Wittig's Lesbian Bodies, Gender Trouble, p. 142.

<sup>128</sup> Butler, Gender Trouble, p. 169.

What constitutes through division the 'inner' and 'outer' worlds of the self is a border and boundary tenuously maintained for the purposes of social regulation and control. The boundary between the inner and outer is confounded by those excremental passages in which the inner effectively becomes outer, and this excreting function becomes, as it were, the model by which other forms of identity-differentiation are accomplished. In effect, this is the mode by which Others become shit. For inner and outer worlds to remain utterly distinct, the entire surface of the body would have to achieve an impossible impermeability. This sealing of its surfaces would constitute the seamless boundary of the subject; but this enclosure would invariably be exploded by precisely that excremental filth that it fears.<sup>129</sup>

Butler goes on to elaborate how social and cultural regulation forces subjective identity to establish itself by relationship to the 'Other', fixing a stable dividing line, the surface of the body, between inner and outer. If those social and cultural injunctions are questioned, the boundary becomes untenable, the binary of inner/outer suspect. As Butler's reading suggests, the permeable body is inherently unstable, those orifices that expel and are penetrable give rise to the fear of the Self's collapse, and propose that identity is only possible as a contingency.

In El público, the subjective identities of the stage characters undergo deconstruction as the tenuous boundary of the body is permeated by a series of expulsions and penetrations. The opposition of inner/outer sustained by the body, therefore, loses coherence.<sup>130</sup> Fundamentally, this opposition, which in El público is consonant with the dualisms of truth and illusion, and the gender binary of masculine and feminine, is explored as a range of penetrative and discharging acts, for the most part scatological.<sup>131</sup> Meanwhile, a model of the ideal of stable identity is presented through a succession of characters, which materialise the statuesque, impermeable

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<sup>129</sup> Butler, Gender Trouble, p. 170.

<sup>130</sup> As Gómez Torres notes in spatial terms: "El escenario anula de modo conceptual la dualidad 'dentro/fuera'. Lorca descompone este binomio a varios niveles", "La destrucción o el teatro", p. 27.

<sup>131</sup> Fernández Cifuentes, picks out "una serie [...] larga de alusiones escatológicas", García Lorca en el teatro, p. 290. Grande Rosales is struck by "la predilección lingüística por [...] lo somático e incluso lo escatológico", "El público: la verdad de las máscaras", p. 108.

surface. Ultimately, 'truth' (the 'truth' of gender) is collapsed onto the surface of the body, as the locus of contingent sexual identity, and manifests in a system of signs with gendered values.

The Director's forsaken bailarina costume makes a brief disembodied entrance before falling to the ground asleep. The miserable cry of its name "Guillermina" forwards, then backwards, is followed by the plea "Dejadme entrar o dejadme salir" (III, p. 121). The exiting, or expulsion, from the body, as represented in the play, is expressed in one area by bodily functions, spitting and urinating, while defecating is also suggested. Immediately after his initial transformation into the harlequin, the Director shouts at Hombre 1: "Quiero escupirte" (I, p. 83). Then, in Julieta's crypt, the argument between the two turns into a physical fight; Hombre 1 tells the Director "Te amo", to which the latter shouts back "Te escupo" (III, p. 119). While, in *Cuadro I*, the Caballos Blancos's first petition to the Director is "Por tu saliva, por un recorte de tus uñas" (I, p. 76), the request for a nail clipping underlines expulsion from the body with an act of elimination. The Caballos surround Julieta with their hollow batons, jets of water pour forth and the Caballos exclaim: "Te orinamos como orinamos a las yeguas" (III, p. 116). Hombre 2 demands of the Director: "¿Es que no es bonito ver orinar a Romeo?" (I, p. 79). The act of defecation is implied by the Figura de cascabeles's: "¿Si yo me convirtiera en caca?" (II, 86). Aside from the more scatological excretions, the act of childbirth is an expulsion of the inner to the outer, which is noted with exaggeration of the number of orifices and offspring in the swaggering claims of the Centurión: "Mi mujer es hermosa [...] Pare por cuatro o cinco sitios a la vez [...] Yo tengo doscientos hijos" (II, p. 96). The childbirth reference is echoed by Julieta's remark: "Un niño recién nacido es hermoso" (III, p. 116).

Penetration of the body's surface, through orifices or otherwise, is referred to with as much frequency as these acts of expulsion, but there is greater emphasis on violent invasion than the ingressions of personal habits. Julieta complains of having received a series of visits in her tomb, from "la joven violada por el perro" (III, p. 112). The Director expresses his fear of the mask recounting to the three men the incident of a man to whom "Los jóvenes más fuertes [...],



con picas ensangrentadas, le hundían por el trasero grandes bolas de periódicos abandonados” (I, p. 80). The man was ‘devoured’ by the mask, while, similarly, Hombre 3 comments on the struggle between Hombre 1 and the Director “[t]endremos necesidad de separarlos”, to which Hombre 2 adds “Para que no se devoren” (III, p. 106). Hombre 1 challenges Hombre 3 to go kill the Emperador, suggesting: “¿Cómo no te precipitas y con tus mismos dientes le devoras el cuello?” (III, p. 103). The mask is promoted by the Director for its purpose of veiling the intimate, solitary and non-violent penetrations that are practised in private: “En la alcoba cuando nos metemos los dedos en las narices o nos exploramos delicadamente el trasero” (III, p. 118). It is not only other bodily parts or parts of others' bodies that may pierce the surface: the body is vulnerable to (violent) incisions from inanimate objects. In a quasi-medical environment, the Enfermero informs the Desnudo rojo of his scheduling for a ‘surgical’ procedure that suggests a worsening of the condition: “a las ocho vendré con el bisturí para ahondarte la herida del costado” (V, p. 130). The Figura de pámpanos offers itself to the Emperador with a disturbing request for brutal penetration: “Si me besas yo abriré mi boca para clavarme después tu espada en el cuello” (II, p. 97). In the verbal exchanges with the Figura de cascabeles, the Figura de pámpanos brings each bout to an abrupt end by introducing the “cuchillo” into its counterpart’s “pez luna” (II, p. 90 & p. 91).

As Butler’s reading of Kristeva suggests, discrete identity is maintained by conceiving the body as an impermeable boundary that separates the Self from the Other. In El público, the portrayal of the body’s permeability, and the consequent destabilising of identity, is figured in the trope of the statue, representing an unchanging, impermeable body surface, and, therefore, a stabilised identity. The initial description of Elena is careful to note her plaster feet (I, p. 84), the material being one of those Hombre 1 suggests as suitable to prevent the internal being externalised:

Hay personas que vomitan cuando se vuelve un pulpo del revés y otras que se ponen pálidas si oyen pronunciar con la debida intención la palabra cáncer; pero usted sabe que contra esto existe la hojalata, y el yeso, y la adorable mica, y en último caso el cartón. (I, p. 81)

The plaster quality to her feet suggests a statuesque imperviousness, which is later reinforced, as if it were diamond rather than plaster, when the Director reminds Hombre 1 that Elena is unmarkable by even the most corrosive substances: “Pero tú sabes que Elena puede pulir sus manos dentro del fósforo y la cal viva” (III, p. 105). The plaster quality of the body’s surface is hinted at in relation to the Emperador when he removes first his black, then his red gloves to reveal hands “de una blancura clásica” (II, p. 96). The latter commands the Centurión to strip the two Figuras, the Figura de pámpanos discards its vine leaves willingly “y aparece un desnudo blanco de yeso” (II, p. 97). The Emperador, then, declares “uno es uno”, his search for “uno” complete when he finds the stabilised identity, the impermeable surface of the plaster nude. Importantly, the Centurión announces that “[e]l Emperador adivinará cuál de los dos es uno. *Con un cuchillo o con un salivazo*” (II, p. 96, my italics). The Emperador knows that, in order to establish a subject of stable identity, he must determine the impermeability of the body and reject those inherently unstable figures that may be penetrated or are capable of abjection.

“Siendo íntegramente hombres. ¿Es que un hombre puede dejar de serlo nunca?” (III, p. 102), the searching question of Hombre 1 is answered by the dialectic of the body’s impermeability/permeability. No ‘man’, no individual can be integral without surrendering all identity and becoming the fixed mask of an impermeable plaster statue. Instead s/he must recognise that subjective identity is only as tenuously and temporarily constituted as the permeable body on whose surface identity is located. Hombre 1’s question is essentially rhetorical as he also articulates this conclusion:

el ano es el castigo del hombre. El ano es el fracaso del hombre, es su vergüenza y su muerte. Los dos tenían ano y ninguno de los dos podía luchar con la belleza pura de los mármoles que brillaban conservando deseos íntimos defendidos por una superficie intachable. (III, p. 102)

The ideal of the marble or plaster statue as the body that maintains a stable subject is an impossible state for the human being whose ‘failure’ is the permeability of the body. Unable to maintain a distinction between inner and outer, the flawed body of the human being cannot

sustain a firm identity, forming, instead, contingent identities in a constant process of change. The dualism of inner/outer being unsustainable, the trope of an interior space, a place where the 'soul' may reside, or an inner essence, is rendered meaningless. Following Foucault, Butler proposes that "the figure of the interior soul understood as "within" the body is signified through its inscription *on* the body" (Butler, p. 172). Hence Butler arrives at her theoretical position that the exterior signs of gender, acts and gestures "fabricate" an identity or inner essence on the surface of the body.

In El público, García Lorca provides poetic representation of the sign system that indicates gender on the surface of the body. The first of three prime examples is contained in the Director's petulant speech after his initial harlequin transformation: "No me gustan los tatuajes, pero te quiero bordar con sedas" (I, 83). The harlequin Director wants to decorate Hombre 1's flesh, not with tattoos that suggest the masculinity of sailors and such like, but with a soft feminine silk thread, using the feminine-associated skill of embroidery. His desire is reminiscent of the Figura de cascabeles's giant who is capable of embroidering "una rosa en la uña de un niño recién nacido" (II, p. 93), the delicate flower perhaps an indicator of the categorisation of sex and gender that takes place when a child is born. Given that a child is first defined sexually by its (external) genitalia, it is not surprising that García Lorca presents a further illustration of gender signed on the body with references to the (male) sexual organ. Julieta complains that four boys came into her crypt, wanted to fix "un falito de barro" on her and were intent on "pintarme un bigote de tinta" (III, p. 112). It is significant that these are external physical signs of sex and that, in this case, they are artificial props, "de barro" and "de tinta", as their artificial and contingent nature suggests a potential for performing the other sex. This is different from the episode recounted by Hombre 2 of the unwitnessed events that unfolded "cuando no pasaba" the Director's Romeo y Julieta when "un ángel [...] se llevaba el sexo de Romeo, mientras dejaba el otro, el suyo, el que le correspondía" (I, p. 79). Here, the 'angel' is reconfiguring the surface of the body so that it corresponds to the 'inner' gender identity. A third instance of the connection between the body and gender identity is to be found

in the discussion of Julieta's feet among the fleeing audience members of *Cuadro V*, and as articulated by Muchacho 1. The uprising against the Director's production of *Romeo and Juliet* is prompted by the identification of Julieta as a male because of h/er feet: "yo descubrí la mentira cuando vi los pies de Julieta. Eran pequeñísimos" (V, p. 133). The problem was that "eran demasiado pequeños para ser pies de mujer. Eran demasiado perfectos y demasiado femeninos. Eran pies de hombre, pies inventado por un hombre". The 'beautiful' but exaggerated femininity of Julieta's feet<sup>132</sup> destabilises both h/er gender and h/er sexual identity; the exterior of h/er body performs a gender that is not coherent with the anatomy. It is the body that ultimately betrays the artifice of the gender being signalled by costume and comportment, not because Julieta's body is too masculine, but because the body is over-performing femininity<sup>133</sup>. In the light of these thoughts on Julieta's overly feminine feet, it is probably the anxiety that it may be developing a gender identification signified by the body, which preoccupies the Figura de pámpanos. With the Emperador's arrival imminent, the Figura confides in its counterpart: "ya siento que mis grandes pies se van volviendo pequeñitos y repugnantes" (II, p. 95). The Emperador's search for "uno", for a fixed identity, culminates in the conversion of the Figura de pámpanos into a plaster nude, gender and sexual identity permanently constituted.

#### *4.7 Queer acts: identity and existence as performance*

*Cuadro V* contains an episodic encounter with a red nude on a perpendicular bed, attended by a sinister male nurse. This fragmented scene encapsulates the structure, or rather the anti-structure, of *El público*. The setting of the scene, its constituent elements and the development of its content, provide a concise illustration of the play's intentions. We are present at a

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<sup>132</sup> For Estudiante 5, Julieta's feet, regardless of any sexual or gender consideration, are "los pies más bellos del mundo", (V, p. 140).

<sup>133</sup> Grande Rosales feels it necessary to discount intersexuality as a device in the play, and therefore any corporeal signification, preferring to view the body and gender transformations as transvestism: "La confusión se produce [...] en el nivel de las apariencias [...] y no en el ámbito biológico: en ningún caso el tercer término es un andrógino o hermafrodita", "*El público: la verdad de las máscaras*", p. 113.

performance following strands of narratives, which start at different points and coil together to form a knotted, confusing bundle, where time and space are twisting, the perspectives shifting.

One strand is a perverted enactment of the Passion of Christ, a distant echo of Christ's suffering as described to María by Gabriel in Cristo. In El público, the (passion) play within the play is first suggested by the *Desnudo rojo*'s crown of blue thorns (V, p. 129), with lines that closely follow a New Testament script: "Padre mío, perdónalos, que no saben lo que se hacen" (V, p. 136), "Padre, en tus manos encomiendo mi espíritu" (V, p. 138) and "Todo se ha consumado" (V, p. 139). The enactment suggests not a real crucifixion, but rather a theatrical performance in the style of a Holy Week passion play. A range of props are referred to, including "los candeleros, el cáliz y las ampollas de aceite" (V, p. 137) and "la barba de José de Arimatea" (V, p. 136). The passion play's stage manager appears apologising for delays, missing props and late calls (V, pp. 136-7). Two supporting players arrive to play the two thieves (V, p. 136), further adding to the Pirandellian scheme of the characters' consciousness of themselves as players. Another strand is formed by the reports of the continuing action of El público itself. The characters of the *Desnudo rojo* and the *Enfermero* discuss the uprising of the audience against the Director's Romeo y Julieta and the state of revolution in which the theatre finds itself (V, pp. 129-131). A further element of narrative follows a surgical line, immediately suggested by the presence of the *Enfermero* and the hospital bed, with references to "inyecciones", "el quirófano" (V, p. 136) and "el bisturí" (V, p. 130). The hospital scenario includes allusions to surgical procedures that suggest more harm being done than good, such as the *Desnudo*'s "¿Cuántos vasos de sangre me habéis sacado?" and the *Enfermero*'s "vendré con el bisturí para ahondarte la herida del costado" (V, p. 130). These lines illustrate the whitening, or bleaching, function we have described in Cristo and Mariana Pineda, and they also recall the blood-thirsty Luna from Bodas de sangre.

Instead of a smooth blending of narrative elements to form an integral storyline, we have a fractured prism of multiple and disparate shards. Any movement towards cohesion and rational

progression is resisted by spatial and temporal distortions that mock the concept of linearity. The scene is played against a backdrop of “*unos arcos y escaleras que conducen a los palcos de un gran teatro*” (V, p. 129). To the right there is “*la portada de una Universidad*”. The upright bed on which the *Desnudo rojo* lies is described as “*como pintada por un primitivo*”, suggesting irregular lines, a lack of geometric regulation<sup>134</sup> and little sense of field depth or perspective. Allied to the strange visual composition of the scenario is the implication that the whole scene is taking place on a moving train. The *Desnudo* asks the *Enfermero* “¿Cuánto falta para Jerusalén?”, to which the latter informs him “Tres estaciones, si queda bastante carbón” (V, p. 130). The *Desnudo rojo* also refers to “[el] hombre solo, en las plataformas y en los trenes” (V, p. 138). The suggestion is further reinforced by *Hombre 1*’s reference to trains that travel at “velocidades inasibles” (V, p. 143). The sense of time in the scene is one of both urgency and, simultaneously, tardiness, of temporal shifts that ebb and flow erratically. As the scene opens, the *Desnudo* asks, disconcertingly for the start of an act, “¿Cuándo acabáis?” (V, p. 129). As opposed to ending, the *Enfermero* anxiously enquires “¿Cuándo va a comenzar el toque de agonía?” (V, p. 138). The late arrival of the two thieves produces a still greater urgency on the part of the *Enfermero*. He scolds the inept stage manager “¿Son estas horas de avisar?” (V, p. 136), and sends him off with an injunction to make haste. The delays caused by the stage manager contrast with the *Desnudo rojo*’s premature delivery of one of his scripted lines, for which the exacting *Enfermero* rebukes him: “Te has adelantado dos minutos” (V, p. 138). The *Enfermero*’s anxieties over correct time are reflected in his precise scheduling of the *Desnudo*’s ‘surgery’: “a los ocho, vendré con el bisturí” (V, p. 130).

The concept of the *Desnudo/Enfermero* scene, as it is fragmentary, multi-layered and spatially and temporally distressed, reflects the nature of El público as a work of queer constitution. As Tamsin Spargo explains, Butler’s theory of gender performativity raises “the possibility of

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<sup>134</sup> We recollect the bracketed epigram of “Suicidio” from Canciones: “Quizás fue por no saberte la geometría.”

[gender's] subversion through twisting or queering".<sup>135</sup> García Lorca's work proposes a subversion of theatrical text, style and structure that reflects the subversion of the notion of stable and coherent identity. The Queer project is an attempt to move away from rational, liberal models of identity and emphasise the *process* of changing forms that better understand the human subject and h/er existence. Central to queer theory, is the thinking of Butler on gender, and Foucault on sexuality. In El público, the exploration of the dualisms of surface/depth, illusion/truth, as well as the portrayal of gender and the body, are clearly challenging the concept of identity as essence, in the manner of Butler and Foucault. The unending series of transformations proposes a reconceptualisation of identity as what you do, rather than who you are. In this sense, the play's theoretical position is close to the queer emphasis on practices rather than identity, on the verb rather than the substantive. The difficulties encountered in an analysis of El público, the struggle to denominate the themes, organise the text, classify the style and delineate the structure, are symptoms of the play's inherent queer tendency towards a deconstruction that exposes the artifice of identity. The very fragmentation of El público's composition, structure and drama represents the theme of destabilised (gender) identity.

The Director, in his philosophical encounter with the Prestidigitador, describes his understanding of 'true' theatre: "tiene un profundo hedor de luna pasada. Cuando los trajes hablan, las personas vivas son ya botones de hueso en las paredes de calvario" (V, p. 151). The very nature of theatre is a stylised repetition of forms that represent a vision of life as a constant procession of temporary fabricated identities. The narratives of theatre enact the lives of people as a series of masks or forms continually repeated, re-invented and re-presented. The proposition is that actual existence and theatrical performance are constituted in the same way through the process of constantly shifting forms. This is the cause of Hombre 1's aching "soledad" in his haunting speech:

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<sup>135</sup> Spargo, Foucault and Queer Theory, p. 60.

Agonía. Soledad del hombre en el sueño lleno de ascensores y trenes donde tú vas a velocidades inasibles. Soledad de los edificios, de las esquinas, de las playas, donde tú no aparecerás ya nunca. (V, p. 143)

Hombre 1 suffers and dies for he knows he cannot restrain the constantly changing representations of his love, the Director; unlike those plaster statues of fixed identity, the Enrique he loves will 'never appear again' in the same form. The implication of García Lorca's most challenging drama is a broadening of the queer thinking on identity to encompass a metaphysical reflection on the nature of existence. It is a shame to think that García Lorca's achievement in El público, to write in theoretical terms barely conceivable in his times, has been circumscribed by misleading concerns for its 'homosexual' content, a problematic text and its supposed impossibility.

Another work that centres on an apparent impossibility is the focus of the next chapter. In Yerma, a search for true, essential identity is represented by the protagonist's intense, metaphysical longing for a 'child' that can never be. While in El público we witness the constant mutation of forms, Yerma seems to remain confined and circumscribed by a mask of infertility. But Yerma, as we shall see, does undergo change: in her quest for an inner being Yerma transgresses prescribed codes of feminine behaviour while pushing against the limits of her female body.



## Chapter Five:

### *¡Hijo de mi alma!*

## – gender inversion and the metaphysical reproduction of the Self in Yerma

### 5.1 Introduction

In El público, ambiguity and confusion characterise the discussion of its themes and structures; opinion focuses on its putative ‘impossibility’. Running through the work are modulating dialectics that generate tensions between the physical and the metaphysical, interactions amid the representations of illusion and reality, and mediations between the organising poles of binary gender. In Yerma, these oppositional forces re-emerge, to enact the tragedy of a woman who fails to achieve the same transcendence of material love that we have witnessed Jesús, Mariana, Perlimplín and Gonzalo pursuing. If the themes and structure of El público were difficult or ‘impossible’ to classify, any analysis of Yerma is circumscribed by the difficulties she faces to become a mother. In fact, for Yerma, having a child is an impossibility.

Both Gwynne Edwards and David Johnston view Yerma as “frustrated”.<sup>1</sup> For Johnston, Yerma is doomed from the start never to find the satisfaction of her desire to be a mother: Yerma’s name indicates right from the outset that her aspirations to motherhood will be denied, that her quest for this particular form of fulfilment is already rooted in failure. Johnston’s reading is supported by María Carmen Bobes who sees Yerma as “la tragedia de la falta de hijos, la

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<sup>1</sup> Gwynne Edwards, García Lorca: the Theatre Beneath the Sands, (London & Boston: Marion Boyars, 1980). David Johnston, “Introduction” in Federico García Lorca, Yerma and Don Perlimplín, tr. David Johnston, (London & Sydney: Hodder and Stoughton, 1990), pp. 3-10, esp. p. 7.

frustración de un deseo de maternidad”.<sup>2</sup> In terms of ‘frustration’, we might prefer to see a genealogy of Yerma in the procession of women from García Lorca’s work whose desire “ya no está en las carnes” and for whom Love is their dream.<sup>3</sup> In his poetry, Romancero gitano is a rich site of examples, especially the Monja gitana, and Soledad from “Romance de la pena negra” (“Vengo a buscar lo que busco,/mi alegría y mi persona”; “[...] pena de cauce oculto/y madrugada remota”) and the gypsy girl of “Romance sonámbulo” are prime examples of women whose earthly desire is frustrated or truncated and diverted towards the nonphysical. These figures in García Lorca’s poetry are reflected in the dramatic characters of Mariana Pineda and Adela of La casa de Bernarda Alba.

The condition of Yerma’s cathected physical desire is girdled by the poet’s own pronouncements. In a number of interviews given around the time of Yerma’s premiere in 1934, and during the course of the following year’s productions of the work, García Lorca refers to his protagonist as “castigada a la esterilidad”, as “víctima de lo infecundo” and as “casada seca”. Later in this chapter we will look at the singular emphasis the poet gives to his eponymous tragic heroine, in terms of the play’s composition. In light of García Lorca’s own definition and the focus on Yerma, it is no surprise that skilled readers of the poet’s work concentrate their vision of the drama around a single argument. Miguel García-Posada states that the theme of Yerma is that of the sterile woman; however he asks appositely under what circumstances should she be viewed as sterile?<sup>4</sup> As we shall investigate, the possibilities for Yerma to conceive exist. Given the Vieja’s impugning of Juan – “La culpa es de tu marido” (III, 2; p. 489) – it becomes possible to imagine Yerma pregnant if she were to allow herself a physical liaison with one of the men who present themselves to her: with Víctor; with one of the

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<sup>2</sup> María Carmen Bobes, “Lectura semiológica de *Yerma*” in Lecturas del texto dramático: variaciones sobre la obra de García Lorca, ed. Inés Marful, (Oviedo: Universidad de Oviedo, 1990), pp. 67-85, esp. p. 77.

<sup>3</sup> Federico García Lorca, Obras. III, Teatro, 1, ed. Miguel García-Posada, (Madrid: Akal, 1996), III, 2; 490. All subsequent references to the work are from this edition and are contained in the body of the text.

<sup>4</sup> Miguel García-Posada, “Introducción”, in Federico García Lorca, Obras. III, Teatro, 1, ed. Miguel García-Posada, (Madrid: Akal, 1996), pp. 9-87, esp. p. 77.

Vieja's sons, or perhaps one of the men attending the *romería*. Elsewhere there are those who suggest Yerma's frustrated desire for a child is an acute pain peculiar to women. Paul Julian Smith maintains that García Lorca's thesis in Yerma concurs with a then contemporary medical proposition that "women are more sensitive to the griefs of [frustrated] motherhood, than they are to the [sexual] pleasures of matrimony" (Smith provides the omitted but implied words).<sup>5</sup> Central to our understanding of the drama is Yerma's enigmatic conviction that she will end up being her own child: "Acabaré creyendo que yo misma soy mi hijo" (II, 2; p. 463). Bobes believes that Yerma's conflation of herself with her child is evidence of the theme of the castrating woman.<sup>6</sup> If such were the case, then the blame for Yerma's 'sterility' is reflected back onto herself. But more important to our reading are the diversions, if not misunderstandings, the focus on the theme of the barren woman poses. There are many illustrations of the trouble that arises from a superficial evaluation of the work. Ian Gibson proposes that Yerma had resonance for García Lorca "on a personal level", because, as he sees it, "García Lorca was poignantly aware of his own 'sterility' as a homosexual".<sup>7</sup> Gibson does not support his contention with other evidence of García Lorca's longing for a child. His statement is one of conjecture as to how "a homosexual" might feel. We have previously discussed the difficulty with such speculative blending of the poet's life and work. Too often such opinion comes from those comfortably within the bounds of heteronormativity. From such a vantage point the perspectives of the gender/sexual dissident are always regarded as marginal. For García Lorca, his philosophical concerns with an impossible, transcendent Love were universal, despite the marginalisation of his same-sex desires. Which brings us back to the question of sterility – does Yerma centre on a woman's desire for a child? Not in such bald terms. Yerma, in common with the Lorcan theatre works that precede it, deals with a desire for Love. In our view, Yerma cannot physically have a child because it is not a child of flesh and blood she seeks; rather

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<sup>5</sup> Paul Julian Smith, The Theatre of Garcia (sic) Lorca: Text, Performance, Psychoanalysis, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 21.

<sup>6</sup> María Carmen Bobes, "Lectura semiológica de *Yerma*", p. 83

<sup>7</sup> Ian Gibson, Federico García Lorca. A Life, (London & Boston: Faber & Faber, 1989), p. 356.

Yerma is motivated by the desire to transcend her material being and ‘reproduce’ her Self on the symbolic plane of the soul.

For a drama that is not bracketed in the same experimental category as works such as El público and Así que pasen cinco años, Yerma boasts a structure as oddly configured as that of the former, convoluted theatre creation.<sup>8</sup> Foremost in the matter is the problematic notion of whether or not Yerma has a plot. In 1935, García Lorca twice declared the work to be devoid of a coherent, progressive narrative: firstly to the Catalan journalist Joan Tomas “*Yerma* no té argument”; and then again in Barcelona he affirmed “No hay argumento en *Yerma*. Yo he querido hacer eso: una tragedia, pura y simplemente.”<sup>9</sup> The poet’s comments highlight the sense of a constant reflecting on and around the predicament of its main character. Luis Fernández Cifuentes observes the static quality of Yerma in that the drama is marked by a lack of linear progression.<sup>10</sup> In this sense Yerma resembles the *estampas* of Mariana Pineda and the *aleluya* of Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín with their shared feature of the animation of the two-dimensional image. In common with El público, Yerma shares a sense of a circular, spiralling configuration conveyed by the opening and ending of the drama,<sup>11</sup> but without the vertiginous evolution of the former work. As El público begins and closes in the office of the Director, with his Criado in attendance, so from the initial stage direction of Yerma we view the chimerical Pastor and white-clad Niño staring at Yerma, and at the end of the final act, there is the arrival of an undetermined number of witnesses to Yerma’s killing of Juan. Miguel García-Posada observes a similar phenomenon with regard to the initial Pastor/Niño vision, the manner

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<sup>8</sup> We should note however the incidence of experimental productions of the work. The 1971 version in the hands of Víctor García, for example, is notorious for its staging of the piece on the canvas of a trampoline, providing at once a multifarious, never static, scenario for the drama as well as confining the narrative to an abstract, imaginary venue. See Smith’s discussion of the production in The Theatre of García Lorca..., pp. 40-42.

<sup>9</sup> “L’estrena d’avui al Barcelona. García Lorca parla de *Yerma*” and “García Lorca en la Plaza de Cataluña”, in Federico García Lorca, Obras VI, Prosa 1, ed. Miguel García-Posada, (Madrid: Akal, 1994), pp. 694 & 695.

<sup>10</sup> Luis Fernández Cifuentes, García Lorca en el teatro: la norma y la diferencia, (Zaragoza: University of Zaragoza, 1986), p. 166.

<sup>11</sup> On this sense of an endless circularity in the play’s structure, the Víctor García production referred to in note 8 also would have had the effect of positing Yerma as a character going nowhere.

in which the Pastor and Niño stare at Yerma, and the end of the first scene in Act I, where Yerma “(*queda con los ojos en un punto*)” (I, 1; p. 430).<sup>12</sup>

The structure of the text lends itself to an appreciation of the even, rhythmical composition of the drama. The three acts feel uniformly balanced: Act I has 25 pages, Act II has 23, and Act III has 21, with two scenes apiece.<sup>13</sup> García Lorca attests to the measured and precise fashioning of his play of “seis cuadros: los que necesité hacer”.<sup>14</sup> The effect of the work’s structure is that of an incantation, a chiming of the singular note of Yerma’s *pena*. Her chant is underscored in counterpoint by the choral work of the secondary characters whom Yerma encounters during the three scenes that take place outside. As the poet confirms: “En éstos [tres cuadros exteriores] no intervienen para nada los protagonistas, y solamente actúan auténticos coros a la manera griega.”<sup>15</sup> The reference to the technique of Greek chorus and its classical resonance connect with the grand scale of the play’s location. Fernández Cifuentes underlines the fact that the play has no specific geographical setting. He cites the divergent opinions of the reviewers of *Yerma*’s first production in 1934: one located the work in Castilla-La Mancha while another identified the site of Yerma’s unhappiness as Andalucía.<sup>16</sup> The unspecified scene of the play’s action allows the drama to resonate on an epic level of unbounded, universal tragedy. Within such a framework of structure, setting and argument, it is probably fitting that the drama should end on a note that is final and yet unending. Contrary to the apparent conclusiveness of Yerma’s intensely absolute declaration at the climax of the drama “¡yo misma he matado a mi hijo!” (III, 2; p. 494), Paul Julian Smith believes that the ending resolves none of the questions posed by the work, which remains instead “defiantly open”.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Miguel García-Posada, “Introducción”, 85.

<sup>13</sup> The García-Posada Edition

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Alfredo Muñoz, 1934, “En los umbrales del estreno de *Yerma*”, in Federico García Lorca, *Obras VI. Prosa 1*, p. 659.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Alfredo Muñoz, 1934, “En los umbrales del estreno de *Yerma*”, p. 659.

<sup>16</sup> Luis Fernández Cifuentes, *García Lorca y el teatro...*, p. 164.

<sup>17</sup> Paul Julian Smith, *The Theatre of García Lorca...*, p. 17.

García-Posada draws our attention to the important tension realised as each scene alternates between interior and exterior settings. As an overview, we have: Act I – Yerma’s house/the fields; Act II – the stream/Yerma’s house; and Act III – Dolores’s house/the environs of the hermitage.<sup>18</sup> The significance of the distinction between the two locations is explained by García Lorca in the interview he gave on the eve of Yerma’s premiere:

De estos [seis] cuadros, tres, los que corresponden a los interiores, tienen un dramatismo reconcentrado, una emoción silenciosa, como reflejo plástico de un tormento espiritual; los otros tres, al recibir color y ambiente natural, ponen luminarias de luz en el tono oscuro de la tragedia.<sup>19</sup>

The contrast of the two groups of scenes has particular meaning for the protagonist in her movement back and forth between the sites, and we discuss below Yerma’s identification with the indoors and her transgressive incursions into the outdoors. But what interests us here are the diverging qualities of the interior and exterior environments underlined by the poet. The indoors is established as the locus for the spiritual or metaphysical conflict that holds sway over Yerma, while the external atmosphere of the natural, physical world casts Yerma’s inner drama into relief. In these conditions of the plastic setting, Paul Julian Smith’s analysis of the underlying tension in the work is applicable. Smith signals the crucial distinction made by Yerma between what her body craves and what her inner being demands from her. In other words he argues for a division of the somatic and the metaphysical.<sup>20</sup> The dualistic interaction between interior and exterior settings, and the symbolic values of the physical and spiritual that they mobilise, are restated repeatedly in a series of oppositional engagements. Fernández Cifuentes picks out and discusses the influential undercurrent of an alternating rhythm of silence and speech, and most fruitfully, a transaction apparent in the frequently two-handed playing in the drama between speaking and listening.<sup>21</sup> For Johnston the decisive dialectic in Yerma strikes a chord with our

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<sup>18</sup> Miguel García-Posada, “Introducción”, p. 84.

<sup>19</sup> “En los umbrales del estreno de *Yerma*”, p. 659.

<sup>20</sup> Paul Julian Smith, The Theatre of García Lorca..., p. 38.

<sup>21</sup> Luis Fernández Cifuentes, García Lorca y el teatro..., p. 168

reading of El público, focussing as he does on the confrontation of illusion or falsehood with truth:

[In Yerma we encounter] the central opposition between the truth of the unchanging human heart and the codified deceit of a society unable and [...] unwilling to satisfy the legitimate aspirations of its members.<sup>22</sup>

In her exploration of the natural (and the supernatural), Mary S. Vásquez identifies a series of binary oppositions that bolster the proposition that the drama depends upon an internal framework of symbolic principles. Vásquez lists “fecundidad/esterilidad, agua/sequedad, esperanza/desesperación, libre albedrío/sino, salvación/perdición” among the dualisms she sees as fundamental to making sense of the play.<sup>23</sup> Gwynne Edwards, like Vásquez, sees an antagonistic opposition between the natural and the strange as the key to understanding Yerma’s engagement with the world around her: “It is logical [...] that the whole of creative Nature should [...] assume a mocking character, its richness an accusation of her abnormality”.<sup>24</sup>

Vásquez centres her reading of the play on the relationship, or rather tension, between Yerma and Juan. Our study also targets the contrast between and polarisation of the couple. We will accordingly examine the coupling, looking at each positioning of Yerma and Juan within the sexual binary of female/male and their shaping within the culturally opposed expressions of feminine/masculine. We follow Judith Butler’s contention that

the heterosexualization of desire [...] requires and institutes the production of discrete and asymmetrical oppositions between ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’, where these are understood as expressive attributes of ‘male’ and ‘female’.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> David Johnston, “Introduction” in Federico García Lorca, Yerma and Don Perlimplín, tr. David Johnston, (London & Sydney: Hodder and Stoughton, 1990), p. 7.

<sup>23</sup> Mary S. Vásquez, “Yerma de García Lorca, historia de una pasión: *natura*, naturaleza, naturalidad” in Federico García Lorca en el espejo del tiempo, ed. Pedro Guerrero Ruiz, (Alicante: Aguaclara, 1998), pp. 128-142, esp. 128.

<sup>24</sup> Gwynne Edwards, García Lorca: the Theatre Beneath the Sands, (London & Boston: Marion Boyars, 1980), p. 188.

<sup>25</sup> Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, (New York & London: Routledge, 1999, first edition 1990), p. 17.

Crucial to our understanding of the gender construction of Yerma and Juan is Butler's contention that fundamental to the cultural epistemology of Western societies is the 'hetero-imperative', what Adrienne Rich famously termed "compulsory heterosexuality".<sup>26</sup> This not only divides sex and gender into two distinct categories, establishing them as both complementary and oppositional, but is an injunction which underpins the dualistic constitution of symbolic values (such as fertility/sterility, reason/emotion, strength/weakness, public/private, truth/illusion). The strategy that García Lorca employs for his depiction of Yerma and Juan in order to expose the artifice of their opposed identities is best defined as an inversion of gender. In the next section we take the case of Yerma. The appropriation of masculine gender roles by the poet's protagonist reveals the contingent nature of her gender, and the lack of an essentialised sexual identity, from which that gender is supposed to follow. In continuation we turn to Juan, and we consider his portrayal as a weak and inadequate male, in comparison to a virilised Yerma (García-Posada views Juan as "la negación de su mujer"<sup>27</sup>), and as the culmination of the series of effeminate, deficient male characters along the trajectory of García Lorca's theatre. Our analysis leads us to reflect on the de-essentialising effects of gender instability in terms of subjective identity. We incorporate into our study Butler's theory of gender performativity which raises "the possibility of [gender's] subversion through twisting or queering".<sup>28</sup> In pursuit of our proposition that Yerma's proper motivation is the (re)production of her Self on an idealised, symbolic plane, that the 'child' she would give life to is an inner essence or soul for her empty body, we will look into the seemingly contradictory attitudes of Judith Butler's theory of gender, as a sign system located on the body's surface, and Paul Julian Smith's argument that Yerma's masculinisation may be viewed as an effect of her hermaphroditism (or "intersexuality"). Ultimately, Yerma finds herself in an impossible union with someone whose material desire for her does not correspond to her thirst for metaphysical transcendence (and hence Smith proposes Yerma's distinction between the somatic and the

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<sup>26</sup> Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence", *Signs*, vol.5, no.4, 1980.

<sup>27</sup> Miguel García-Posada, "Introducción", p. 84.

<sup>28</sup> As we read in Tamsin Spargo's explanation, cited in Chapter Four, *Foucault and Queer Theory*, (Cambridge: Icon, 1999), p. 60.



psychic). Just as Mariana Pineda swaps love for her lover's ideals, Yerma displaces her physical love for her partner onto an ideal. Mariana pursues a spiritual state of perfection for herself in the public realm by way of the socio-political cause of Liberty; Yerma's cause is entirely more introverted and personal as she seeks a route to immortality. Yerma's desire is for the transmutation of the soma into perpetual essence. It is a reproduction, not of her flesh in the form of a child, but of her soul in the image of a pure, immaterial child. Like *Perlimplín*, Yerma strives for union with an ideal because the object of her love, Juan, cannot or will not reciprocate in any other way than offer material pleasure.

## 5.2 A masculinised Yerma

The opening scene of *Yerma* sets out the proposition of a masculinised Yerma and in contrast a feminised Juan. The initial scene succinctly establishes the dominance of wife over husband. We observe that the first character to speak is Yerma, and her words are a call for Juan to attend her: "Juan, ¿me oyes? Juan" (I, 1; p. 418). The first ten lines are short and curt; they resound in the air with their spartan quality, functional and terse. Yerma marks the time, attuned to the world outside, and expectant of a desired event:

YERMA: Ya es la hora

JUAN: ¿Pasaron las yuntas?

YERMA: Ya pasaron (I, 1; p. 419).

Simone Saillard has connected Yerma to María in *Cristo*, as each waits by the window for the return of the herds, and we should add for the arrival of their child.<sup>29</sup> The dialogue abrupt and the action static, the kind of liaison between Yerma and Juan is readily conveyed. Within the enclosed space of her home, Yerma's voice carries the same authoritative tone as Marcolfa's in *Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín*. Like *Perlimplín's* servant, there is a sense that

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<sup>29</sup> Compare MARÍA: "¿Pasaron los camellos de Daniel?" *Cristo* I, 1; p. 233. Simone Saillard, "Renan en Fuente Vaqueros, o la *Vie de Jésus* según Federico García Lorca", in *Valoración actual de la obra de García Lorca : actas del coloquio celebrado en la Casa de Velázquez = lectures actuelles de García Lorca : actes du colloque tenu à la Casa de Velázquez*, eds. J. J. Bustos & Y. R. Fonquerne, (Madrid : Casa de Velázquez/Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1988), p. 67.

Yerma 'directs' her husband – almost as the director of the play would direct the actors. Juan seems to follow Yerma's guidance. Just as María in Cristo asserts her authority over an incapacitated, weak and old José, so Yerma, as we shall see, signals her influence over Juan. Yerma's supremacy over Juan in the first scene is reinforced as Juan exits. It is Yerma who approaches, embraces and kisses him – "[...] *tomando ella la iniciativa*" (I, 1; p. 421). Initially, the house is presented as Yerma's locale, and traditionally in gender terms, we might expect this to be case, associating the female with the private domain. What is different is that the house is not only identified *with* Yerma but assigned *to* Yerma, as we note in this stage direction from Act II: "*(Casa de Yerma)*" (II, 2; p. 456). Juan iterates the identification of woman with home in terms of *honra*: "Mi vida está en el campo, pero mi honra está aquí" (II, 2; p. 456). The poet's comment on Yerma's involuntary dilemma explains this: "Mi protagonista tiene limitado su arbitrio, encadenada por el concepto, que va disuelto en su sangre, de la honra españolísima."<sup>30</sup> García Lorca, however, intimates that the house is not so much Yerma's locus according to Juan, but rather her property. In the same manner, the poet will reassign Antonio Benavides's house to Bernarda Alba. The ascription of property to Yerma is revisited when Víctor comes to bid farewell to her in Act II. He makes it clear that, although it was Juan who bought his sheep from him, they are Yerma's property: "(A YERMA) Tuyos son" (II, 2; p. 468). He might have, perhaps should have, said "vuestros son". The fact that property is attributed to Yerma underlines her occupation of the traditional masculine sphere. Therefore, it is the case that Yerma's transgression is not only figured in spatial terms, her frequent unaccompanied sorties out of the house, but that a further offence is enacted in her usurpation of male property and commerce.

The home is therefore identified as both domain and territory of the woman in the relationship of this odd couple. Furthermore, Juan's declaration invests in Yerma the weight of his honour and the honour of his house: Yerma needs to stay within the private confines of the house to

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<sup>30</sup> Interview with Ricardo García Luengo, 1935, "Conversación con Federico García Lorca", Obras VI, Prosa 1, p. 719.

keep the husband's public reputation intact. María Carmen Bobes expresses this principal concern of Yerma's husband thus: "Juan reduce la honra a que su mujer esté en casa y no salga sola".<sup>31</sup> Juan reinforces the affiliation of Yerma and the house when he confronts her in the first scene of Act III for having left her station and gone to the house of Dolores, the wise woman. He complains bitterly that he is married to a woman "que se sale de noche fuera de su casa" (III, 1; p. 478) when she, "la honra de mi casa" (III, 1; p. 477), compromises his good name by leaving the home and wandering the streets "[que] están llenas de machos" (III, 1; p. 478). With Yerma continually transgressing the boundaries of honour and her womanhood, the answer to Juan's rhetorical "ni yo sé lo que busca una mujer a todas horas fuera de su tejado" (III, 1; p. 478), is that Yerma does not behave in a womanly way. Absconding from the locus of the woman, Yerma enters the outside world of "machos".

Juan is replaced in the first scene with Yerma's neighbour and friend María. García-Posada highlights the development of this María from the María of *Cristo*. In the latter, juvenile work, Jesús's mother receives a visit from the archangel Gabriel, a form of second annunciation which warns of Jesús's tragic destiny. In the brief episode of the phantasmic Pastor/Niño apparition which functions as prologue to *Yerma*, García-Posada sees the ghostly shepherd as "una especie de arcángel anunciador", but it is María who receives the good news that she is to have a child.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps for Yerma, as for Jesús's mother, the appearance of the Pastor announces not happy news but forewarns of her tragic fate. Indeed, the figure of the shepherd is accompanied by "(un niño vestido de blanco)" (I, 1; p. 418), whose otherworldly apparel echoes that of the Niño muerto from *Así que pasen cinco años*, as well as eerily proclaiming the elusive, spectral figure of the child so longed for by Yerma. The newly pregnant María is presented with Yerma's opinions on the care of babies and what constitutes a good mother. Yerma has no pity for the pains of women who bear children. She singles out those she calls "las quejumbrosas", 'weak', indulgent women who do not appreciate that to have a child "no es tener un ramo de flores" (I,

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<sup>31</sup> María Carmen Bobes, "Lectura semiológica de *Yerma*", p. 77.

<sup>32</sup> Miguel García-Posada, "Introducción", p. 85.

1; p. 427). What is implied here is the contrast Yerma draws between herself and those feeble women; that she is so much stronger and more resolute than they, or in other words much less feminine. Yerma dismisses the physical pain, complaints that for Yerma are part and parcel of caring for a newborn child. The more circumspect María understands that “con los hijos se sufre mucho” (I, 1; p. 427). Yerma rejects that suffering, again relegating the sentiment to a class of mother she terms “débiles” (I, 1; p. 427). The weakness of those mothers is juxtaposed with Yerma’s quasi-virile strength. This discussion with María sees Yerma denying any identification with the feelings of other women, and as such it opens up the possibility of a connection between Yerma and a masculine ethos. All this is underwritten by evidence of Yerma’s strength and independent spirit as she emphasises to Juan. On leaving their mothers to be married, many women might have shed a tear and cleaved to the maternal breast. Yerma felt nothing: “Mi madre lloró porque no sentí separarme de ella” (I, 1; p. 421). A robust, if not mannish, sense of determination motivates Yerma in the pursuit of her dream of a child.

Our study of Yerma’s identification with the masculine, also leads us to Víctor’s engagement with Yerma. In the plainest terms, Víctor relates to Yerma as though she were an equal. This suggests that to Víctor she responds with equal strength, and that in his dealings with her Yerma occupies the masculine position of the public. Yerma from the outset criticises the male hegemony in the public sphere. As she complains to Juan: “Los hombres tienen otra vida: los ganados, los árboles, las conversaciones, y las mujeres no tenemos más que esta de la cría y el cuidado de la cría” (II, 2; p. 459). It seems rather odd that Yerma, a woman who appears single-minded in her pursuit of a child, should balk at the idea of restricting her life to the single occupation of childcare. But here we anticipate the realisation that Yerma’s ‘child’ is an ideal, representative of a higher purpose. As Yerma’s spatial transgressions bring her into contact with Víctor, if they do not indeed compel him to respond to her as a male equal, so we witness, in a highly symbolic movement, Yerma physically placing herself in the position of the man. Following Víctor’s exit and in keeping with her appropriation of Juan’s role in his business transaction with Víctor, Yerma moves across the stage and occupies the space where Víctor was

standing “[...y respira fuertemente, como si aspirara aire de montaña]” (I, 1; p. 430). Yerma places herself physically in the position the man has vacated, so she suggests her desire not *for* Víctor but to *be* Víctor, or at least be of his gender. Yerma takes in a rather masculine lungful of air, as if it were mountain air – air from the masculine outdoor space, the domain of Víctor the shepherd. This, the work environment of the male, is a space liberated from her feminine enclosure. Later, Yerma equates the house with death, as if being confined to the house, the station of the female, were suffocating her: “Las mujeres dentro de sus casas. Cuando las casas no son tumbas” (II, 2; p. 457). In contrast, the masculine space represents freedom, something readily understood by the daughters of Bernarda Alba, imprisoned in their own “tumba”.

Yerma makes it quite clear that the pursuit of the symbolic child is frustrated by the limits of her female body, and the gender located and culturally constructed upon it. In her confrontation with Juan at Dolores’s house, Yerma defines her predicament in the contours of the body: “Una cosa es querer con la cabeza y otra cosa es que el cuerpo, ¡maldito sea el cuerpo!, no nos responda” (III, 1; p. 480). The body for Yerma represents a betrayal. Despite her intense longing for a child, her body offers no reply except the prison of gender. Rather than conflate womanhood with maternity, and attribute Yerma’s childlessness to her virilised or intersexual body, as Gregorio Marañón might have done,<sup>33</sup> we ought to view Yerma defeated by the body’s sex which does not correspond to her metaphysical aspirations. In these terms we view the exchange between husband and wife when Juan challenges her for the ‘unfeminine’ habit of cursing: “No maldigas. Está feo en una mujer”. Yerma confoundingly retorts: “Ojalá fuera yo una mujer” (I, 2; p. 444). The surface that is the body, and its determined female shape, betrays Yerma’s soul as it limits and restrains her desire for something more than the physical. Meanwhile, Juan is despairingly aware of Yerma’s false status as a woman. He bitterly complains that Yerma can no longer fulfil her ‘feminine’ role as wife: “lo que pasa es que no

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<sup>33</sup> See Paul Julian Smith’s enquiry into the theories of the ‘godfather’ of Spanish gynaecology, in the chapter “Yerma and the Doctors: García Lorca, Marañón and the Anxiety of Bisexuality”, in The Theatre of Garcia Lorca..., 16-43.

eres una mujer verdadera” (II, 2; p. 460). Yerma is only too aware of the dissonance between her woman’s body and her masculine behaviour, as she is of her transgressive incursions into the world of men. Yerma confesses to María her mannish activity: “bajo a echar comida a los bueyes, que antes no lo hacía, porque ninguna mujer lo hace” (II, 2; p. 463). The divergence between Yerma’s corporeality and the effect of her appropriation of masculine advantage has reverberations: “mis pasos me suenan a pasos de hombre” (II, 2; p. 463).

### *5.3 An effeminate Juan*

The inversion of gender realised through Yerma continues with its reversal of the sexual hierarchy in García Lorca’s portrayal of Juan. As the poet suggests, the character of Juan reflects Yerma’s ascendancy in his impotence: “Si pongo un hombre de pelo en pecho, me ahoga el drama de Yerma. El marido es ‘un hombre débil y sin voluntad’”.<sup>34</sup> The rendering of Juan in *Yerma* demonstrates a connection to his forebears among the uninspiring male characters of García Lorca’s theatre. On several counts Juan resembles both Perlimplín and *Cristo*’s José: for his weak physical constitution, his submission to an authoritative woman who exercises control over him and his childlike dependency which sees him abdicate agency to the women of his house (Yerma and his sisters). Unable to correspond, as a man, to the perfect, idealised Love sought by Yerma, Juan might do well to regress, emotionally if not physically, to a childlike state. In this sense, Yerma may look at Juan and detect the spiritual dimension of her Self, an inner being or soul, that is her true desire: hence her vision “me miraba en sus ojos [de Juan ...] para verme muy chica, muy manejable, como si yo misma fuera hija mía” (I, 2; p. 434). Juan, therefore, shares with Perlimplín’s sensualist young wife Belisa, Mariana’s faint-hearted Pedro, Adela’s fugitive Pepe, and Gonzalo’s Enrique, who both loves and resists him in *El público*, an inability to meet on equal terms of transcendent Love the needs of his lover.

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<sup>34</sup> Interview with Ricardo García Luengo, 1935, “Conversación con Federico García Lorca”, *Obras VI, Prosa I*, p. 718.

As we have outlined in the preceding section, Yerma's relationship to her husband is one of dominance, of a show of strength over a weak man whose dry character is evident not only in the descriptions of him but in his very sparseness of dialogue. Yerma, in her descriptions of Juan, reduces him in physicality, much as Marcolfa and Belisa reduced Perlimplín with their treatment of him in the diminutive. Juan is diminished in his capacity for physical labour, i.e. a man's role, and so his masculinity is diluted: "no tienes tú cuerpo para resistir los trabajos" (I, 1; p. 419). Juan protests that his lean body has the 'masculine' strength of steel: "Cuando los hombres se quedan enjutos se ponen fuertes como el acero" (I, 1; p. 419), but his use of the term "enjuto" is unfortunate. The Real Academia defines "enjuto" as "delgado, seco o de pocas carnes".<sup>35</sup> Thus, from the opening lines of the drama, we have the insinuation of Juan's sterility in the nuance of "seco". Yerma rebuffs Juan's defence: "Pero tú no". She depicts him as "white-faced" ("la cara blanca") and "sad" ("triste"), agreeing with Juan's epithet of "enjuto" (I, 1; p. 419). While, by the end of the play, Yerma will come to view herself as "marchita" – "¡Marchita, sí, ya lo sé!" (III, 2; p. 491) –, the opening of the play suggests that it is Juan who has been withering away, becoming old and useless as a man.<sup>36</sup> Yerma goes as far as to propose that they might eventually exchange gender roles. She envisions a hypothetical Juan assuming her feminine role of carer:

Si yo estuviera enferma, me gustaría que tú me cuidases. 'Mi mujer está enferma'. Voy a matar este cordero para hacerle un buen guiso de carne.' 'Mi mujer está enferma' [...]  
Así soy yo. Por eso te cuido. (I, 1; p. 420)

Alongside the inversion of gender, how should we interpret Yerma's image of him "como si crecieras al revés" (I, 1; p. 420) if not as an inversion of the 'natural' order?<sup>37</sup> If Juan were to 'grow in reverse' we might see him become a child again, dependent on a mother and in need of

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<sup>35</sup> Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*, 21st edition, two volumes, (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1992), p. 839.

<sup>36</sup> Edwards has drawn our attention to the antithetical depiction of Juan to Yerma in the first scene: "Juan is Yerma's opposite. Her conversation is impassioned while his is lifeless... and while she is endowed by Nature with a great vitality, Juan grows thinner and paler as the years go by". Gwynne Edwards, *García Lorca: the Theatre Beneath the Sands*, p.175.

<sup>37</sup> Edwards again has indicated "a disturbing irony in the fact that Juan works close to Nature but is in every other way divorced from it". Gwynne Edwards, *García Lorca: the Theatre Beneath the Sands*, p.175.

care and loving. This reverse growth would also return Juan back along the trajectory of human development as put forward by the bio-medical discourse of the nineteenth century and informed opinion in García Lorca's generation, as we argued in Chapter Three.<sup>38</sup> Under the conditions of the physiological nexus of man-woman-child, with the male as the most 'developed', Juan could be viewed as regressing toward an infantile state. Having not yet reached that position, it is arguable that he has moved 'back' to find himself in feminine circumstances.

With regard to Yerma's dream of having a child, Juan is immediately negative, seeing children as a drain on their resources: "Las cosas de la labor van bien, no tenemos hijos que gasten" (I, 1; p. 420). These economic preoccupations lead García-Posada to the conclusion that instead, Juan offers a vision of a relationship without children where desire is a matter of simple physical pleasure. A non-reproductive liaison is not a valid option for Yerma. Yerma turns down "material solutions to her quandary [...including] Juan's offer of a sterile love, a kiss that bears no promise of children within it".<sup>39</sup> Juan will reiterate his preference for physical love in the final moments of the drama in an attempt to convince Yerma of the advantages of non-reproductive marital life: "Muchas mujeres serían felices de llevar tu vida. Sin hijos es la vida más dulce" (III, 2; p. 493). Juan's proposition that there are women who would enjoy carnal, non-reproductive pleasures makes the important point that Yerma's longing for a child is an ideal which is far from shared by all women.

Where does the masculinisation of Yerma leave Juan? There is much in Juan, as we have indicated above, that we might anticipate from previous husband roles in García Lorca's theatre. In the opening scene of the play, like Cristo's José and don Perlimplín before him, Juan speaks of a certain preoccupation with the passage of time and his sense of ageing: "Cada año seré más viejo" (I, 1; p. 420). The worry of old men married to younger wives, the fear of

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<sup>38</sup> See section 3. 4.

<sup>39</sup> Paul Julian Smith, The Theatre of Garcia Lorca..., p. 40.



potential infidelity on the part of their wives, is played out in La zapatera prodigiosa with a happy conclusion. The juvenile work Cristo gives voice in its secondary plot to Jose's fears about his wife's apparent infidelity in the supposedly virginal conception of Jesús. José's past doubts become sublimated into his fears for the future material well-being of his family and the mental stability of his son. The heroic but tragic conclusion of Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín is the result of Perlimplín's self-sacrifice which sees him turn his cuckolded status into a triumphant and redemptive expression of pure love.

Reminiscent of Perlimplín's drama is the notion of honour, or rather dishonour, in Yerma. While Perlimplín rejoices in having abandoned all (masculine) honour and revels in his status of cuckold, Juan reproaches Yerma for conduct that jeopardises his honour and integrity as a man. Yerma's continual spatial transgressions eventually catch public attention and become a source of shame for her husband:

YERMA: [...] *guárdate de poner nombre de varón sobre mis pechos.*

JUAN: No soy yo quien lo pone, lo pones tú con tu conducta, y el pueblo lo empieza a decir [...] Cuando llego a un corro, todos callan; cuando voy a pesar la harina, todos callan. (III, 1; p. 478; my emphasis)

Interestingly, Juan does not explicitly accuse Yerma of infidelity but instead suggests that Yerma's behaviour has 'endowed' her with a male name or, more literally, posited a male name on her body. Juan's accusation is, therefore, open to the interpretation that he is, in fact, recognising his wife's adoption of a masculine condition. Juan's discomfort in the public presence of other men also indicates that he feels effeminately out of place in 'masculine' venues. In fact, because of Yerma's behaviour, Juan is entirely sensitive to his outward show before the others of his community: YERMA: "Hablar con la gente no es pecado", JUAN: "Pero puede parecerlo" (II, 2; p. 460). While honour for Juan is a matter of concern for his public image, for Yerma honour stems from the same source as her idealised child. Yerma pursues her desire for a child in a way that is not honour-bound in the sense of conforming to appearances, but rather bound to her honour in the sense of an assertion of her integrity. When Yerma's

honour is questioned, it is perceived as an attack on the truth of her being, in other words the depth of identity or her soul. When Yerma is offered by the Vieja (III, 2; p. 490) the alternative of sleeping with another man, if that is what is required for her to procreate, she responds with a strident assertion of her belief in the honour system as a natural force:

¿Te figuras que puedo conocer otro hombre? ¿Dónde pones mi honra? El agua no se puede volver atrás ni la luna llena sale al mediodía [...] (III, 2; p. 490)

For Yerma, the honour code fixes in position her relationship with Juan as a natural order because it represents the symbolic order of Love over desire, the pursuit of an ideal over any material wishes.

Unfortunately for Juan, there is no happy ending as for the shoemaker nor vindication of his position as don Perlimplín achieves. Juan describes himself as “un hombre que trabaja la tierra”, a simple man without “ideas” who has to contend with a woman of “astucias” (III, 1; p. 477). But Yerma is a woman with metaphysical concerns, “por cosas oscuras, fuera de la vida, por cosas que están en el aire” (III, 2; p. 492), while he is content with what is empirical, “lo que tengo entre las manos, lo que veo por mis ojos”(III, 2; p. 492). Juan’s concern is for the dull necessities of everyday existence. Yerma has moved beyond such things and is now in the elevated position of exploring Love on a spiritual level. Of course, this means that he is simply “un hombre sin voluntad” (II, 2; p. 460). Juan is cognisant of his failure as a man, of his failure to contain the driving force of his wife’s longing within the social and spatial boundaries prescribed by the sexual hierarchy: “me miras de un modo que no debía decirte ‘perdóname’, sino *obligarte, encerrarte*, porque para eso soy el marido” (II, 2; p. 461; my italics). Juan clearly fails in his duties as a husband, firstly, to govern the actions of his wife, and, secondly, in not producing an heir to his property, as would be expected of him in the patriarchal terms of the family. Juan’s eventual death at the hands of his wife inversely corresponds to Perlimplín’s sacrifice of himself. The old, weak, ridiculous Perlimplín effects a union with his beloved Belisa by transforming himself into the spiritual essence, his death guarantees an eternity of her Love. Juan, on the other hand, finally provides Yerma with that which she has all along sought:

in his death, the death of her 'child', Juan is transmuted into the site of Yerma's Love, a physically impossible, but everlasting ideal.

#### *5.4 A desire for the Soul and the reproduction of Self*

Recalling, briefly, the example of the young García Lorca we encountered in the reading of Cristo in Chapter One, we may not be surprised to hear Yerma ask “¿Es preciso buscar en el hombre al hombre nada más?” (I, 2; p. 435). The young poet pressed into service the paradigm of a pure, loving Christ, to advocate his conviction, held despite the ravages of modernity, of perfect, nonphysical Love and its representation as the figure of the immortal soul. Now in his depiction of a childless woman, fixed and bounded by the name Yerma, García Lorca incarnates his life-long (necessary) belief in the supremacy and value of life-constituent Love over the ultimately dead-end, draining desires of the flesh. It is with existential resignation, then, that the poet's vision in Yerma leads to the conclusion that not all individuals will triumph in glorious self-sacrifice, becoming, like Jesús, Mariana, even Perlimplín, heroic, inspiring icons of perfect Love. For the socio-cultural realities of his times, something that García Lorca could never ignore, demand that in the singular case of Yerma, a marginal and subjugated figure such as the non-reproductive woman is certain to fail to achieve heroic, mythic, sublime status. In this sense Yerma is very much the poetic tragedy or *poema trágico* that García Lorca designates as its classification.

In the year following Yerma's premiere, García Lorca made some influential statements regarding the constitution of his tragedy. Foremost among these we note: “Mi tragedia no se restringe a porciones de naturaleza e instinto”, rather, singling out the moment in Act I Scene 2 when Víctor falls silent and Yerma hears the ghostly voice of the child (I, 2; p. 442), García

Lorca identifies the sound as “[un] eco subconsciente que lleva dentro”.<sup>40</sup> Elsewhere in the work, and citing Yerma’s “mis pasos me suenan a pasos de hombre” (II, 2; p. 463), the poet indicates: “otros atisbos psicológicos hay en mi obra”. According to the poet’s own interpretation of his work, therefore, the drama of Yerma lies not only in the material lack of a child but in the mental, interior tussle with a more metaphysical torment. Paul Julian Smith argues that Yerma’s admission of “un dolor que ya no está en las carnes” signals a privileging of the psychic over the somatic by Yerma herself.<sup>41</sup> With García Lorca’s concession of the psychological elements to the drama, it seems reasonable to pursue this line of enquiry, above all to see what light it sheds on Yerma’s search for the spiritual over the corporeal. Jonathan Dollimore draws our attention to Freud’s work on the decathected connection between desire and satisfaction, principally in the Austrian psychoanalyst’s tract “On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love”.<sup>42</sup> Briefly, Dollimore depicts Freud’s essay as highlighting the repression of perverse or deviant desire, incest in particular, leading to a state of non-satisfaction, with love objects as mere substitutes for the subject’s true, perverse desire. Freud’s conclusions for the organisation of both deviant and non-deviant desire allow Dollimore to formulate “[the] lack inherent in normalised desire”.<sup>43</sup> The gap between desire and its satisfaction, between the author and object of desire, is a dilemma familiar to many of the protagonists in García Lorca’s theatre. For Jesús it is, as his mother fears, the dark horizon that separates the familiar, natural world from the other world of the spirit beyond his death. The gulf between the reality of Mariana’s pusillanimous Pedro and the lofty ideals of Liberty is the cause of her self-sacrifice. The faithless, superficiality of Belisa could never fulfil Perlimplín’s dreams of the perfect, white-clad image of young beauty. For Gonzalo in *El público*, his reality is a ‘dream’ “lleno de ascensores y trenes” where his loved one is in constant motion “a velocidades inasibles”, impossible to reach over a distance of space and time (V, p. 143). The

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<sup>40</sup> Interview with Ricardo García Luengo, 1935, “Conversación con Federico García Lorca”, *Obras VI, Prosa 1*, p. 719.

<sup>41</sup> Paul Julian Smith, *The Theatre of Garcia Lorca...*, p. 40.

<sup>42</sup> See Sigmund Freud, *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay, (London: Vintage, 1995), pp. 394-399.

<sup>43</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991, pp. 256-7.

barriers between Adela and freedom are oppressively represented by the physical walls of her mother's house.

Resonating with Dollimore's 'lack inherent', Luis García Montero elucidates García Lorca's preoccupation with emptiness, the "vacío" of the poet's New York verse "1910 (Intermedio)": "No preguntarme nada. He visto las cosas/ cuando buscan su pulso encuentran su vacío".<sup>44</sup>

In a similar light, Christopher Maurer finds García Lorca's use of "hueco" to be central to the concerns the poet expresses in his New York poetry<sup>45</sup>. In the same poem picked out by García Montero we find: "un dolor de huecos por el aire sin gente"; and in "Norma y paraíso de los negros" the final line: "queda el hueco de la danza sobre las últimas cenizas". Certainly, Poeta en Nueva York is rich in the imagery of the void: *el hueco y el vacío*. In all of García Lorca's theatre perhaps the clearest illustration of the poet's version of the Freudian lack is the case of Yerma. For the poet's protagonist the lack is constituted by the absent, non-existent child. It is Víctor who articulates for Yerma what is missing from her existence, the 'inherent lack', the child that represents an ideal: "En esta casa *hace falta* un niño" (I, 1; p. 429; my italics). Yerma emphatically repeats Víctor's phrasing "(*con angustia*) ¡Hace falta!". We think also of the Vieja who tries to explain to Yerma "¡[...] estás vacía!" (I, 2; p. 434) because she derives no pleasure from sexual intercourse with her husband. Here, in the final moments of the drama, Juan delivers the devastating verdict to Yerma that her dream of the ideal 'child' can never be realised because for him the dream, the pursuit of something more than the material, is hollow:

YERMA: [...] Buscabas la casa, la tranquilidad y una mujer. Pero nada más. ¿Es verdad lo que digo?

JUAN: Es verdad ...

YERMA: [...]¿Y tu hijo?

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<sup>44</sup> Luis García Montero, "La vitalidad y la tragedia" in Federico García Lorca (1898-1936), (Catalogue of the exhibition presented by the Comisión Nacional Organizadora de los Actos Conmemorativos del Centenario del Nacimiento de Federico García Lorca), ed. coords Tf. Editores, (Madrid: Tf.Editores, 1998), pp. 47-53, esp. 52-53.

<sup>45</sup> Christopher Maurer, "Introduction" in Federico García Lorca, Poet in New York, tr. G. Simon and S. F. White, ed. C. Maurer, (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. ix-xxviii.

JUAN: ¿No oyes que no me importa? [...]

YERMA: ¿Y nunca has pensado en él cuando me has visto desearlo?

JUAN: Nunca. (III, 2; p. 493)

It is of course Yerma who refuses to satisfy the desire for a child through physical intercourse. Regardless of whether Juan is unwilling or physically incapable of fathering a child, the options are there for Yerma to procreate either with Víctor or with the Vieja's son, or, indeed, with any of the young men attending the *romería*. Instead, Yerma remains dedicated to her desire for self-reproduction, in the same sense that Perlimplín generates a soul in Belisa through his reinvention of himself (in her eyes) as the Joven de la capa roja; Yerma seeks an interior Self, and the notion of an incorporeal child-that-will-never-be satisfies that desire for another manifestation of her ego.

At a pivotal point in the drama we find the empty gap between desire and fulfilment audibly expressed. On her way to bring food to her husband who is tending his sheep, Yerma unexpectedly encounters Víctor. The atmosphere between the two is charged with an inner conflict that cannot be exteriorised: “(*El silencio se acentúa y sin el menor gesto comienza una lucha entre los dos personajes*)” (I, 2; p. 442). Standing so close to one another, and yet a gulf exists between Víctor's desire for Yerma and Yerma's desire for a being, “muy chica”, inside her. The desire of one for the other is channelled elsewhere by the other and a fear-inducing, negating silence pervades. The anxiety communicates itself without sound as Yerma, “(*Temblando*)”, looks into Víctor's eyes “(*y VÍCTOR la mira también y desvía la mirada lentamente, como con miedo*)” (I, 2; p. 443). That empty silence or absence crystallises momentarily into an almost palpable presence, and Yerma thinks she hears a child crying “como ahogado” (I, 2; p. 442). The unsettled atmosphere of the exchange between the two is haunted by an absent child that only Yerma recognises. Her desire for transcendence, long denied, calls from within, a ‘child’ drowned or submerged inside her. The phantom child is a weight which restrains and defines Yerma's heart, dreams and desires, causing her the pain of frustration for so many years. As she later articulates to Dolores and her sorority: “es mucho

mejor llorar por un hombre vivo que nos apuñala, que llorar por este fantasma sentado año tras año encima de mi corazón” (III, 1; p. 474). (Compare the Vieja’s verdict on Esther in Cristo: “estás enamorada de un fantasma” II, 1; p. 280). If only her desire could accept some material outlet, the comfort of a flesh-and-blood man, Yerma pleads; instead, she shares the fate of “[el] hombre de Apolo” in the New York verse “Tu infancia en Menton”: “[...] te afilabas/ por los breves sueños indecisos”. The Niño vestido de blanco from the prologue episode returns to haunt Yerma.

Yerma’s friend María pays her a visit in the first scene of Act I and brings news that she is pregnant. Although married later than Yerma, María enjoys a relationship with her husband that is entirely physical, ‘green’ with desire and fecundity: “No me lo dice [que me quiere], pero se pone junto a mí y sus ojos tiemblan como dos hojas verdes” (I, 1; p. 426). The love María and her husband have for one another is unspoken, but it is tangible and demonstrable. This is not the empty silence between Yerma and Víctor, inhabited only by the ghostly and impossible ‘child’. Nor is it the cold and sterile silence of Yerma and Juan’s intercourse: “Cuando me cubre cumple con su deber, pero yo le noto *la cintura fría* como si tuviera *el cuerpo muerto*” (III, 1; p. 474; my italics). The insubstantial, infantilised Juan is corporeally numb and insensitive to Yerma’s driving force of desire for an idealised child. For Gwynne Edwards, María “is the embodiment of Yerma’s dream”, or rather María’s child is the incarnation of a dream that for Yerma will remain unrealisable.<sup>46</sup> María’s description of how she became pregnant resonates with the christology we have identified throughout García Lorca’s theatre work. Here there is the suggestion of a quasi-virginal conception: “me parece que mi niño es un palomo de lumbre que él [mi marido] me deslizó por la oreja” (I, 1; p. 426). Often depicted as a ‘dove of light’ in Catholic iconography, the Holy Spirit is attributed with impregnating that other Mary, the Virgin. At the time of the annunciation, Mary is ‘impregnated’ by the Word of God, delivered by the angel Gabriel. We have already connected María in Yerma to the mother

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<sup>46</sup> Gwynne Edwards, García Lorca: the Theatre Beneath the Sands, p. 176.

of Jesús in Cristo; now the imagery of Yerma's María in this speech revisits the discourse of the Virgin Mother and the scene of Gabriel's second annunciation in that early drama. Both Fernández Cifuentes and Smith underline the heightened and abstract quality of the language, that is, its symbolic function, where, according to Smith "words precede and displace actions".<sup>47</sup> This example of the fecund word tallies with Butler's usage of the 'performative': in linguistic terms, a word that says and does at the same time.<sup>48</sup>

During her conversation with María in Act II, when María is now a young mother, Yerma seems to provide much evidence of the terms of her inverted gender identity. For a woman who desperately longs to have a child, Yerma refuses to hold María's baby, declaring: "yo no debo tener manos de madre" (II, 2; p. 462). Earlier with Juan, Yerma states her opposition to the idea of adoption which her husband proposes: "No quiero cuidar hijos de otros. Me figuro que se van a helar los brazos de tenerlos" (II, 2; p. 459). This repulsion seems quite extreme. But it is more comprehensible when we consider that Yerma is not desperate for a child in a physical sense of holding and caring for a baby. Nor is it the case that Yerma will not care for a child because it belongs to someone else. Yerma needs to have a child of her own, for it is not the child *per se* that is important, it is a sense of completion, of spiritual fulfilment, that governs Yerma's feelings. She has conflated her desire for the spiritual with the intangible figure of an imagined child. Yerma is adamant that only her own child would satisfy the desire: "estoy segura que las cosas que pienso las ha de realizar mi hijo" (I, 2; p. 435). Of course, this is logical considering that it is Yerma's soul or inner self, the locus of her sense of identity, that is at stake. Yerma's desire for reproduction shares with procreative acts a desire to perpetuate the Self, to see beyond one's death to the sense of immortality that a child of one's own genes might bring. But Yerma's reproductive instinct has a mimetic or duplicative intention: she wishes to generate within her physical self another psychic self. This is borne out by the

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<sup>47</sup> Luis Fernández Cifuentes, García Lorca y el teatro..., p. 167 and Paul Julian Smith, The Theatre of García Lorca..., p. 17.

<sup>48</sup> See Butler's discussion of performativity in Gender Trouble..., pp. 171-190.



references to: firstly, the reflection of her childlike self in Juan's eyes we noted above, – “me miraba en sus ojos [...] para verme muy chica, muy manejable, como si yo misma fuera hija mía” (I, 2; p. 434); secondly, Yerma's conclusion that she will end up “creyendo que yo misma soy mi hijo” (II, 2; p. 463); and lastly, the troublesome final line of the drama “¡yo misma he matado a mi hijo!” (III, 2; p. 494).

The first two of these speeches underline the discourse in the work of an inner being or soul, as Smith notes: “[the] image of one within (of a subject confined or imprisoned inside another) recurs throughout the play”.<sup>49</sup> Yerma's vivid, final words can be viewed as the physical sacrificing of Juan which unites Yerma with a Love that will never die. It is María who first illustrates the notion of a living being housed in the body that Yerma understands as the soul. As Yerma's young friend describes the sensation of carrying a child in her womb: “¿No has tenido nunca un pájaro vivo apretado en la mano?” (I, 1; p. 424); to be with child is “lo mismo..., pero dentro de la sangre” (I, 1; p. 425). After María's child is born, she avoids coming into contact with Yerma, ostensibly for fear of upsetting the still childless woman, but more likely it is María's incomprehension of Yerma's intense, nonphysical hunger, and the discomfort the latter feels with living, breathing children. But Yerma tries to reassure María that “no es envidia lo que tengo; es pobreza” (II, 2; p. 462). The poverty is not a material one for, as she then points out to María, her husband can provide for all her visible needs: “mi marido me da pan y casa” (II, 2; p. 464). The poverty seems therefore to be of a more fundamental nature than the basics of existence, food and shelter. For Yerma, it is a poverty of the spirit, provoking a crisis in identity, most manifest in her unwomanly behaviour. Yerma does not know who she is because she does not have what she most needs in order to understand herself. Yerma's problem with identity, in her case the difficulty in reconciling the anatomy with gender, stems from her desire which is a metaphysical rather than a carnal longing. As Yerma explains to the Vieja in the final scene of the play: “lo mío es dolor que ya no está en las carnes” (III, 2; p.

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<sup>49</sup> Paul Julian Smith, *The Theatre of Garcia Lorca...*, p. 26.

490). Hence with María the pitch of Yerma's 'womanly' advice sounds entirely idealistic: "No andes mucho y cuando respires respira tan suave como si tuvieras una rosa entre los dientes" (I, 1; p. 425).

Although socially and morally conventional, Yerma's friend María shares with the Vieja a faith in physical pleasure. The godless Vieja is no stranger to physical desire, describing herself as "una mujer de faldas en el aire" (I, 2; p. 432). The Old Woman has always enjoyed sexual intercourse and fecundity: "[...] me he puesto boca arriba y he comenzado a cantar. Los hijos llegan como el agua" (I, 2; p. 432). The Vieja places her faith not in God but in men, or less literally in the material and the empirical: "Son los hombres los que tienen que amparar" (I, 2; p. 436); "Los hombres tienen que gustar [...] Han de deshacernos las trenzas y darnos de beber agua en su misma boca", concluding that "Así corre el mundo" (I, 2; p. 435). For Yerma with Juan, sex is not about desire but a means to Love, "pero nunca por divertirme" (I, 2; p. 435). The carefree, practical and morally liberal attitude of the Vieja is admired and envied by the Muchacha segunda whom Yerma meets in Act I. The Muchacha complains about the socio-cultural institution of marriage. She views herself as the object-victim of a marriage arranged and done *to* her rather than *with* her: "me han casado" (I, 2; p. 438). She laments the impossibility of having a single life and eschews the duties of a married woman: "tengo diecinueve años y no me gusta guisar ni lavar" (I, 2; p. 438). Marriage for her makes no sense: "¿Qué necesidad tiene mi marido de ser mi marido?". The Muchacha carries on the same (sexual) relations with her husband as she had before they were married. Significantly, the Muchacha seems quite content to enjoy sex for pleasure's sake, contending that "con no tener [los niños], vivimos más tranquilas" (I, 2; p. 438). This presages Juan offering Yerma the alternative and materialistic possibility of physical love in the closing moments of the play with the contention that "sin hijos es la vida más dulce" (III, 2; p. 493). The shared perspective of Juan and the Muchacha on physical pleasure is firmly rejected as a model by Yerma when she tells Juan that his desire is merely a carnal urge contrasting with her more spiritual hunger: "me buscas como cuando te quieres comer una paloma" (III, 2; p. 493). Again like Perlimplín's

Belisa or the Vieja in Yerma, the Muchacha is a sensualist: her romantic liaisons are entirely for pleasure. With this in mind, could García Lorca be accused of conservatism, as Smith implies,<sup>50</sup> in promoting Yerma's more demure position over these sexually liberated women? If that is the case, then the idealism of Jesús, Mariana, Perlimplín, Gonzalo, and now Yerma, can be criticised as conservative or rather illiberal, tending toward an unfashionable, romantic belief in the soul.

As we discussed above, Yerma's strategy in pursuit of the soul involves the curious feat of a reproduction of Self. Taken together with his tactic of gender inversion, the poet's manoeuvre of self-reproduction leads us to the Freudian schema of narcissism. As the psychoanalyst delineates in his table of narcissistic object choices:

A person may love:

According to the narcissistic type,

- (a) what he himself is (i.e. himself),
- (b) what he himself was,
- (c) what he himself would like to be,
- (d) someone who was once part of himself.<sup>51</sup>

Yerma's desire for a child, read against Freud's categories, produces a correspondence to the narcissistic type on the grounds that she desires a reflection of herself in the childlike figure of her soul: (a) what she is, (b) what she was; (c) what she would be; and (d) part of herself. As is the case in García Lorca's Yerma, (textual) inversion and narcissistic desire are central themes in the work of Oscar Wilde, as Gregory W. Bredbeck has demonstrated.<sup>52</sup> Highlighting in particular the "The Disciple" from Poems in Prose, Bredbeck analyses the significance of Wilde's short parable relating the classical tale of Narcissus. Briefly, the tale tells that when Narcissus died, the pool of his pleasure changed into salt tears. Consoled by the Oreads

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<sup>50</sup> Paul Julian Smith, The Theatre of Garcia Lorca..., p. 27.

<sup>51</sup> Sigmund Freud, "On Narcissism: an Introduction", The Freud Reader, pp. 555-6.

<sup>52</sup> Gregory W. Bredbeck, "Narcissus in the Wilde: Textual cathexis and the historical origins of queer Camp" in The Politics and Poetics of Camp, pp. 51-74.

(mountain nymphs) for the loss of one so beautiful as Narcissus, the pool declares that it was unaware of such a beauty. The Oreads are at a loss, then, to understand the pool's grief. But the pool tells them: "I loved Narcissus because, as he lay on my banks and looked down on me, in the mirror of his eyes I saw my own beauty mirrored".<sup>53</sup> Like the pool of Narcissus's pleasure, the key account Yerma gives to the Vieja, of how she used to gaze into her husband's eyes "para verme muy chica [...] como si yo misma fuera hija mía" (I, 2; p. 434) makes it evident that Yerma's desire for the transcendent Love of the soul is, in a narcissistic way, self-reflexive. Yerma makes it clear to the Vieja primera in Act III that she is fully cognisant of the reality of reproductive (hetero)sexuality: "yo sé que los hijos nacen del hombre y de la mujer" (III, 1; p. 475). However, the circumstances of her ideal would be to have children without the need for a distinct and contrasting other: "¡Ay, si los pudiera tener yo sola!" (III, 1; p. 475). Yerma's exclamation expresses a narcissistic longing in the strict sense of auto-eroticism, that is, desire *by oneself* rather than *toward oneself*.<sup>54</sup> Yerma seeks true autonomy for herself. Through a feat of auto-eroticism, circumventing the need for the Other of the (hetero)sexual binary, Yerma looks, not to split the 'I' into subject and object, but to duplicate her material being in the metaphysical Self. This is appositely illustrated in the issue of the symbolism of Yerma's name. In Act I, Víctor suggests to Yerma, in the mistaken belief that the baby clothes she sews for María are for her own pregnancy, that if the child is a girl she should call the child after herself. Considering, firstly, that Yerma as a name is a neologism invented by García Lorca from an adjective describing barren land, and anyway not a usual choice for a girl's name, it is perhaps more unusual that Víctor does not suggest that the child, girl or boy, should be named for the father, presuming the masculinist and patriarchal milieu of the setting. The naming of the child ought, perhaps, to have been the marker of the child's discrete identity. But instead there is the suggestion that the child should be another Yerma, a reproduction of the Self represented by appellation. With no hope of satisfaction within a heterosexual economy, Yerma's desire 'perverts', turns back upon herself. The only child that will make Yerma happy is a spiritual

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<sup>53</sup> Oscar Wilde, *Poems in Prose*, 1893, pp. 15-16, cited by Bredbeck, "Narcissus in the Wilde...", p. 54.

<sup>54</sup> See Gregory Bredbeck, "Narcissus in the Wilde...", p. 64, for a fuller definition of 'auto-eroticism'.

version of her Self, and is not this desire for a nonphysical reproduction of her own flesh, an image of her Self, best styled as narcissistic? Thinking of Yerma's predicament we recall that Wilde once quipped "to love oneself is the beginning of a life-long romance".

### 5.5 *The theory of gender inversion*

If the configuration of Yerma and Juan in the drama does indeed represent a transposition of culturally traditional gender roles, then surely, it would seem, the two popular Máscaras of Act III denote two conventional poles of binary gender. The *romería* at the hermitage, the setting for the final scene of the play, represents for the childless women of Yerma's village the concealed opportunity to meet and couple with young men under the guise of a pilgrimage to a patron saint of the infertile. This apparently free loving excursion into the hills by the otherwise orthodox villagers should be viewed in terms of a temporary and licensed release from socio-cultural stricture. Among the Bakhtian theories for the containment of dissident practices Jonathan Dollimore discusses, he finds that "allegedly transgressive practices like carnival [are] not at all disturbing of dominant values but rather their guarantor".<sup>55</sup> Equally, the performance of the masks of the Macho and the Hembra as part of the *romería* do not represent a debauchery that rides roughshod over conventional morality and overthrows the dominant order. García Lorca made it quite clear to an imagined director of his work how he wished the scene to be represented: "(*No son grotescas [las máscaras] de ningún modo, sino de gran belleza y con un sentido de pura tierra*)" (III, 2; p. 485). And García Lorca was quite resolute that the dance of the Macho and Hembra should function metatheatrically as a microcosm of Yerma's central symbolic tension: "En la *romería* de *Yerma* salto de lo real a lo real simbólico, en el sentido poético de obtener ideas vestidas, no puros símbolos."<sup>56</sup> Smith argues that the representational function of the Máscaras permits mobile and conditional meaning to be assigned to them. He highlights the grammatical shifting between first, second and third persons in the verses

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<sup>55</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence...*, p. 82.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Ricardo García Luengo, 1935, "Conversación con Federico García Lorca", *Obras VI, Prosa 1*, p. 717.

pronounced by the Hembra and Macho, and further suggests that the spectator may identify alternatively with one, other or both (gender) positions proposed by the masks.<sup>57</sup> The Macho and Hembra perform a (hetero)sexuality lifted to a ritualised form that attempts to authenticate a binary and oppositional gender order, with the mask of the Macho declaring “En esta romería/el varón siempre manda./Los maridos son toros” (III, 2; p. 487). But the very need to perform an enactment of gender, within the *romería*'s contrived atmosphere of abandon, suggests the instability or contingency of gender rather than assuring its naturalness. The alternative to the Hembra/Macho's performance of gender orthodoxy is the Yerma/Juan couple and their subversion of gender paradigms.

Dollimore explains the subversive impact that a theatrical performance of a cultural dominant has on the symbolic hierarchy:

This very mimicry of the dominant, be it a literary trope or cultural actuality, involve[s] a scandalous inversion. [...] And feeding back through [...] inversion is an equally scandalous interrogation of the dominant order being mimicked; civil society is shown to be in a like corruption. If [a] subculture imitates the dominant from below, it also thereby employs a strategy which embarrasses the dominant.<sup>58</sup>

We have previously argued the connections between the strategies interrogating the normative employed by both Oscar Wilde and García Lorca. The wit of Wilde relies upon the seemingly flippant inversion of qualities held by culture to be true and axiomatic. The inversion is less flippant than it first seems when understood as a tactical replacement of the essentialised (that is, from deep inside, of the soul) moral values, culture holds to be superior, such as truth, authenticity, selflessness, with the inferior, de-essentialised (superficial) opposites: deception, style, narcissism. The result of Wilde's policy of inversion is that “insincerity, inauthenticity, and unnaturalness become the liberating attributes of decentred identity and desire”.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Paul Julian Smith, *The Theatre of Garcia Lorca*..., p. 39.

<sup>58</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence*..., p. 287.

<sup>59</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence*..., p. 14.

Furthermore, the inversion of the moral binaries inscribed in culture comes directly linked to Wilde's transgressive same-sex desire.

Moe Meyer has studied the significance of the "pose" (in both senses of masquerade and attitude) in Wilde's life and aesthetics. He emphasises the infamous challenge issued to Wilde by Alfred Douglas's father the Marquess of Queensbury which was addressed to "Mr Oscar Wilde, *posing* as a sodomite" (*sic*; my italics). The implication is that Queensbury did not directly accuse Wilde of illegal and immoral sexual acts (something he could not prove, nor necessarily was interested in proving) but that Wilde's un-masculine, affected self-presentation *signified* the practice of those sexual acts.<sup>60</sup> The (public) posing as something was in fact more disturbing to the normative gender order than an often tolerated or ignored private praxis. What this reading of the Wildean pose does is to expose the power and legitimacy of inferior categories in the system of moral binaries. It asserts the necessity of the inferior values in culture's moral hierarchy as the antitheses of the superior, as one endorses the other's existence. Authenticity cannot exist without style nor the natural without the unnatural; they are two sides of the one coin. In addition, the binary structure of these values is a reflection, if not as Butler contends a consequence, of the heterosexually-compelled dual order of sex/gender.

If Wilde's strategy of inversion, an easy reversal of the moral order, reveals the tenuous construction in culture of a hierarchical schema of values, then García Lorca's inversion of gender in Yerma (and, of course, with Perlimplín/Belisa, María/José and the many theatrical transformations in El público), uncovers the differentiation between female and male as a feeble fabrication. The relationship between female and male is not therefore oppositional or polar, but deceptively unitary, with any distinction constructed and maintained only through enormous

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<sup>60</sup> Moe Meyer, "Under the Sign of Wilde: an Archaeology of Posing" in The Politics and Poetics of Camp, ed. Moe Meyer, (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 75-109.

cultural, political and social effort. Luis García Montero has elucidated<sup>61</sup> how García Lorca was entirely conscious of the deception of the binary, as the poet makes evident in “Pequeño poema del infinito”:

“Pero el dos no ha sido nunca un número/ porque es una angustia y su sombra”.

García Montero understands the poet’s meaning as that there are “dos caras de una realidad”, that *two* is an impossibility because there is only *one* and its shadow. And the poet’s theory is a progressive one.

We recall the search of the Emperador in El público for “uno”. In response to the Emperador both Figuras de pámpanos and de cascabeles suggest “Uno soy yo”. The Centurión declares “El Emperador adivinará cual de los dos es uno”, which the Emperador ‘clarifies’ by proposing “Uno es uno y siempre uno [...] Y no hay dos” (II, pp. 95-6). This riddle-like exchange succeeds on two levels. Firstly, the central dialectic in El público is that of surface versus depth identity. The Emperador and his soldier are among a range of characters who advocate the philosophical position that the constant shifting of theatrical and contingent identity needs to be resisted. Their quest for ‘one’ claims that it is possible to stabilise the Self in an integral whole, represented in the drama linguistically as “uno” and metaphorically as the figure of the statue. Secondly, the same theoretical stance is argued in Yerma, for just as ‘two’ is but ‘one’ and its shadow, the antithetical separation of moral values, of genders, even of the figurative notions of body and soul, is illusory. Instead, García Lorca proposes that Yerma’s longing for a child is a need to comprehend her other Self or catch hold of her ‘shadow’.

If this begins to sound less than progressive, then we may refer to the criticism formulated by Paul Julian Smith that in Yerma, García Lorca’s championing of Yerma’s insistent fidelity to the sterile Juan over the libertarian alternatives offered to her to can be viewed as a

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<sup>61</sup> Luis García Montero, “La vitalidad y la tragedia” in Federico García Lorca (1898-1936), (Catalogue of the exhibition presented by the Comisión Nacional Organizadora de los Actos Conmemorativos del Centenario del Nacimiento de Federico García Lorca), ed. coords Tf. Editores, (Madrid: Tf.Editores, 1998), pp. 47-53 esp. 52.



conservatism on the part of the poet. But, for our part, we argue that García Lorca anticipates the late-modern emptying of meaning and depth, *from* his location as a modernist, resisting the advance of modernity and its concomitant rejection of the soul. The poet both values the depth, security and integrity provided by the soul, and foresees, if not forestalls, its imminent collapse onto the body.

As much as gender is a political construct of society and culture, so the body is, in Judith Butler's words, "the materialization of the regulatory norms of 'sex'" with the objective of "...materializ[ing] sexual difference in the service of the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative".<sup>62</sup> In El público, the series of transformations undergone by the Director, Enrique, (the ambiguous Arlequín, the bailarina Guillermina, and Dominga "de los negritos") effects changes in his gender identity by means of costume. Butler's surface of matter that is the body is the venue for de-essentialised mutations of the Self, and the body is configured as Caballo blanco 1's "mil superficies" (III, p. 118) creating the illusion of essential depth. The gender inversion in El público, through transvestism, is potentially disappointing in that the exposure *per se* of the binary system may only disrupt rather than subvert or displace the dominant order. In the example of the transvestite, the dressing in the clothes of the other does not eliminate the female/male binary; it is, rather, a case of working within it; the categories of male and female are still the only ones available to determine identity. However, the parody of gender enacted by the transvestite offers a more sophisticated critique of the supposed 'truth' of, and coherence between, sex and gender than we first apprehend. As Judith Butler has soundly, if opaquely, reasoned:

The performance of drag plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed. But we are actually in the presence of three contingent dimensions of significant corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance. If the anatomy of the performer is already distinct from the gender of the performer, and both of those are distinct from the gender of the

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<sup>62</sup>Judith Butler, Bodies That Matter, (New York & London: Routledge, 1993), p. 2.

performance, then the performance suggests a dissonance not only between sex and performance, but sex and gender, and gender and performance.<sup>63</sup>

By questioning the correlation of outward appearance to the body of the performer, transvestite enactments also force us to query the relationship of the body to the internally-located psychic identity. The strategy of drag performance is alternatively explained by Jonathan Dollimore as “transgressive reinscription”, that is, a way of working within a cultural order while disrupting its fixity, or “a *turning back* upon something [...] typically if not exclusively through inversion” (Dollimore’s italics).<sup>64</sup> Dollimore’s proposition allows us a way of viewing the transgressive role of the transvestite as successfully resistant to the dominant sexual order.

Meanwhile, El público’s Hombre 1, Gonzalo, remains convinced that his lover is hiding his true essential self behind the mask of the body. The pursuit of unchanging, core identity takes him to the skeletal frame, the inner anatomy, of his lover:

HOMBRE 1: Desnudaré tu esqueleto.

DIRECTOR: Mi esqueleto tiene siete luces.

HOMBRE 1: Fáciles para mis siete manos.

DIRECTOR: Mi esqueleto tiene siete sombras. (V, p. 157)

The question of anatomy and gender identity is the concern of Paul Julian Smith’s study of the theories of intersexuality proposed by the early twentieth century Spanish biologist, Gregorio Marañón, and of the light his work sheds on García Lorca’s Yerma. Marañón identifies an “intersexual type” with the sterile woman. Smith proposes that the doctor’s physiological hypothesis is borne out in the progressive masculinisation of Yerma, culminating in her physical domination of her husband as she strangles him to death in the final moments of the drama. In Marañón’s terms Yerma is biologically intersexual, a hermaphrodite *embodying* the male and the female. Whereas the transvestite exchanges one gender role for another, working within the existing sexual order, the intersexual being refuses binary gender and transcends the

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<sup>63</sup> Judith Butler, Gender Trouble..., p.175.

<sup>64</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, Sexual Dissidence..., p. 323.

sexual order. Smith does not therefore argue the progressive masculinisation of Yerma as evidence of her appropriating the male role by stealing his clothes, and so effecting a theatrical, superficial transformation, but rather that Yerma's transgressive gender performance arises from a physiological inconsistency. Jonathan Dollimore points out the advantage of the intersexual being over the cross-dresser:

the transvestite [...] by switching gender roles rather than dissolving them (as the hermaphrodite does) reinforces the very sexual division which s/he finds oppressive.<sup>65</sup>

Smith's interest in the physiology of Yerma's body helps us to understand the connection between Yerma's desire for an inner essence, figured as a 'child', and the importance of her transgression of gender difference. For Yerma, there is a marked correlation between the crisis in her gender identity and the lack of faith in her body. Yerma is not satisfied with her materiality because fleshly love is limited by the confines of the world around her; her desire is for a Love that transcends temporality. The collapse of Yerma's gender identity is a symptom of her lacking a spiritual essence, something that would fix and anchor her identity, answer her searching desires with truth, faith and the promise of permanency.

What has been achieved by the inversion of the gender binary? The measure of success in destabilising the regulatory system of gender is problematic. The inversion *per se* does not overthrow the binary configuration of gender. But the hypothesis of Butler that sees the body as the site of gender signifying practices which are contingent, alongside Dollimore's promising notion of rewriting the system subversively from within, as well as Smith's reworking of early biomedical thinking on intersexuality, all point to ways of reading Yerma as an animation of García Lorca's engagement with the assumed empirical basis of identity. Certainly, the destabilisation of the gender hierarchy in Yerma uncovers the continuing Lorcan interest in modern life's emptying of meaning and voiding of essential truths as he fights a defensive action to hold onto the Soul. And we must stress that the simultaneous promotion of the

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<sup>65</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, Sexual Dissidence..., p. 296-7.

necessity for pure Love over carnal desire is not reactionary, for García Lorca's advocacy of transcendent Love goes in the face of the dominant socio-political and cultural regime's marginalisation of subordinate desires into a hollowed-out, non-spiritual space without love. In the play, what the inversion of gender, a masculinised Yerma and feminised Juan, does provide is an interrogative critique of heterosexually-compelled gender difference. Again Dollimore helps us to understand the subversive danger posed by this strategy:

Inversion becomes a kind of transgressive mimesis: the subculture (even as it imitates, reproducing itself in terms of its exclusion) also demystifies, producing a knowledge of the dominant which excludes it, this being a knowledge which the dominant has to suppress in order to rule.<sup>66</sup>

In García Lorca's final published collection of verse from 1936, *Diwán del Tamarit*, the Casida VII, known as "Kasida de la rosa", we find the verse: "La rosa/ no buscaba ni ciencia ni sombra:/ Confín de carne y sueño/ buscaba otra cosa".

What is this other thing that lies between the two poles of a García Lorca's binary system, "ciencia"/"carne" and "sombra"/"sueño"? Another question, a poorly conceived one, that is occasionally asked of *Yerma* is the nature of García Lorca's interest in the figure of the childless woman.<sup>67</sup> What should be focused on in trying to connect García Lorca and his *Yerma* is a sense of longing, a metaphysical desire for Love, that seems impossible to satisfy between the confines of "ciencia" and "sombra". It is that impossible, inexplicable, frustrating gulf between the water and the thirsty horse in the poet's favourite *nana* ("[...] de aquel/que llevó el caballo al agua/y lo dejó sin beber"), a gap between material want and metaphysical need. The 'something else' that the rose seeks is a spiritual outlet for desire. In the same way, *Yerma* aches for the "desembocadura", the impossibility of which is the torment of the little girl-child trapped in a well, subject of the *neoyorquino* "Niña ahogada en el pozo (Granada y Newburgh)", so similar to the diminutive image of herself that *Yerma* sees in Juan's eyes. In

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<sup>66</sup> Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence*, pp. 287.

<sup>67</sup> See Ian Gibson's derivative linking of the "homosexual" poet's alleged sterility and his *Yerma*, cited above.

many ways, Yerma is a drama about escape, in the sense of transcending the binary of gender, of overcoming those “confin[es] de carne y sueño”, all physical, and even non-physical boundaries. And for Yerma such escape is tragically impossible. In the following, final chapter we survey the attempts by the women of Bernarda Alba’s house to overcome the metaphysical emptiness represented by the physical imprisonment of them and their desires. In recognition of the critique of gender witnessed in Yerma, we argue, in particular, for the illuminating advantages of a drag performance of the women characters.

## Chapter Six:

### **Beyond the outer walls: transvestite masquerade and transcendent escape in La casa de Bernarda Alba**

#### *6.1 Introduction*

The case of Yerma demonstrates that in a superficially conventional drama we can identify profoundly dissident disturbances in the dominant social, cultural and moral order. Even looking at the more orthodox of Yerma's concerns, to have a 'child' (or rather to stabilise and locate her Self psychically and spiritually), we are confronted by a radical solution that leaves Juan dead. Similar to the conventional views of Yerma's plight, La casa de Bernarda Alba appears to address some grittily real social issues by staging the tragic results of denied physical passions. But, in practice, the work shakes with the tremors of subversive practices unsettling the edifice of subjective identity and simmers with the tension of metaphysical longing.

In 1935, referring to an unknown "acto completamente subversivo" on which he had just finished working, García Lorca declares that this new work has "un tema social, mezclado de religioso, en el que irrumpe mi angustia constante del más allá."<sup>1</sup> We do not know to which work García Lorca was referring in this description. Given the date, we could speculate that he was speaking about the experimental piece Comedia sin título, which would readily fit in with the quality of subversion the poet names. We know that in the same year, García Lorca was also working on several other projects, as Marie Laffranque catalogues.<sup>2</sup> Among them, we find the

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Ricardo García Luengo, 1935, "Conversación con Federico García Lorca", Federico García Lorca, Obras, V, Prosa, I, ed. Miguel García-Posada, (Madrid: Akal, 1994) p. 720.

<sup>2</sup> Marie Laffranque, "Nuevos elementos de valoración. La obra dramática de García Lorca y su teatro inconcluso" in Valoración actual de la obra de García Lorca: Actas del coloquio celebrado en la Casa de Velázquez, eds. A. Esteban & J-P. Étienvre, (Madrid: Universidad Complutense, 1988), pp. 11-22, esp. 13.

alternatively titled Las hijas de Loth or La destrucción de Sodoma. Many have seen this outlined work as a forerunner of La casa de Bernarda Alba. But ultimately it is not important to identify conclusively the drama in question because the description itself is broad enough, and appropriate enough, to assign to almost any of García Lorca's theatre pieces. Who could not detect a social theme in any number of the poet's dramas? Childlessness, infidelity, personal liberty, abandonment, isolation: all are represented. As for a fine injection of religious or spiritual subjects, our dissertation has reviewed the vital importance of metaphysical matters in the poet's theatre. Moreover, we have, hopefully, been persuasive concerning García Lorca's portrayal of Jesús's, Mariana's, Perlimplín's and Gonzalo's suffering for "el más allá", or Yerma's desire for "cosas que ya no están en las carnes".

We cannot presume García Lorca was alluding to the work he would write the following year, just a few months before his own tragic end. However, we propose to demonstrate in this chapter that the description of a subversive work, addressing a social matter, infused with a heady spiritual content, and resolutely driven by a painful desire to surpass physical boundaries is an entirely apposite account of La casa de Bernarda Alba, both of its text and in its performance. The focus of our thesis has been and continues to be the strains upon gender and identity in the tension between the physical desire and metaphysical Love. But in this final chapter we test the validity of our proposition of the dialectics that we view as central to the text. We undertake a case-study, as it were, of the performance of La casa de Bernarda Alba in order to see if our reading of text could withstand the experiment of performance, and to see if our argument would hold its ground in the trials of theatre practice.

Our approach involves a number of stages. In the first instance, we take advantage of the frequency with which La casa de Bernarda Alba is produced to select a range of examples of performance styles, from the conventional to the avant-garde. Taking a cue from the more adventurous of recent productions of the drama, we investigate the semiotic discourse of Camp, which we make use of to better understand the central symbolic device of (Bernarda's) *fachada*.

Pitted against the figurative, immobile façade instituted by Bernarda, we view Adela in her attempt, firstly, to break free from the prescribed feminine space of Bernarda's house. We, therefore, go on to review the rather masculine construction of femininity in the play. Then, in the final section of this chapter, against the backdrop of the other principal characters in the work, we trace the plight of Adela as she moves toward the only possible transcendence of the restrictions on her (female) physical self by reaching beyond death to the truth of her inner Self.

## 6.2 From realism to drag performance

To achieve our goal, we need first and foremost to lay aside some of the cumbersome baggage of conventional interpretation of the drama. As Miguel García-Posada points out, any approach to the work is overshadowed by the reaction of those of García Lorca's immediate circle of friends and acquaintances who were privy to the poet's private readings of his work (essentially a work still in progress, the refinement of which was never realised with the poet's assassination).<sup>3</sup> The now famous, if suspiciously accurate, recollections of Adolfo Salazar where he remembers the poet running over to his house with a page of the drama freshly written, exclaiming “¡Ni una gota de poesía! ¡Realidad! ¡Realismo puro!”<sup>4</sup> dominate and prefigure so much of the analysis of the play. In addition to Salazar's graphic anecdote, we can add the testimony of Carlos Morla Lynch, who records after attending a reading of the work:

[...] esta vez se me antoja que Federico ha desterrado al poeta que lo habita para darse entero al pavoroso realismo de una verdad terrible.

Manuel Altolaguirre, who attended the same reading, corroborates Morla Lynch's report.<sup>5</sup> From such contemporary witnesses to the work when it first saw the light of day, we now have exemplary studies, such as that of Derek Gagen, which make a severe and unyielding case for

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<sup>3</sup> See Miguel García-Posada, “Introducción”, Federico García Lorca, *Obras IV, Teatro 2*, ed. M. García-Posada, (Madrid: Akal, 1992), pp. 7-36, esp. pp. 14-15.

<sup>4</sup> Cited by Andrew A. Anderson (and by many others), “The Strategy of García Lorca's Dramatic Composition 1930-36”, *Romance Quarterly*, 33 (1986), p.221.

<sup>5</sup> Cited by Derek Gagen, “The Reality of *La casa de Bernarda Alba*”, *Acts*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Autumn 1988, pp. 27-35, esp. p. 28.



the realism of La casa de Bernarda Alba.<sup>6</sup> Gagen differentiates the last of García Lorca's dramas from La zapatera prodigiosa, Bodas de sangre and Yerma, which he decides have drawn their themes from the poet's "real-life experience" and "from deep within Lorca's own spirit". These he contrasts with La casa de Bernarda Alba, which he believes was a professionally commissioned work (by Margarita Xirgu) and expressed a matter close to the poet's heart: "the reality of Spanish life".<sup>7</sup> Indeed, García Lorca's concern for contemporary social issues cannot be disputed, at least in his later theatre work, as he made clear in another interview from 1935: "El teatro ha de recoger el drama total de la vida actual."<sup>8</sup>

We should make it clear, as Gagen does, that we are engaged here with the suggestion that La casa de Bernarda Alba is a work of social, and not socialist, realism. Gagen rejects the influence of any dogma on García Lorca, insisting that his drama does not propose social change but that behind the artistic creation there is an "authentic social reality."<sup>9</sup> However, and this is a crucial objection, such austere analyses of the drama fail to acknowledge the dynamism that a staging of the work can bring to its interpretation. Indeed, it is in the practice of stage work that textual theories can truly be made stand or fall. It is as pointless to deny the profound roots of García Lorca's theatre in traditional and conventional drama as it is to ignore any socio-political dimension to his work. Above all in such a work as La casa de Bernarda Alba, concerned as it is with restraint and release, it seems inappropriately humourless and unemotional to deny the mobilisation of García Lorca's text by all kinds of stage directors with a range of styles, techniques and ideologies, from the experimental, to the overtly political, from satirical to the classical. Antonio Sánchez Trigueros advises us not to lose one sense of the poet's theatre for the other:

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<sup>6</sup> Derek Gagen, "The Reality of La casa de Bernarda Alba".

<sup>7</sup> Derek Gagen, "The Reality of La casa de Bernarda Alba", p. 27.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Nicolás González-Deleito, 1935, "Federico García Lorca y el teatro de hoy", Federico García Lorca, Obras, V, Prosa, I, p. 675.

<sup>9</sup> Derek Gagen, "The Reality of La casa de Bernarda Alba", p. 31.

hay que distinguir [...] entre dos Lorcas: uno experimentador vanguardista, absolutamente crítico desde la escena y contra la escena tradicional, y otro realista de neta inspiración popular, cuya tradición enriquece.<sup>10</sup>

A brief survey of La casa de Bernarda Alba in production reveals the scope of artistic vision that has been brought to bear on the poet's final work. In this, we are aided by Sánchez Trigueros's inquiry, which juxtaposes the text to the *mise-en-scène*. The premiere of La casa de Bernarda Alba took place in Buenos Aires in 1945, with García Lorca's leading actor, Margarita Xirgu, at the helm. The staging and sceneography were consistent with the poet's stage directions and descriptions.<sup>11</sup> The official Spanish opening, the work of Maritza Caballero's theatre company, took place in Madrid in 1964, and was directed by Juan Antonio Bardem. Eschewing the diminishing effect of the lighting directions laid down by the author, Bardem arranged for the stage illumination to be static and indistinct throughout, essentially normal room lighting conditions, and the overall effect produced was that of a claustrophobic *camera obscura*. This device, of course, was intended to express and reflect the poet's seminal direction or *advertencia* that "[...] estos tres actos tienen la intención de un documental fotográfico", or what Gagen calls "the celebrated – or notorious – photographic realism of the piece."<sup>12</sup>

Sánchez Trigueros selects a 1984 production at the Teatro Español and directed by José Carlos Plaza, as a prime example of a hyper-naturalistic interpretation of the drama. The staging was completely devoid of stylisation and the director's vision came as a result of sociological/psychological character study. The scenographer took great pains to try and accurately reflect a contemporary Andalusian setting, even hand-dyeing the women's costumes

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<sup>10</sup> Antonio Sánchez Trigueros, "Texto de tradición y espectáculo de vanguardia. (A propósito del teatro de Federico García Lorca)", in La verdad de las máscaras: teatro y vanguardia en Federico García Lorca, Imprévue, 1 (1999), pp. 15-40, esp. 21.

<sup>11</sup> This review of the Spanish-language productions listed here we have drawn and summarised from Sánchez Trigueros's elegant account in his article "Texto de tradición y espectáculo de vanguardia. (A propósito del teatro de Federico García Lorca)", pp. 29-35.

<sup>12</sup> Derek Gagen, "The Reality of La casa de Bernarda Alba", p. 27.

mourning black to reproduce as much 'authentic' detail as possible. Such extremes of naturalism are no longer as commonplace in Spain, Latin America or, indeed, much of Europe. But in Anglophone countries realism, especially social realism almost monopolises English-language versions of García Lorca's drama. Among the many examples we could cite, several stand out as exemplary slaves to a po-faced realism: these include the 1999 "Focus Theatre" production of The House of Bernarda Alba in Dublin directed by Jane Snow, and the 2003 production of The House of Bernarda Alba directed by Martin Drury for the "National Theatre of Ireland" at The Abbey. Both productions were blighted by an unwieldy English text, as well as a direction and performance style that stumbled ineptly over an *espagnolade* setting, a heightened language that unnerved the performers and a clumsy attempt to parallel rural Andalusian idiom with rustic Hibernicisms and accents.

Attempts to stage the work in other Anglophone countries fare no better if not worse. In 1999, the company "Shared Experience", based in Salisbury, England undertook to produce a new English-language adaptation of the drama. Polly Teale, the version's director, in her programme introduction to the work inadvertently signals the root problem of what turned out to be a confused staging, wide of the original mark. According to Teale, "[t]he play explores an unhappy truth [...] The play is above all a passionate plea for change". Here we note the intentions of producers with their immediate appeal to the 'truth' and 'reality' of the work. And yet we feel confident that Gagen, for one, would certainly disagree with the message of revolutionary intent. But what is more, the director has read the drama as an image of contemporary socio-political strife: "The house is a metaphor for a country at war." Unhappily, Teale's analysis is at odds with the thrust of another of the programme's notes provided by the English studies scholar Maria Delgado, who highlights that

[García Lorca] as playwright and director, [...] consistently challenged the parameters of what was possible on a stage, providing an avant-garde aesthetic which dispenses with the literal in favour of the imagination.

Instead the company's approach to the work is circumscribed by a lazy evaluation where (the poet's) same-sex desire is reduced to and conflated with that of the female stage characters: "That García Lorca, a homosexual man in a fiercely masculine society, should write about suppressed sexuality is not surprising."<sup>13</sup> This example of a production fails to deliver a 'new' reading of the drama, and in its place draws heavily on established norms of realism. The very notion of a new interpretation of the work is somewhat misleading, as García Lorca himself explained:

Creo que no hay, en realidad, ni teatro viejo ni teatro nuevo, sino teatro bueno y teatro malo. Es nuevo verdaderamente el teatro de propaganda – nuevo por su contenido. En lo concerniente a forma, a forma nueva, *es el director de escena quien puede conseguir esa novedad, si tiene habilidad interpretativa*. Una obra bien interpretada [...] puede ofrecer toda una sensación de nuevo teatro.<sup>14</sup> (my italics)

As the poet suggests, an talented director can revitalise a text generating a fresh response to the work from the audience. Sánchez Trigueros chronicles the influential and ground-breaking production by the "Teatro Experimental de Oporto", directed by Angel Facio. The staging first took place in Portugal in 1972, and was revived and recast in Madrid some four years later. Sánchez Trigueros highlights both the production's expressionistic quality and the director's 'Freudo-marxist' reading of the work based on the notion of an alignment between sexual repression and political oppression.<sup>15</sup> The origin of power in the staging is represented by the quite terrifying prospect of "una Bernarda que no es madre, ni siquiera mujer, sino una especie de animal asexuado, monolítico, rígido, inflexible, implacable, destructivo y constante". Rather than Adela, Bernarda's true opponent is posited as María Josefa. In a radical and expressive move, Facio has Bernarda played by a male actor, Julio Cardoso in the Portuguese performance and Ismael Merlo in the Spanish; the actor is heavily made up so that h/er face becomes a

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<sup>13</sup> All references are from the production's programme booklet, published by "Shared Experience" Theatre Company, Salisbury, England, 1999.

<sup>14</sup> "Federico García Lorca y el teatro de hoy", Federico García Lorca, *Obras, V, Prosa, 1*, p. 675.

<sup>15</sup> See again Sánchez Trigueros, "Texto de tradición y espectáculo de vanguardia. (A propósito del teatro de Federico García Lorca)", pp. 29-35, esp. pp. 31-2.

mask.<sup>16</sup> Of course, such a move sensitive to the formation of gender in the poet's drama "de mujeres en los pueblos de España" would displease those who promote the play's putative engagement with reality. Not unexpectedly, Gagen disparages Facio's employment of a male Bernarda which "remove[s] the play's ambiguities, nullifie[s] the polysemic symbolism that lies within the realist conventions and consequently remove[s] from the audience the opportunity to interpret [...] signs."<sup>17</sup> Later in this chapter, we will rehearse our contention that a drag performance of La casa de Bernarda Alba opens up, rather than closes down, innovative inroads of understanding into the play's text and communication with the spectacle's audience. For the time being however, we at least indicate the rich profit in connecting Bernarda's masculinity with the type of gender transgressions we witnessed in our discussion of Yerma. Luis Fernández Cifuentes notes the similarity between Yerma's violation of the public, 'masculine' orbit of the outdoors and the desire of those women under Bernarda's control to exit the private, feminine (at least, all female) enclosure of the house.<sup>18</sup> While the advocates of the play's realism continue to delineate discussion of the drama's tensions in terms of, for example, Herbert Ramsden's vitality/repression opposition, experimental performances of the work now offer the more rewarding dialectics. The first is that of gender identity (the feminine inside and the masculine outside) and the second places the half-lived lives of Bernarda's daughters, their physical mere subsistence, in opposition to the spiritual ideal of freedom (the material and the immaterial separated by the walls of Bernarda's dominion).<sup>19</sup>

Naturally, even experimental productions can offer a reflection of reality, but they may be alternative actualities to that suggested by the text. The group "La Jácara" from Seville offered just such a substitute version in 1986. The director, Alfonso Zurro, reworked the drama of

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<sup>16</sup> Sánchez Trigueros, "Texto de tradición y espectáculo de vanguardia...", p. 32.

<sup>17</sup> Derek Gagen, "The Reality of La casa de Bernarda Alba", p. 34.

<sup>18</sup> Luis Fernández Cifuentes, García Lorca en el teatro: la norma y la diferencia, (Zaragoza: University of Zaragoza, 1986), p. 206.

<sup>19</sup> For the vitality/repression argument see Herbert Ramsden, "Introduction", Federico García Lorca, La casa de Bernarda Alba, (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1983), pp. 7-63, esp. pp. 15-29.

Bernarda and the women in her domain, placing on stage nine men (not in drag) in a cloistered setting bordered by railings, being watched over by guards. In this way the director sought to propose “un discurso más universal sobre el poder, la autoridad, la represión, la libertad y el hombre”, and the prison of Bernarda’s house stopped appearing as a metaphor but was instituted as a reality.<sup>20</sup> Among these challenging contemporary productions, we should also count the production staged by a group of theatre students from Granada calling themselves “Teatro La Liorna”. Their enactment, directed by Gustavo Cañas in 1995, comprised a mixed group of female and male actors who continually swapped roles throughout the performance. The effect of this technique, according to Sánchez Trigueros, was, in a Brechtian or Sartrean fashion, to distance audience identification with any given character due to their (un)sympathetic physical appearance – a tricky theatrical enterprise but one which succeeded. An even more recent staging, and one that is arrestingly original and pregnant with theatrical potential, is that of the Málaga-based, provocatively-named “Teatroz”. Over three years from 1995 to 1998, the company, under the direction of Juan Manuel Lara, toured Spain with their show entitled Casting. The spectacle consisted of two parts. The first half of the performance was a simulation of a casting session for a planned version of García Lorca’s drama. The ‘cast’ is selected from actors planted within the audience and the overall atmosphere is one which breaks down barriers between audience and performer. The second part is the enactment with the ‘cast’ of a parody of La casa de Bernarda Alba in the style of a Broadway musical, which the poet is supposed to have written during his New York stay, complete with no less than fourteen songs and dance routines. The mock musical is playfully (re)titled A la caza de Bernarda Alba.<sup>21</sup> An inventive variation on the text of La casa de Bernarda Alba, such as the “Teatroz” production, is not so much a losing sight of the original; rather we propose that it is a reconnection through humour and melodrama with the drama’s underlying dialectic of gender as well as the tension between superficial materiality and profound spiritual essence. It also sees the work re-embracing the black humour of parody and the travesties or charades of farce;

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<sup>20</sup> Sánchez Trigueros, “Texto de tradición y espectáculo de vanguardia...”, p. 33.

<sup>21</sup> Sánchez Trigueros, “Texto de tradición y espectáculo de vanguardia...”, p. 34.

styles that have dropped from the scope of vision of the majority of the work's critics and performers.

### 6.3 *On symbols and on the signs of Camp*

None of the representations of La casa de Bernarda Alba cited above would be admissible if the drama were to be treated simply as a work of realism. But that would be to deny the renovating input of theatre practitioners, which we know García Lorca supported. And just as the poet advocates the new interpretations of directors, so theatre producers seek in García Lorca's work an opportunity to explore all that is innovative in theatre, as José Monleón claims:

Los directores que buscan textos que permitan superar las convenciones del falso realismo escénico, han recurrido muchas veces a Lorca como soporte de las nuevas poéticas.<sup>22</sup>

Pertinently, Fernández Cifuentes has reviewed the opinion of both critic and theatre practitioner on the composition of the characters in La casa de Bernarda Alba and recommends that the figures of the women should be taken as models of the symbolic, the discursive and the ideological. This he believes is a positive aspect of the text, which allows a more political profile to emerge, rather than the realist fare of psychological sketches.<sup>23</sup> The redesignation of La casa de Bernarda Alba as a symbolic tragedy releases both the text from weighty social obligations and the characters from the limiting function of representing “[las] mujeres en los pueblos de España” of the 1930s. Acknowledging still the desire of the poet to have his theatre engage with the reality of contemporary existence, Sánchez Trigueros signals the receptivity that the work's images allow: “la obra en la que busca [García Lorca] ese realismo más puro, se nos presenta hoy como la más simbólica de la serie [de las obras maduras], la más abierta.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> José Monleón, “Con Víctor García y Nuria Espert”, *Primer Acto*, Madrid, 137, pp. 14-21, esp. 15; cited by Sánchez Trigueros, “Texto de tradición y espectáculo de vanguardia...”, p. 35.

<sup>23</sup> Luis Fernández Cifuentes, García Lorca en el teatro, p. 204.

<sup>24</sup> Sánchez Trigueros, “Texto de tradición y espectáculo de vanguardia...”, p. 25.

Both the production of “Teatro la Liorna”, with its process of actor/role swapping, and the Málaga company’s Casting demonstrate a creative disregard for the fixity of (stage) identity. In fact, as we have seen in El público, García Lorca is specifically interested in the manner in which theatre and its constructs tutor us in the discrete fabrication of our subjective human identities. The masks of Bernarda, Adela, Poncia, Martirio and the others are there to be worn by whichever (female or male) actor steps into the costume. The aim of García Lorca in writing La casa de Bernarda Alba is no different from any of the other theatre works we have examined. Here, too, the poet advances (i) his concern with identity, a Self that is undermined by the collapse of gender difference, and (ii) the crisis he senses around belief in a spiritual essence, or soul, in which nonphysical Love transcends the strictures of physical and material want. Presently we shall address the representation of the key figures in the drama. For the moment, though, we might record several appropriate observations made by Fernández Cifuentes pointing to the symbolic and mobile identities of the stage characters. Firstly, his energetic examination of the play sees a meaningful lack of differentiation between the daughters of Bernarda. In particular, he notes the almost identical black mourning garb, and the alliterative effects in the name scheme: with one group Magdalena-Martirio-María Josefa and a second, Angustias-Adela-Amelia.<sup>25</sup> In addition, Fernández Cifuentes records the frequency with which each character is named in the text. Thus we discover María Josefa is never named, Poncia and Prudencia only once, and Amelia on a mere three occasions. We compare those virtually unidentified characters with Bernarda whose name appears 28 times, the 21 instances we hear Angustias, Adela named 20 times, and the names of Magdalena and Martirio which turn up 13 times each.<sup>26</sup> In the following section we contend that the inhabitants of the all-female household in fact share a tendency toward masculinisation, a gender transgression made viable by the symbolic constitution of the drama’s characters. We possibly do not need to point

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<sup>25</sup> Luis Fernández Cifuentes, García Lorca en el teatro, pp. 204-5. For more on phonic similarities and their implications see James Whiston, “Syntax and Semantics in the Dramatis Personae of Lorca’s La casa de Bernarda Alba”, in Spanish Theatre Studies in Honour of Victor F. Dixon, eds. K. Adams, C. Cosgrove, J. Whiston, (London: Tamesis, 2001), pp. 177-89.

<sup>26</sup> Luis Fernández Cifuentes, García Lorca en el teatro, p. 205.



out how often García Lorca made use of characters of a symbolic nature to widen the range of his dramas' impact. Frequently we find protagonists simply designated with a generic name, such as the Joven of Así que pasen cinco años and the Director of El público, but we are also reminded of the early farces and the Zapatera and her husband, the *curianos* of El maleficio de la mariposa, as well as the entire cast of Bodas de sangre, excepting, pointedly, Leonardo. We cannot omit a whole host of ancillary characters whose supporting roles demand no distinguishing appellation: Niños, Duendes, Monjas, Viejas, Damas and Estudiantes, Muchachos and Muchachas. Nor should we gloss over the crucial significance of characters designated by a simple form, such as the Figuras of El público and those hollowed-out Trajes in the same work, for they underscore the possibility inherent to a symbolic character to both extend identity universally and throw into doubt the stability of any distinct Self. This point will help us understand the Mask-like function of Bernarda and her regime of the *fachada*, which we discuss in depth in the final section of this chapter.

We also make reference in the final section to the names of the main characters of La casa de Bernarda Alba (this aspirant, representative “drama de mujeres”) which are, like that of Yerma, charged with symbolic purpose. It is perhaps an easy point to make but we ought not to forget the poet's abiding attraction to the allegorical format of Pedro Calderón de la Barca's *auto sacramental*, La vida es sueño. The most performed play in La Barraca's repertoire, García Lorca was fascinated by the play's ability to communicate complicated moral themes by the unadorned dramatic force of figurative characters. Ana María Gómez Torres dedicates a chapter of her study of El público to the axis of the poet's work she articulates as “[la] función simbólica de los personajes”<sup>27</sup> and highlights an interview given by García Lorca in 1935, where we hear the poet admit his understanding of what is inescapably symbolic about the real:

- Dígame, Federico, para la mejor comprensión de su teatro por el público, si sus tipos y, en general, los personajes de sus dramas son reales o simbólicos.

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<sup>27</sup> Ana María Gómez Torres, Experimentación y teoría en el teatro de Federico García Lorca, (Málaga: Arguval, 1995), p.193.

- Son reales, desde luego. Pero todo tipo real encarna un símbolo. Y yo pretendo hacer de mis personajes un hecho poético, aunque los haya visto alentar alrededor mío. Son una realidad estética.<sup>28</sup>

Gómez Torres, still referring to El público, goes on to explain “al igual que los autos sacramentales, los personajes carecen de nombres propios: son seres arquetípicos de desdibujada y múltiple identidad.”<sup>29</sup> Her terms of reference recall García Lorca’s depiction of Perlimplín as “un monigote”, who reinvents himself in the guise of the shadowy Joven de la capa roja. Virginia Higginbotham reiterates Gómez Torres’s point in relation to La zapatera prodigiosa, and emphasises the pedigree of characters with generic names in the tradition of farce.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, Gómez Torres’s assessment points to the blurred distinction between the personalities of the Alba sisters and the manufacture of their gender identity. On the feature of multiple identity, Gómez Torres gives the following evaluation of its implications:

Los caracteres están concebidos como facetas de un mismo individuo, como personificaciones de sentimientos o actitudes distintas hacia un determinado hecho, ya sea el paso del tiempo, el amor o la muerte.<sup>31</sup>

Her framing of multiple identity suggests, for an experimental production of La casa de Bernarda Alba, how rewarding it might be to look at the play’s other characters as though they were facets of Bernarda’s personality, each with its own mask. In this chapter, we are content to look at the principal figurative device employed in La casa de Bernarda Alba of the Mask, and its variant the *fachada* or façade.

There is much correspondence between Bernarda’s preoccupation with the *fachada* and the semiotic discourse of Camp that, as Moe Meyer argues, Oscar Wilde mobilised in his pursuit of

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<sup>28</sup> “Conversación con Federico García Lorca”, Federico García Lorca, Obras. V, Prosa. I, p. 716.

<sup>29</sup> Ana María Gómez Torres, Experimentación y teoría, pp. 193-4.

<sup>30</sup> Virginia Higginbotham, The Comic Spirit of Federico García Lorca, (Austin & London: University of Texas Press, 1974), p. 30.

<sup>31</sup> Ana María Gómez Torres, Experimentación y teoría, p. 194.

a homosexual socio-cultural identity.<sup>32</sup> Meyer deftly links Honoré de Balzac's "four signifying practices for an organized system of self-representation – posture, gesture, costume and speech"<sup>33</sup> to Wilde's presentation of the Self, in his aesthetic of the dandy, via the nineteenth century method of actor training known as Delsarte. To summarise: Wilde is motivated by a desire to put his theory of aestheticism into practice. He then discovers that the Balzac/Delsartean semiotic technique allows him the freedom to create a new interior Self by locating both the signified (meaning) and the signifier (what represents meaning) on the exterior corporeal surface, in effect collapsing the soul onto the body. According to Meyer, "This was [...] a recognition of the constructedness of social identity."<sup>34</sup> We recall at this appropriate juncture Wilde's epigram that "those who see any difference between body and soul have neither", which deflects any probing of the authentic Self.<sup>35</sup> Employing the sign system of Camp, Wilde found that he could produce a public persona, or pose, which put itself forward in society as his true and only identity. In El público this same notion is represented by the Mask which "en medio de la calle [...] nos abrocha los botones y evita el rubor imprudente que a veces surge a las mejillas" (III, p. 118). In La casa de Bernarda Alba, the dominant metaphor for the Mask is the *fachada* or façade, which Bernarda posits as her governing policy, and to which the aspirations of her daughters are subordinated. She articulates her principle to Angustias, "Cada uno sabe lo que piensa por dentro. Yo no me meto en los corazones, pero quiero buena *fachada* y armonía familiar" (III, p. 384; my italic). Bernarda's precept makes it clear that it is superficial qualities that count and that an individual's inner self is not recognised. In our reading of the play, the key tension is between the maintenance of the integrity of the Mask (we recall the impermeable surface of the mono-dimensional statues that populate El público), and the desire to break through that shell, to make contact with what is at once one's true interior Self and the limitless, eternal freedom of the realm beyond the physical.

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<sup>32</sup> Moe Meyer, "Under the Sign of Wilde: an Archaeology of Posing", in The Politics and Poetics of Camp, ed. M. Meyer, (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 75-109, esp. p.76.

<sup>33</sup> Moe Meyer, "Under the Sign of Wilde...", p. 78.

<sup>34</sup> Moe Meyer, "Under the Sign of Wilde...", p. 81.

<sup>35</sup> Oscar Wilde, "Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young", Complete Works of Oscar Wilde, (London: Collins, 2001), p. 1205

Between the façade of the material world and the spirit of each individual's inner being, we have the impossible situation of Bernarda's daughters who must police the boundaries of their own and the others' confinement, while contending with the unbearable longing to break out of the Mask, break free from the strictures of their gender, and know the freedom accorded the male. The desire of Bernarda's daughters for a metaphysical life would have been recognised even by an arch-modernist such as Wilde, who used the Mask strategically and publicly to camouflage his private Self.

If we intend promoting the performance in drag of García Lorca's drama, then we must examine carefully the deployment of gender roles in the work. But before moving on to discuss the practice of gender transgression in La casa de Bernarda Alba, it is important for our terms of reference to clarify our usage and the significance of the discursive notion "Camp". Philip Core styles his 1984 compendium of camp cultural interventions after the Jean Cocteau aphorism "the lie that tells the truth". In the introduction he elaborates on the title of his book thus:

this phrase ['the lie that tells the truth'] encompasses not only specific homosexuals who behaved exaggeratedly because of social displacement, but also those figures whose solecisms were not necessarily sexual but whose *desire to conceal something and to reveal it at the same time* made their behaviour bizarre to our (*sic*) way of thinking.<sup>36</sup>  
(my italics)

The notion of simultaneously concealing or keeping private while revealing or making public is one we will return to later in our analysis of the characters of La casa de Bernarda Alba, and more specifically Bernarda's regime of the *fachada*. But we are immediately concerned with the semantic capacity of "the lie that tells the truth", for it is through the mask of each of his characters that García Lorca tells the truth of the human soul, the truth of h/er (gender) identity. Delving deeper into the possibilities of Camp, we leave aside this discursive formation and look

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<sup>36</sup> Philip Core, Camp: the lie that tells the truth, (New York: Delilah Publications, 1984), p.9.

to the common usage of the word 'camp'.<sup>37</sup> Directly we come up against the problem that the term is peculiar to the English language. Accordingly, we search for a Spanish equivalent, but the constructions *tener pluma* or *plumero* are limited in their application to the exaggeratedly effeminate (homosexual) man. Broadening our search we turn to an English-Spanish dictionary for some assistance, but we find a similar range of meaning: "camp – 1 (a) afectado (y divertido), exagerado; (intencionadamente) teatral; (b) afeminado; (abiertamente) homosexual".<sup>38</sup> What we can distil from this phraseological discourse are the coordinates with which we will map the topography of Bernarda's household: the exaggerated and the theatrical, the superficial/inauthentic and the effeminate. The former pair we look for in the exaggerated and melodramatic cruelties Bernarda inflicts on those in her domain, and the treatment in kind the injured exact on each other. Virginia Higginbotham points to the exaggerated "grotesqueness" of Bernarda.<sup>39</sup> In *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, amid the lies, the pretence and the façade stretched to breaking point, there is a quest, with Adela in its vanguard, for truth, authenticity and meaning with real depth. We have already drawn attention to the importance of the façade as marking Bernarda's concern for surface appearance and disregard for the authentic self, and we will continue to highlight this symbolic sequence. As for effeminacy, the most accepted value of camp, in the section on gender performance we ascertain the enactment of some particularly masculine conduct by the women of the Alba household. With such a reading we suggest the Camp advantage of having male actors take on the playing of the drama's personalities in order to throw into sharper relief (more pointed than women acting mannishly) the discontinuity between male body, feminine costume and masculine behaviour.

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<sup>37</sup> We should point out that when referring to the discourse of Camp, that is an aesthetic strategy employed by practitioners such as Oscar Wilde, with a socio-political purpose in its current deployment by drag performers, we adopt Moe Meyer's practice of capitilising the initial letter. Elsewhere, we employ 'camp' as an adjective, discussing its meanings, or translations into Spanish, and extrapolating a system for comprehending how a drag performance of *La casa de Bernarda Alba* would work.

<sup>38</sup> Colin Smith, *Collins Spanish-English and English-Spanish Dictionary*, 3rd edition, (Glasgow: HarperCollins, 1992), p. 95.

<sup>39</sup> Virginia Higginbotham, *The Comic Spirit of Federico García Lorca*, p. 118.

#### 6.4 *The photo documentary: reflection of reality or subjective vision?*

Much has been made of García Lorca's note that precedes the text, advising that the drama is intended as "un documental fotográfico" (p. 306), especially among those who argue for the play's realism.<sup>40</sup> The 'photographic' quality of the play seems to be primarily suggested in the black-on-white photo negative effect of the setting: Act I "*habitación blanquísima del interior de la casa de Bernarda*" (I, p. 308); Act II "*habitación blanca del interior de la casa de Bernarda*" (II, p. 342); Act III "*cuatro paredes blancas ligeramente azuladas del patio interior de la casa de Bernarda*" (III, p. 378). Against the white we have details in black, such as the arched doorway which has "*cortinas de yute*" (I, p. 308), and of course the women of the house dressed in black, who resemble more than anything, in their sketchy, mono-dimensional composition, the shadows that Poncia sees as her role (compared to Adela) "¡Sombra tuya he de ser!" (II, p. 352). In fact the shadow takes on the form of the negated, silent lives that populate Bernarda's realm of "¡Silencio!": "*Un gran silencio umbroso se extiende por la escena*" (I, p. 308). We observe, however, the dimming whiteness, "*blanquísimas*" / "*blancas*" / "*ligeramente azuladas*" that matches both the play's progression and our journey into the recesses of Bernarda's house: from the "*muros gruesos*" (I, p. 308) of the exterior to the "*cuatro paredes [...] del patio interior*". We remind ourselves of the pertinence of Adela's wish to pass through/over the walls of the house: "¡Quisiera ser invisible, pasar por las habitaciones sin que me preguntarais dónde voy!" (II, p. 349); and of Bernarda's determination to preserve the impermeability of the walls: "Si pasara algún día [la cosa muy grande], estate segura que no traspasaría las paredes" (II, p. 369). The initial stage directions for each of the three acts mark and describe the photographic process of development, which takes place in "esta sala oscura" (I, p. 320), or *camera obscura* of the house. The gradual reduction and interiorising of space keeps pace with a regressive movement of light until the original image is exposed: from the negativity of Bernarda's house emerges the developing image of Adela's white soul, from the monochrome, comes depth, and the truth overtakes the façade.

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<sup>40</sup> Such as Derek Gagen's "photographic realism" cited above.

Amid our impressions of the setting's starkness (García Lorca's injunction "el decorado ha de ser de una perfecta simplicidad" III, p. 378) and between the two antithetical tones of the play's monochrome vision, we can discern two counter forces at work in La casa de Bernarda Alba. First, there is the authority of Bernarda and her obsession with conserving the *fachada*, the "blanquísima" extreme of the early part of the play: We recall her instruction to the Criada: "Tú empieza a blanquear el patio" (I, p. 326). Moving in an opposite direction there is Adela who we recollect attempts to hold forth her whiteness against the encroaching gloom of the house: "¡No quiero perder mi blancura en estas habitaciones!" (I, p. 335). Bernarda tries to maintain her regime of negativity, the photographic inversion in the negative of black-on-white. Adela seeks her self-exposure (in a photographic sense) and the exposure of inner Self, her whiteness (or spirit) stands out against the encircling shadows of those living half-lives around her, an affirmative production of Love's ascendancy over Bernarda's destructive denial of life.

It is appropriate that we momentarily review our assessment of the poet's use of two-dimensional, fixed images in and for his theatre. In Cristo, García Lorca took the rich, stylised form of Catholic iconography of those "*estampitas sagradas*" (I, 1; p. 233), many examples of which would have been found adorning his childhood homes,<sup>41</sup> and brought to life a portrait of his imagined young Christ. *Estampas* of more secular themes form the original canvass for the poet's interpretation of Mariana Pineda, whose iconic image is reworked by García Lorca as the eternal saint of freedom to Love, surpassing all temporal concerns of liberal politics and historical circumstance.<sup>42</sup> The poet continued his simulations of two-dimensional imagery with his meditation on the soul and the body, Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín, with

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<sup>41</sup> In both the Casa-Museo de Federico García Lorca in modern day Fuente Vaqueros and that of Valderrubio, we can find many samples of this iconography in the recreations of the poet's juvenile homes – images of Jesus of the Sacred Heart, the Virgin of the Seven Sorrows, Saint Joseph and more.

<sup>42</sup> Specimens of secular images of Granada are to be found in the work of García Lorca's friend, the artist and photographer Hermenegildo Lanz. The artist manufactured the settings for García Lorca and Manuel de Falla's production of La niña que riega la albahaca y el príncipe preguntón, which took place on the Feast of the *Reyes Magos*, 1923, in the García Lorca family house, in Granada, and published a collection of engravings entitled Estampas de Granada: 20 grabados en madera originales, in 1928. See the exhibition catalogue Federico García Lorca (1898 – 1936), (Madrid: Tf. Editores, 1998), pp. 114 and 135.

his imaginative visualisation of the strip-cartoon *aleluya*. By now it should be clear that the poet's aesthetic strategy of amplifying, deepening and animating the flat image, giving a spatial or depth dimension to a superficial illustration, is an accurate description of the philosophical dialectic that drives his theatre work. In El público, García Lorca pursues the body/soul, surface/depth debate with a vertiginous flight of the soul through a crowd of statue-figures, their bodies, impermeable (plaster) surfaces. Then, in Yerma, the poet advances a distillation of this central opposition of the body's surface that lacks an interiority, a surface without depth, through the tragic yearnings of his protagonist for a 'child'. Now, in La casa de Bernarda Alba, García Lorca discovers a more exacting medium, the austere and mercilessly precise photograph. The photograph may be thought to be a realistic representation of (an unforgiving) reality, hence the belief, following the author's apparent claims, that the drama is a work of realism, a true reflection of real life. This must be viewed as a modernist proposition, in light of Christopher Soufas's cogent argument: photography was adopted by avant-garde factions who rejected the attempts of previous art forms to mimic reality, and instead put forward photography as an indexical representation (that is a point-to-point reproduction).<sup>43</sup> But this reality is being processed through the *camera obscura* of the author's eye, and into the frame comes the Lorcan vision of depth or spiritual life in the field of the drama's lens. Hence the need to approach La casa de Bernarda Alba with a methodology that is more experimental, that goes beyond surface realities. We recall that the black-on-white scheme is not only a photonegative but a meeting of adversaries. It is, we recall, a stratagem of Camp: a polarisation of extremes, an exaggeration of opposition, an austerity that is arch. In the end this play is no photo reality, it is still a mimetic representation, but, as the lie tells the truth, the façade also gives forth the true image.

Our study now proceeds to consider the enactment of gender in the play. In El público we witness the theatrical transformations of male characters who undergo a barrage of gender

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<sup>43</sup> See C. Christopher Soufas, Audience and Authority in the Modernist Theatre of Federico García Lorca, (Tuscaloosa & London: University of Alabama Press, 1996), esp. pp. 18-19 and 130-131.



reassignments at the level of costume, dressing as women, and occasionally, as in the case of *Hombre 2*, in terms of anatomy, when the actor playing the part is replaced by a woman actor. Meanwhile in *Yerma* the reconfiguration of the protagonist's womanhood in a host of transgressions into the masculine domain questions the constitution of her gender identity at the psychic level. Here in *La casa de Bernarda Alba* we recommend taking a step further from the examples of *El público* and *Yerma*. In the single-sex house of Alba, we build on the experience of those productions which have intentionally disregarded the sex of the character and placed male actors in the roles of women. With such a strategy the three-point dissonance between the body of performer, the sex of the character and the gender role enacted by the character further promotes the poet's problematising of the certainty of gender-defined, essential identity.

### *6.5 The performance of gender*

Summing up his paper examining the "queerness rampant" in *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, Ronald Cueto follows the investigation of Bettina Knapp into the "hermaphrodite" figure of Bernarda<sup>44</sup> with the conclusion that "an adventurous director [...] might be tempted to ponder the pros and cons of a production in drag". The purpose of his suggestion is to illustrate "the decidedly bent trajectory of García Lorca's religious thought".<sup>45</sup> We have already discussed the radical Lorcan vision of Christianity in the review of *Cristo* in Chapter One. But here it is Cueto's proposal that a transvestite performance would illuminate what for him is the central concern of García Lorca in his theatre: "a cast in drag would neatly personify [...] the mystery of the spirit of man [...] at the heart of [...] suffering and sacrifice". Cueto's "spirit of man" is a curious, problematic notion, but we affirm his conclusion that the poet's work sees beyond sexual difference to concentrate on "human beings in love, desperately in love [...] love in all its

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<sup>44</sup> Bettina L. Knapp, "Federico García Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba*: A Hermaphrodite Matriarchate", *Modern Drama*, 27 (1984).

<sup>45</sup> Ronald Cueto, "On the Queerness Rampant in the House of Bernarda Alba", in *Leeds Papers on Lorca and on Civil War Verse*, ed. Margaret A. Rees, (Leeds: Trinity and All Saints College, 1988), pp. 31-2.

senses”.<sup>46</sup> The theatrical application of cross-dressing is not then a device of empty parody or of the comic farce of impersonation. Judith Butler explains the significance of drag for revealing the fabrication of gender that is culturally posited as natural and authentic: “In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency”.<sup>47</sup> The mimetic characteristic of gender forms part of Butler’s sweeping study of the (hetero)normative hierarchies of sex, re-evaluating sexual categories as performative signs. Paul Julian Smith follows Butler in his analysis of miming in the films of Pedro Almodóvar. Firstly, he acknowledges mime to be the “postmodern reproduction of found material”.<sup>48</sup> Smith then points to the significance of mime for a queer audience: “for lesbians and gay men, obliquely placed in relation to a dominant culture which does not speak to our experience, miming is a constant feature of our life in a hostile environment, and of our resistance to that environment.”<sup>49</sup>

In conventional interpretations of La casa de Bernarda Alba, the subtitle of the play “Drama de mujeres en los pueblos de España” is frequently invoked as an indication of some socio-political interest on the part of García Lorca in establishing a voice for women, telling the story of their lives in a male-dominated culture. We argue based on our reading of gender in the work, as we review below, that if the poet ever harboured such a desire, then through a transvestite production of the work such aspirations would only come more to the foreground. What follows is an examination of the peculiar masculinisation of the women of the house of Alba. In the characters of Bernarda, her servant Poncia, and, to an extent, her four elder daughters, this destabilisation of their (feminine) gender renders them as Masks, figures without a secure identity. It emphasises the related (Camp) phenomena of the superficial and hyperbole. For Adela, however, gender instability takes on the same importance as it did for Yerma. Adela

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<sup>46</sup> Ronald Cueto, “On the Queerness Rampant...”, p. 33.

<sup>47</sup> Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, (New York & London: Routledge, 1999, first edition 1990), p. 137.

<sup>48</sup> What Smith suggests is that mime is a typically postmodern device in that it is a copying of a copy with no pretence to an original.

<sup>49</sup> Paul Julian Smith, Laws of Desire: Questions of Homosexuality in Spanish Writing and Film 1960-1990, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 203.

moves toward the masculine in, firstly, spatial terms – those of her attempts to exit the feminine enclosure of the house and enter the male domain of freedom –, and, secondly, in symbolic terms, – she moves from the feminine prison of her body to the gender transcendence of the soul. We signal also in advance the parodic terms of drag performance, and acknowledge that they, like those of gender inversion in Yerma, function within the dominant sexual and gender order. As such, we adopt throughout our discussion the traditional and conventional senses of feminine and masculine, and disavow any recognition on our part of the legitimacy of these gendered values.

Before Bernarda sets foot on stage, Poncia has painted an alarming image of her. Significantly, the first words from the servant that describe Bernarda in disturbing terms (“tirana” and “dominanta” I, p. 309) are more common, more expected, in their male form; the second of the two is in fact García Lorca’s neologistic variation of the adjective ‘dominante’. Even Derek Gagen is impressed by the excessive venom in Poncia’s outburst: “while it is normal for servants to insult their mistresses, it may seem less normal for ritual vituperation to reach such a pitch.”<sup>50</sup> Poncia’s fellow domestic is prompted to rejoinder “¡Qué mujer!” (I, p. 309). Of course, it is on a superficial level an exclamation short on meaning. But we are tempted to read it as a mark of surprise at Bernarda’s masculine authoritarianism. We are provided with a graphic account of Bernarda’s virulence as Poncia relates:

Es capaz de sentarse encima de tu corazón y ver cómo te mueres durante un año sin que se le cierre esa sonrisa fría que lleva en su maldita cara. (I, p. 310)

Allowing for the picturesque flow of the servant’s language, the scale of Bernarda’s cruelty exceeds all credibility. In Poncia’s image Bernarda, in a display of rather masculine dominance, literally sits on top of her victim, her face frozen into a cold, grotesque, smile of the hypocrite. The excess of Bernarda’s malice parallels what in El público is a discourse of such exaggerated,

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<sup>50</sup> Derek Gagen, “The Reality of La casa de Bernarda Alba”, p. 29.

masculinity, that the distinction between the sexes becomes ludicrously overstretched and impossible to sustain, as we recall from the exchange of the Figuras:

no soy nada más que eso, un hombre, *más hombre que Adán*, y quiero que seas *aún más hombre que yo*. *Tan hombre* que no haya ruido en las ramas cuando tú pases. (II, p. 90; my italics)

Bernarda's spite is generative in its turn and moments later we hear Poncia echoing Bernarda's nastiness, matching Bernarda's year long torture with one of her own:

Me encerraré con ella en un cuarto y le estaré escupiendo un año entero 'Bernarda, por esto, por aquello, por lo otro', hasta ponerla como un lagarto machacado por los niños, que es lo que es ella y toda su parentela. (I, p. 311)

To compound the picture of a mimetic relationship (we recall the centrality of mime to gender performance) between mistress (better 'master') and servant, we find Poncia describing herself as "buena perra" (I, p. 311), strongly resonant of the Novia in Bodas de sangre: "Yo dormiré a tus pies/para guardar lo que sueñas./ [...] /como si fuera una perra" (III, 1; p. 399). The relation of Poncia to Bernarda is that of a woman to a man, in the terms laid down by Martirio: "A ellos [los hombres] les importa [...] una perra sumisa que les dé de comer" (I, p. 329). The imitative faculties of La Poncia are reprised in her mimicry of the macho-sounding Tronchapinos, the former sacristan of the church where the funeral mass for Bernarda's husband is taking place. We hear her re-create the 'wolfish' holler that the old sacristan made as he sang an amen (I, p. 312). Poncia's observations of the churchmen are later qualified by Bernarda who pronounces: "Las mujeres en la iglesia no deben de mirar más hombre que al oficiante, y ése porque tiene faldas" (I, p. 316). Bernarda's depiction of the mass celebrants as men in skirts sheds new light on Poncia's imitation of the sacristan, Tronchapinos, who would also wear a cassock, for now we have (in a drag production, a man dressed as) a woman impersonating a man dressed like a woman. On the heels of the bellowed amen, Poncia shares a vulgar joke and a laugh with her junior, and it smacks of a deliberately unrefined, mannish swagger. The correspondence between Poncia and her 'master' Bernarda is underlined again when Bernarda leads the mourning party in prayers for the dead man; now Bernarda is in the position of service

celebrant, calling out a litany of petitions to which the gathered women respond (I, pp. 316-7). With Antonio María Benavides dead and gone, Bernarda steps into her husband's role, we observe her adopting the duties of the defunct husband with regard to the management of, what are now, her lands. We note that one of the women in the mourning party of the first act, addresses a question to Bernarda about the current tasks of work "¿Habéis empezado los trabajos en la era?" (I, p. 314). Later, Prudencia describes the toils of women like herself and Bernarda as "bregando como un hombre" (III, p. 381). Hence we see Bernarda's insistence on preserving every item of the dead man's clothing and belongings as an almost literal stepping into her husband's shoes (I, p. 327). Replacing her husband and taking responsibility for the patriarchal line of her father ("esta casa levantada por mi padre" II, p. 366), Bernarda's dominance of the household is presented as absolute and monolithic. Evinced no interest in any interior, thought-process, self-questioning or doubt, Bernarda operates an inflexible rule: "No pienso [...] Yo ordeno" (II, p. 366). Hence we view Bernarda in the briefest moment of hesitation remind herself of the (masculine) sense of duty she has inherited: "¡Tendré que sentarles la mano! Bernarda: ¡acuérdate que ésta es tu obligación!" (II, p. 366).

Bernarda's assumption of her husband's duties extends a masculine veneer to her overall demeanour. We have already noted the rather masculine violence of her reputation and Bernarda does indeed live up to her threatening image. Of course, Bernarda is almost synonymous with her "vara" or "bastón" that she carries everywhere with her: the carrying of this stick is not an aid to walking, but a clear symbol of masculine authority. For the interest she shows in the (outside) society of men, Angustias is beaten, with such a force and viciousness that Bernarda has to be restrained by Poncia (I, p. 323). In the second act, Bernarda assails Martirio, who, though her 'crime', to steal Pepe's portrait from her sister Angustias, was itself a spiteful jealousy, surely does not merit such an excessive, ferocious and vitriolic attack from Bernarda – "¡Mala puñalada te den, mosca muerta!" (I, p. 363). Let us be in no doubt about Bernarda's arrogation of masculine agency and her assumption of extreme, unfeminine violence, which of course she does ironically in order to compel a separation of the sexes.

Called “un lagarto machacado” by Poncia (I, p. 311) and “Vieja lagarta recocida” by one of the women mourners (I, p. 316), Bernarda is compared to a shrivelled or squashed lizard, interestingly both male and female, suggesting not only a reptilian cold-bloodedness but the female lizard’s practice of burying in the sand the eggs of her children. Like the lizard, Bernarda attempts to ‘bury’ her daughters in the womb of her house, perhaps never to see the light of day.

Bernarda’s travesty of the male reaches the point of imitating a misogynistic policing of women’s desire, most graphically realised in her vicious judgement on La Librada’s daughter: “¡Acabar con ella [...]! ¡Carbón ardiendo en el sitio de su pecado!” (II, p. 376). But Martirio shows a boldness in defying her mother, and in contrast to Magdalena who snivels for her dead father in the first act, Martirio masculinely expresses her insubordination: “No voy a llorar para darle gusto” (II, p. 364). But whether tears or any sign of (feminine) weakness would please Bernarda is unlikely. We recall her directive to Magdalena “(*Fuerte*) [...] Si quieres llorar te metes debajo de la cama” (I, p. 314), and one of her final injunctions at the end of the play “no quiero llantos” (III, p. 404). In case her daughters are in any doubt of her capabilities, she warns them, “¡No os hagáis ilusiones de que vais a poder conmigo!” (I, p. 338). Bernarda’s shadow, Poncia, makes clear to us that the power Bernarda invokes is a strength that overcomes masculine authority, as she declares referring to her husband Evaristo: “¡Yo pude con él!” (II, p. 347). Poncia claims to have beaten her husband so much, she left him “tuerto”. Poncia’s bravado with her deceased husband extends to an act of viciousness, killing his cherished finches with a pestle that blackly amuses her audience (II, p. 348). But if Poncia’s actions are a testament to an appropriated masculinised potency, then Bernarda, whom Poncia posits as “la más valiente” (II, p. 371), ultimately fails to convince. At the end of the drama, Bernarda’s masculine power is symbolically broken as Adela snaps her stick in two (III, p. 401). From Bernarda’s conversation with Prudencia, we are further alerted to the standards of masculinity in the drama: Prudencia speaks of her husband who because of a family dispute no longer uses

the conventional means of exiting his house but instead “pone una escalera y salta las tapias del corral”; Bernarda coos approvingly “Es un verdadero hombre” (III, p. 379).

All this less than feminine behaviour is set at odds with Bernarda’s proclamations on the difference between the sexes, which she spells out in clear, naturalised terms: “Hilo y aguja para las hembras. látigo y mula para el varón” (I, p. 320). According to her, the spatial and cultural locus of women is firmly immobilised in the gloomy, shadowy interior of the house, as Magdalena fears: “[...] estar sentada días y días dentro de esta sala oscura”, and Bernarda confirms: “Eso tiene ser mujer” (I, p. 320). In fact, Bernarda’s instruction, in the third act, to lock up the mares, and let the stallion run free around the corral, atomises her vision of the proper sexual order. Indeed, Bernarda, assisted by Poncia, is careful to police the division between and separation of the sexes while running hand in hand with her own sexually transgressive behaviour. Like the Director, Hombres 1 and 2, and their counterpart Caballos Blancos in *El público*, the problematising of their (masculine) gender does not prevent them from attempting to enact, to enforce, the conventional hierarchical role of the dominant male. Despite feminising transformations, the Caballo Blancos attempt to sexually possess Julieta: “queremos acostarnos [...] Con Julieta [...] Desnúdate, Julieta, y deja al aire tu grupa para el azote de nuestros colas” (III, p. 115). But, of course, Julieta, the Julieta played by a boy-actor, resists the advances of the Caballos and attempts to dominate them in turn: “ahora soy yo la que quiere acostarse con vosotros, pero yo mando, yo os monto, yo os corto las crines” (III, p. 115). In the style of *El público*’s transvestite Julieta, Bernarda’s verdict on the roles of women and men would be visibly unsettled in a parodic transvestite performance of the play.

But even in the text, Bernarda’s gender regime is challenged by her daughters, and then, in contradiction, by herself. “Prefiero llevar sacos al molino” (I, p. 320) asserts Magdalena; she, for one, would like to leave the designated feminine space of the house and take on a man’s work. Adela endorses her sister’s sentiment. As Poncia and the daughters listen to the song of the harvesters making their way through the village to the fields, Adela yearningly sighs: “Me

gustaría poder segar para ir y venir” (II, p. 357). Caught up in the fantasy of escape both Adela and Martirio reprise the song of the reapers (II, p. 358), melodically mimicking the masculine chorus. But blaming nature for their gendered captivity, Amelia complains: “Nacer mujer es el mayor castigo” (II, p. 356). With these desires to do men’s work, to go out the fields, to reap, and so on, Luis Fernández Cifuentes identifies in the daughters an attempt to find “una salida de carácter masculino.”<sup>51</sup> In the final count, Adela surpasses Bernarda’s masculine might. Unlike Prudencia’s husband, who as a man is encouraged to behave in all sorts of ways a woman would be castigated for, Adela’s is not a physical escape from the feminine enclosure of the house; she cannot escape the cultural binds of her feminine body. Instead Adela’s is a metaphysical flight from her material circumstances, through her tragic but martyr-like suicide. From the moment the emblem of her masculine authority is gone, we see Bernarda retreat behind her feminine exterior. We observe her feeble attempt to fire upon Pepe el Romano and hear her blame the poor shot on her womanly constitution, “Una mujer no sabe apuntar” (III, p. 402). All this is contrasted with Adela’s cumulative rise in potency. From her defiant declaration of intent in the first act, “Yo quiero salir!” (I, p. 335), to her assertions in her confrontation with Poncia in the second when she exclaims “ya soy más fuerte que tú” (II, p. 353). Adela’s power grows concurrently with her progression toward masculine egress, as she also pronounces to Poncia with an image of extra-human mobility: “No por encima de ti, que eres una criada: por encima de mi madre saltaría” (II, p. 352). Again, Adela links her developing strength with her sorties into the world beyond the house, a domain where her essential self resides as she tells Martirio: “He tenido fuerza para adelantarme [...] He salido a buscar lo que era mío” (III, p. 397). Adela can no longer contain her desire to leave the debilitating, feminine limits of the house: “Ya no aguanto el horror de estos techos” (III, p. 399). She will not end up like Martirio, whom she dismisses as “débil”. Instead, Adela’s capability takes on the symbolic dimensions of an exaggerated (super)male power: “A un

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<sup>51</sup> Luis Fernández Cifuentes, *García Lorca en el teatro*, p. 209.



caballo encabritado soy capaz de poner de rodillas con la fuerza de mi dedo meñique” (III, p. 400).

Adela’s imagined herculean strength equates her with Pepe el Romano, not as a lover but as a peer. We recall María Josefa’s depiction of Pepe as “un gigante, [...] él os va a devorar” (III, p. 396). The image reverberates from El público and the Figuras’ dialogue of hyperbolic masculinity, where too we find “un gigante”. But, in the words of the Figura de cascabeles, this giant male is inversely circumscribed by the most delicate, dainty, refined and feminine capability: “Un gigante, tan gigante, que puedo bordar una rosa en la uña de un niño recién nacido” (II, p. 93). Adela’s extravagant usurption of male power generates a corresponding diminution in the prominence and authority, a feminising, of the men of Bernarda’s village. Relating the tale of Paca la Roseta’s sexual escapade with men foreign to the village – “es la única mujer mala que tenemos en el pueblo” (I, p. 324) – the implication is that Paca’s consorting with men marks her as a bad, in the sense ‘defective’ as well as ‘immoral’, woman. Poncia reminds us that: “Los hombres de aquí no son capaces de eso” (I, p. 324). We recollect María Josefa’s verdict: “aquí los hombres huyen de las mujeres” (I, p. 338). Adjudicating on Poncia’s scandalous news, Bernarda qualifies her servant’s comment on the village’s men: “pero les gusta verlo, comentarlo y se chupan los dedos de que esto ocurra” (I, p. 324). It is with sardonic laughter that we note Poncia and Bernarda’s parody of the gossiping village men of the mourning party. Their tittle-tattle mimics that of the men, except that while they talk about these sexual exploits of others, and ‘lick their fingers’ over the juiciness of the scandal of men, they do not leave the house to witness the events. Poncia and Bernarda’s parodic mimicry of the men is an empty and impotent charade.

It is pertinent to remind ourselves that in this “drama de mujeres”, no male character ever appears. They and their world are frequently referred to, but they never enter the house (what we see of the house on stage), and are never visible. We recall in particular that the men of the mourning party are pointedly forbidden from entering the inner all-female sanctum of

Bernarda's domain: "Que salgan por donde han entrado. No quiero que pasen por aquí" (I, p. 315). The world of men is the realm of the invisible, the shadowy and the imaginary. We note especially the elusive Pepe el Romano, about whom Bernarda reminds the gathered mourners, "A Pepe no lo ha visto ni ella ni yo" (I, p. 315). Indeed, Pepe never appears in the drama despite his apparent significance to the women of the Alba household. We are left with only phantasmic traces of his presence at the nocturnal visits to Angustias (and illicit trysts with Adela), as Amelia reports: "Lo sentí toser y oí los pasos de su jaca" (II, p. 344). Angustias confirms the vision of Pepe as indistinct and spectral: "miro a Pepe con mucha fijeza y se me borra a través de los hierros, como si lo tapara una nube de polvo" (III, p. 386). Bernarda's reply to Angustias, "[e]so son cosas de debilidad" is ambiguous as to whether it refers to her womanish faintness and inexperience on finding herself alone with a man, or to Pepe's dimness and faint outline. In fact, the only clear image of Pepe to feature in the play is Angustias's portrait of him, which Martirio steals and hides from her. The portrait we the audience never see and it falls into Amelia's re-imagining of the image as "un Bartolomé de plata" (II, p. 361). It is appropriate that Pepe's likeness should be compared to a religious icon, for indeed his presence in the play is no more real than the spiritual being of a saint. The adjectival "de plata" connects Pepe with other metaphysical beings from García Lorca's dramas, including Gabriel from *Cristo*, Mariana Pineda, and the Luna of *Bodas de sangre*. It also 'freezes' Pepe as the cold, metallic-framed portrait of a heavenly creature, like the unearthly figure of the gypsy girl "con ojos de fría plata" in "Romance sonámbulo". Indeed, while the gypsy girl is held in "un carámbano de luna", Pepe we are told likes to "andar con la luna" (II, p. 361).

For Martirio, the strange and frightening world of men is something that, following her mother, she prefers to remain separate from: "Es preferible no ver a un hombre nunca" (I, p. 328). Adela equates Pepe with a great beast, a lion – "¡Ahí fuera está, respirando como si fuera un león!" (I, p. 401) – like the giant who María Josefa says will eat them all up, but this also revisits Magdalena's memory, from when she was small, of her grandmother's embroidery, which had images like that of "el negro luchando con el *león*" (I, p. 329; my italic). These are images of

fantastical and improbable domains, echoing the “*paisajes inverosímiles de ninfas, o reyes de leyenda*” (I, p. 308) we are told decorate the otherwise austere walls of the house. It is as if they are windows, in a house where the windows will be boarded up, onto another world, the imagined world of men. When Adela begins to imagine the potential of Pepe, “ese hombre es capaz de...”, Magdalena quickly concludes that a man has no limits, is beyond their more physical, less able sphere: “Es capaz de todo” (I, p. 334). The Criada warns of the potency and symbolic force the (imagined) man is assigned in an all-female environment: “[Bernarda] no sabe la fuerza que tiene un hombre entre mujeres solas” (III, p. 392). It seems more and more unlikely that we can concur with Poncia’s minimal and artless rationalisation: “Un hombre es un hombre” (III, p. 392). Instead, we must ascribe to Pepe the values that the male has accumulated in the expressive subtext of the drama: a sense of what is beyond the walls of the house, unbounded, invisible, fanciful, hyperbolic, or rather hyperreal. In short, the realm of the male in La casa de Bernarda Alba is the domain of the metaphysical, represented in relation to human existence as the soul.

Adela’s attempts to traverse the walls that delimit her life indoors are a transgressive move from the feminine to the masculine, from what is outlined as the body to the figure of the soul. In this light we read her relationship to, rather than with, Pepe. It is, in a reversal of the symbolic terms of Perlimplín and Belisa, an embrace of the soul by the body. What Pepe represents to Adela is a life-constituting interiority, metaphorically, blood in her veins. Hence, Adela’s confession to Poncia: “Mirando sus ojos me parece que bebo su sangre lentamente” (II, p. 353). And now we comprehend, when Adela tries to embrace her, Martirio’s denial of a blood-sister, a sister who no longer belongs in the bounded, material world Martirio cannot leave: “Mi sangre ya no es la tuya, y aunque quisiera verte como hermana, no te miro ya más que como mujer” (III, p. 399). The latter assertion on Martirio’s part, that her sister is now but a woman, is amplified by Adela in her climactic revelation that she is Pepe’s lover, “Yo soy su mujer” (III, p. 401), uniting herself with him. Adela has taken from Pepe, his essential self, that is, his identity. This forces Pepe into the approach Martirio describes: “Ese hombre sin alma vino por otra” (III, p. 398).

But we have to ask does this “otra” refer to ‘otra mujer’ (Angustias) as it first appears, or could it also denote ‘otra alma’? For if Adela has drunk in all his blood, where does this leave the invisible, phantasmic Pepe? Such identity crises based on knowledge of the gendered self is nothing new in the poet’s work, as we have seen. In particular, we think of Yerma’s searching for an impossible, ghostly ‘child’, and how her quest to have this symbolic child inside her, in her blood, disrupts her sense of gender. We also recollect Perlimplín’s sacrifice of self, which like Christ’s ultimate sacrifice gives Belisa new life. In the same manner Adela, reinvents her as a woman, investing in her an eternal, transcendent life: “Belisa, ya eres otra mujer ... Estás vestida por la sangre gloriosísima de mi señor” (IV, p. 288). This transforming gift of interior life is recognised by Pedro when he tells Mariana Pineda: “Toda mi sangre es nueva, porque tú me la has dado” (II, 5; p. 148). Relatedly, we note the curious plea from the *Desnudo rojo* (the Christ-figure in *El público*) to know the measure of his sacrifice: “¿Cuántos vasos de sangre me habéis sacado?” (V, p. 130). The *Desnudo* is right to be concerned, the demand on the martyr’s sacrifice is great, for there are many who crave what he has, as *Caballo 1’s* “*Ansia de la sangre*” (III, 113) suggests. All of these instances add up to multiple cases of soul-giving, blood transfusions, or *bodas de sangre*.

### *6.6 Shadows on the walls of the house of Alba*

Antonio Ramos Espejo’s research describes the environs of García Lorca’s childhood home in Valderrubio (then Asquerosa). He highlights an adjacent house where a certain family, a twice-married woman called Frasquita Alba, her five daughters and two sons, lived. Ramos Espejo also supplies evidence of individuals from ‘real’ life whose names, and sometimes circumstances, bear some correspondence to the stage figures in the poet’s play. Among them, we find an Adela (Delgado García), a second cousin of García Lorca; a José (or Pepico) Benavides, from the village of Roma; and a servant, Dolores, known in her village as La

Colorina.<sup>52</sup> All this is very useful in supporting a realist reading of the play, and there is no advantage to be gained in denying the play's sources. In arguing for an experimental production of the drama, with all the parts played by male actors, it is not our purpose to elide any inspiration the poet drew from his own experience. On the contrary, we wish to stress that García Lorca's experiences are wider ranging than the social, political or cultural; they extend to a motivating philosophical vision of the world which generated an opus of depth, scope, elasticity and innovation that endures. Therefore, we argue for the potential of non-conventional interpretation of his work to be continually explored. Our intention stated, we go on with the following supposition of our own, drawing on the material circumstances of the poet's life. In Valderrubio, the family Alba and the family of García Lorca's cousins the Delgado Garcías shared a water source in the nearby well. We do know that Federico frequently visited his cousins' house, and we ask ourselves how much did García Lorca see of the lives of Frasquita's daughters as they came and went to fetch water, or appeared at their next-door patio? Perhaps the poet came to know these women very well, or perhaps they stayed as shadowy figures, flitting here and there; lives half-known, half-conjectured. Whichever is the case, the house of Bernarda Alba is haunted by shadows that hang on the walls. Firstly, we are conscious of the phantom figure of Pepe, then the departed Antonio María Benavides and Evaristo, and the absences left by the men who come as mourners and never materialise on stage. Even more intangible, but nonetheless almost palpable, are the spectres of the impossible desires of Bernarda's daughters which, as Adela demonstrates, are ultimately unrealisable in the material confines of the house. And, in case we need more visible reminding, the poet creates the shadow spectacle of Bernarda and her daughters clad entirely in mourning black, passing by brilliantly white-washed walls. One of the most enduring images from La casa de Bernarda Alba is the entrance of the two hundred-strong group of women mourners dressed in black, their heads covered with black scarves and carrying black fans, two at a time, until they fill a white-washed scene (I, pp. 313-4). The effect cannot conceivably be judged naturalistic, the

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<sup>52</sup> See Antonio Ramos Espejo, García Lorca en los dramas del pueblo, (Seville: Centro Andaluz del Libro, 1998), pp. 91-114.

practical, near impossibility of staging such a scene any stage director would attest to. Rather the impact is both heavily symbolic, the women representing all those of “los pueblos de España”, and one of Camp exaggeration – the excess of such a theatrical, intense intervention, advocates a non-realistic *mise-en-scène*.

What follows is a survey of the defining features of the character composition of the principal players. As with the other texts we have examined the configuration of these characters centred on two opposing ideas. As with the plays in the previous chapters, again we argue for an attempt to transcend the physical and the material into the realm of the spiritual and metaphysical. In La casa de Bernarda Alba, material existence is presented as a pretence, a world of the superficial, artifice and deception, represented by Bernarda’s obsession with decency, honour and conserving the public *fachada* of her household. What’s more, the house is designated as a feminine enclosure, defining the lives and limits of the Alba women. Bernarda’s *fachada* shares common ground with the Masks and “el teatro del aire libre” of El público; with the superficial and selfish desires of Belisa; with the empty love Juan offers to Yerma, and the code of honour that circumscribes the possibilities open to her as a woman; and with Cristo and Mariana Pineda, this drama photographically is an enhancement of their *estampas*, religious and secular, revealing them as images devoid of the depth and truth of Mariana and Jesús’s Love. As an opposing force to the *fachada*, we discern the desires of Bernarda’s daughters to leave the confinement of the house and to join the world reserved for men – a world of freedoms without bounds. Moreover, the world of men, men who never appear in Bernarda’s domain, is presented in the drama as the immaterial and metaphysical world, a realm of the spirit – a nonphysical existence of true meaning and depth. We hope to demonstrate that this opposition in the drama is promoted on the side of the material *fachada* by Bernarda and her servant Poncia. Resisting Bernarda and Poncia’s attempts to maintain the public façade are her daughters, whose desire for men, or rather the elusive world of men outside the house, causes the tension that forges the drama. The daughters’ resistance is insubstantial or shadowy, all of them in their own, perhaps unwitting, way act to support Bernarda’s supervision of the *fachada*’s integrity. That is with the

exception of Adela. Prefigured by her grandmother, María Josefa, Adela is the only one who offers a profound challenge to the walls of the house of Bernarda's will. Ultimately her attempt to escape from the feminine imprisonment of Bernarda's house cannot be realised in any physical sense. So like Mariana Pineda and Jesús, Adela crosses the boundary of death into a metaphysical realm of transcendence. The tension between Bernarda's *fachada* and Adela's transgression is brought into relief when we apply the semiotic indices of Camp discourse. This is not necessarily a proposal for a reading of La casa de Bernarda Alba as a (camp) farce, in the sense of a comedic or slapstick interpretation, given that this drama is ultimately the tragedy of the predicament of the Alba women. Instead, we intend to mobilise the precepts of Camp: the exaggerated, the theatrical (the heightened), and the superficial, to better comprehend the nature of Bernarda's *fachada*. There is also the related Camp interrogative tactic of gender inversion, typified by drag performance. While we leave the staging of a drag production of La casa de Bernarda Alba to directors and theatre practitioners, we argue in our reading of the poet's composition for an application of the Camp maxim: the lie that tells the truth. Just as Butler contends that the 'lie' of drag reveals the 'truth' of "the imitative structure of gender", so we propose that the 'lie' of Bernarda's masculine masquerade of dominance compels Adela to seek the 'truth' of masculine freedom and rise above her confinement. Above all, we have the phenomenon of the shadow world generated by the tension between the physical, surface existence within the walls of the house which Bernarda struggles to conserve, and the spiritual depth promised by the world beyond that Adela attempts to reach.

### **6.6.1 Bernarda and La Poncia**

For Virginia Higginbotham, Bernarda is mono-dimensional, and has no viability as a person of flesh and blood. Instead, her Bernarda is a "monigote", in the style of Perlimplín: "the villain of a puppet farce, whose body jerks into stiff but automatic poses."<sup>53</sup> As the choice of Perlimplín's name carried with it the connotations of its origin in a, possibly French, word of magic spells,

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<sup>53</sup> Virginia Higginbotham, The Comic Spirit of Federico García Lorca, p. 118.

so the name of Bernarda bears a symbolic weight. Both Ronald Cueto and Patricia McDermott have suggested that the name may have been inspired by the common Spanish usage of *bernarda* to mean a nun of the order of St Bernard of Clairvaux.<sup>54</sup> The image of the Bernardine nun with her white cassock and black cowl resonates with dark shadow on white walls proposed above. We also recall Poncia's irritation in being consigned to the 'cloisters' of the Alba house: "Ya me ha tocado en suerte este convento" (II, p. 355). Poncia reminds us again of the women-only environment: "Son mujeres sin hombre, nada más" (III, p. 393). If the connection with the Bernardine order of nuns stands up, we can add the connotations of the surname Alba, which certainly carries with it the idea of whiteness, purity, and more specifically, is the name of the white vestment worn by priests and other celebrants of Catholic ceremonies. The alb reminds us of Bernarda's belief that a 'man in skirts' (in church) is the only man that it is decent to behold. The white, clerical garment is typically worn over the priest's ordinary garb, and is therefore a form of concealing costume. Regarding the assigning of the house to Bernarda Alba in the title of the drama, Luis Fernández Cifuentes views Bernarda as a new "eslabón de una cadena masculina". He cites the geneology claimed by Bernarda: "casa de mi padre", "casa de mi abuelo" (I, p. 320), and we add "esta casa levantada por mi padre" (II, p. 366).<sup>55</sup> Bernarda's first appearance on stage, amid the vivid spectacle of the entrance of the two hundred women in mourning black dress (in contrast to the alb), announces her character as authoritarian, absolute, univocal, and above all negative, in her singular command "¡Silencio!" (I, p. 314). Luis Fernández Cifuentes has carefully documented the destructively negative language in the text which he contends qualifies Bernarda's authority as "del exterminio".<sup>56</sup> Indeed, the malice of Bernarda's gossip about the aunt of the Muchacha, who naively answers Bernarda back, is commented on in the most inhuman terms by other women in the mourner party: "¡[...] más que mala!", and "¡[!]engua de cuchillo!" (I, p.316). From this point, Bernarda officiates at a

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<sup>54</sup> See Ronald Cueto, "On the Queerness Rampant..." and Patricia McDermott, "Death as a way of life: Lorca's dramatic subversion of orthodoxy", in *Leeds Papers on Hispanic Drama*, ed. Margaret A. Rees, (Leeds: Trinity and All Saints College), 1991.

<sup>55</sup> Luis Fernández Cifuentes, *García Lorca en el teatro*, p. 207.

<sup>56</sup> Luis Fernández Cifuentes, *García Lorca en el teatro*, p. 195.



sanctimonious and showy litany of prayers for the deceased husband. Elsewhere in the house, but off stage, the male mourners are gathered. Hitherto treated to no more than a glass of lemonade on Bernarda's instructions, when Poncia informs her that the men have left a donation of money, Bernarda, in a display of effortless superficiality directs that the men be allowed a small glass of *aguardiente* (I, p. 318). With the exit of the mourning party, Bernarda's vitriol continues, in the nastiest terms: the women who have come to pay their respects represent for her 'poisonous tongues', richly ironic, and a sullyng "manada de cabras", ruining the perfect aspect of her recently burnished floor and filling the house with the less than sweet odour of "el sudor de sus refajos" (I, p. 319); Bernarda's distaste for feminine smells emphasises her adoption of a masculinist and misogynistic attitude.

It is from this concern with the polluting, contaminating effects of those who come from outside her house that we begin to note Bernarda's central preoccupation with the *fachada*, the preservation of an integral and impermeable surface veneer of physical and moral purity and an antiseptic absolute. Bernarda leaves her daughters and us in no doubt as to her intention: the house is to be sealed, presenting an intact surface to the outside world "Haceros cuenta que hemos tapiado con ladrillos puertas y ventanas" (I, p. 320). Following her disparaging remarks about the women mourners, Bernarda notices that Angustias is not present. Spitefully Adela tells on her sister reporting that Angustias had been hovering around the front door where a group of men mourners were standing. Bernarda summons Angustias and confronts her: "¿Es *decente* que una mujer *de tu clase* vaya con el anzuelo detrás de un hombre el día de la misa de su padre?" (I, p. 323, my italics). Bernarda's veneer of virtue and authority is inextricably linked to her snobbish sense of class superiority. The discourse of decency continues as Bernarda complains to Poncia of her moral responsibilities: "¿Cuánto hay que sufrir y luchar para hacer que las personas sean decentes y no tiren al monte demasiado!" (I, p. 325). Significantly, her 'struggle' incorporates a need to restrain those under her from egressing (*tirar al monte*). And when Poncia tries to persuade Bernarda that these transgressive desires could be given a safe outlet by say, allowing Angustias (or the other daughters) to marry, Bernarda

baulks, reminding Poncia that as far as she is concerned “Los hombres de aquí no son de su clase” (I, p. 326). Lest Poncia, with such suggestions, forget the class hierarchy upheld by Bernarda, the terms of her relationship to Bernarda are brutally restated: “Me sirves y te pago” (I, p. 326).<sup>57</sup> Always Bernarda underlines her motivation to preserve the integrity of the outward façade: “Aunque fuera por decencia, por respeto” (I, p. 336). By the end of the second act, Bernarda’s fixation on the maintenance of public propriety sees her brutal condemnation of La Librada’s daughter, which of course bears ominous overtones for the fate of Adela: “que pague la que pisotea su decencia” (II, p. 75).

The parameters of purity and the integrity of the surface are established by Bernarda’s mimetic reflection, Poncia, at the earliest point in the drama, before Bernarda’s arrival. In Bernarda’s stead, Poncia issues the sterilising directives: “Limpia bien todo” (I, p. 309); “¡Limpia, limpia ese vidriado!” (I, p. 310); “Este cristal tiene unas motas” (I, p. 311). Such zeal is necessary, for, according to Poncia’s recital, Bernarda sees herself in the most exaggerated, immaculate terms: “ella, la más aseada, ella, la más decente, ella, la más alta” (I, p. 310). Indeed, Bernarda’s second utterance following her proclamation of “¡Silencio!” is to chastise the Criada: “Debías haber procurado que todo esto estuviera más limpio para recibir el duelo” (I, p. 314). A further and interestingly perverse indication of Bernarda’s obsession with the *fachada* can be seen at the end of the first act, when Bernarda scrubs “*violentemente*” the make-up from Angustias’s face (I, p. 337). Though it seems Bernarda is removing a ‘mask’ or *fachada* from Angustias, we might rather read it as Bernarda prohibiting any indication of interest in men and the world outside that they represent.

The significance of the façade for Bernarda is elucidated in the opening scene of the final act. A friend of Bernarda’s, the pointedly-named Prudencia, is paying a visit at the time of the family’s evening meal. Revealingly, Prudencia is sitting apart from the table, and, quite literally, the

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<sup>57</sup> Such clipped, totalising language represents another facet of Bernarda’s obsession with maintaining the absolute, impermeable façade of her house.

interpretation must be that prudence, or judiciousness, is alien to the house of Alba. Bernarda and Prudencia's discussion of 'proper' behaviour is interrupted, off stage, by a terrific banging noise against the walls. Bernarda explains that it is the stallion they have hitched up in the stable, kicking against the wall; she adds in a whisper "debe tener calor" (III, p. 381). The frustrated sexual impulses of the horse violently shatters the refined, self-righteous tone of the women's conversation. Symbolically, the walls of Bernarda's house, the surfaces of her *fachada*, are being threatened from within, not only by the horse, but as we know by the truncated desires of her daughters – the horse is possibly responding to the odour of sexual activity of Adela and Pepe in the stable. It is at this point of critical mass when Bernarda articulates her philosophy: "Yo no me meto en los corazones, pero quiero buena fachada y armonía familiar" (III, p. 384). Nowhere does Bernarda's principle become more apparent in its chilling, life-negating capacity, than at the end of the drama. Bernarda closes the play with a sentiment that encapsulates her singular and narcissistic concern for outward form. Faced with her daughter's suicide what matters above all to Bernarda is the preservation of the integrity of the *fachada*, and the intactness of her daughter's, and therefore her house's, honour: "¡Mi hija ha muerto virgen! [...] ¡Nadie dirá nada! Ella, la hija menor de Bernarda Alba, ha muerto virgen" (III, p. 404). It is a breathtaking instance of the superficial that allows Bernarda to issue her desperate injunction. The most immediate concern is to cover the truth and restore the lie of outward appearance, as we hear in her plainly revisionist order: "Llevadla a su cuarto y *vestirla como si fuera* doncella" (III, p. 403; my italic). For Bernarda has promised Poncia "[s]i pasara algún día [*la cosa muy grande* that Poncia warns of], *estáte segura que no traspasaría las paredes*" (II, p. 369). The confines of Bernarda's *fachada* are impermeable.

As we have noted Bernarda begins and ends her time on stage by issuing commands. A defining moment arrives when Angustias's portrait of Pepe has gone missing, and, in the midst of a tumult raised by the squabbling daughters, Bernarda enters. Immediately, she orders a search of the daughters' rooms, in terms that echo a police raid: "Registra los cuartos, mira por las camas" (II, p. 362), another telling masculine touch. In the Alba house, no space is to be

allowed for private, introverted desires, – and hence the invasion of her daughters’ most intimate space of their beds –, everyone’s lives must be exposed and a veneer of superficiality be maintained. Bernarda’s domination of the lives of those who live under her roof is an echo of the management or direction of Perlimplín, the puppet-like old man who is supervised, first, by his servant Marcolfa, and then by his young wife Belisa. In this sense, Bernarda serves as the all-seeing, omnipotent, but despotic, puppet-master who the young García Lorca compared with God, or rather the Old Testament God the Father, in his juvenile works Dios, el Mal y el Hombre and Jehová.<sup>58</sup> This vision of Bernarda is supported in the political and utilitarian counsels of the shrewd Poncia. In the second act, she points out to Adela in cold, matter-of-fact terms that Angustias has no future, her marriage to Pepe will not last long, and that all Adela need do is wait and she can have him when Angustias has succumbed to the dangerous business of childbirth (II, p. 351). Her advice is as pragmatic as that of Pilate to Christ: abandon your pursuit of (ideal) Love, compromise, take the rational option. Significantly, Poncia justifies her advice to Adela telling her, “no vayas contra la ley de Dios” (II, p. 352). We recall Jesús in Cristo, his admonition of the pharisee Daniel, and pronouncement that “[n]o hay más ley que el Amor”, and so, as Jesús commands, Adela resists Poncia’s coercion, having already ‘drunk’ in Pepe’s soul-giving blood. It is pertinent to recollect Poncia’s report of what happened to La Librada’s daughter. Her crime of infanticide is exposed supposedly when dogs find the body of the dead child and leave it on her doorstep. Poncia insists that these ‘dogs’ were guided to the young woman’s door “por la mano de Dios” (II, p. 375). If this is the case then it is the same vengeful God of judgement concerned with upholding the moral order and punishing those wayward women who have enjoyed illicit relations with men. We note that as Pilate sustained the law of the pharisees, the *thora*, so Poncia promotes the restrictive, moral façade of a vengeful Bernarda: the same order that Javier Herrero sees as the Law of God the Father, the

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<sup>58</sup> The stage direction that opens the fragment of Dios, el Mal y el Hombre, depicts humanity as the discarded playthings of God: “A diestra de Dios hay un armario que encierra un[a] reproducción de un hombre hecho de barro, y en las diversas tablas del estante, miniaturas de tipos con todas las características de las razas pasadas y presentes”. In Jehová, the subjects of God’s heavenly realm “[s]on de cartón, con los ojos iluminados por detrás; se mueven por hilitos que manejan personas invisibles”. In Federico García Lorca, Teatro inédito de juventud, p.107 & p. 332.

(Old Testament) God of judgment.<sup>59</sup> Of course, here Adela represents the type of protagonist consistently presented by García Lorca throughout his theatre work: the figure persecuted and punished by the world for following the law of Love, as laid down by the poet through his Jesús in Cristo, in opposition to those who hypocritically or misguidedly adhere to the letter of God (the Father)'s Law promoted by the Church.

Bernarda's position in this schematic, as an authoritarian God of retribution, is reinforced by the discourse in the text that casts her as an all-seeing eye. The first references to Bernarda in the play speak fearfully of the terrible consequences of Bernarda seeing something she does not approve of – “¡Si te viera Bernarda!” (I, p. 308) – and of her obsession with outward appearances: “Si Bernarda no ve relucientes las cosas [...]” (I, p. 309). In fact, Bernarda has kept her house so clean of outside contamination that since her father's death (and she became owner of the house) we are told that no-one has set foot in it because of what they might bring and what they might see: “Ella no quiere que la vean en su dominio” (I, p. 310). Bernarda's fear of what the neighbours might see, if they were able to see beyond the façade, extends to her callous remark about María Josefa. The grandmother is to be kept away from the house's well, not, as the Criada thinks, for fear that she might fall in, but out of concern that the embarrassing old woman would be spotted by the neighbours: “desde aquel sitio las vecinas pueden verla desde su ventana” (I, p. 322). Bernarda's measure to present an immaculate face may be of no use, given Poncia's assertion that “las viejas vemos a través de las paredes” (II, p. 351). But this must relate more to Bernarda's powers of constant and incessant vigilance over her *fachada*, as she makes her function clear to Poncia and her daughters: “Nací para tener los ojos abiertos. Ahora vigilaré sin cerrarlos ya hasta que me muera” (II, p. 373).

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<sup>59</sup> See Javier Herrero, “The Father against the Son: Lorca's Christian Vision”, Essays on Hispanic Themes in Honour of Edward C. Riley, eds. Jennifer Lowe/Philip Swanson, (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1989), pp. 170-199.

La Poncia gives the impression, among many such false ones, that she occupies the middle ground between Bernarda and her daughters, neither on one side or another. But ultimately Poncia acts in support of Bernarda's *fachada* of 'decency'. In keeping with a christological resonance we shall explore with María Josefa, and Adela's identification with the figure of Christ, we observe that Poncia's name, as Ronald Cueto accurately states, is a feminised version of Poncio or Pontius (Pilate).<sup>60</sup> The ideal candidate for shirking responsibility and not declaring sides, while meddling behind the scenes and hiding in the shadow of Bernarda, Poncia is well aware that, at the end of the day, she is a paid servant of Caesar. Although she gives the impression that her loyalty is to no-one but herself, and, despite the rancour she bears toward Bernarda, Poncia replicates Bernarda's concern with the *fachada*, "quiero vivir en casa decente" (II, p.352) and is an able agent of Bernarda's dirty work: carrying tales, snooping and spying. Her spleen against Bernarda is vented only in private, as she does in the opening scene with the Criada, while, of course, to Bernarda's face she ingratiates herself, flatters herself that Bernarda considers her a trusted friend and confidante: "Tenemos o no tenemos confianza" (I, p. 326). We have above laid out the case for Poncia to be viewed as a reproduction of Bernarda, in a number of ways, especially in her maintenance and policing of the *fachada*. We note the poet's direction to the actor playing Poncia that every utterance comes "*siempre con crueldad*" (II, p. 368). Further corroboration of the cruelties she shares with Bernarda comes from Poncia's own assertion to Magdalena: "Yo tengo la escuela de tu madre" (II, p. 348). Furthermore, Poncia's deliberate cruelty in killing her husband's pet finches mimics Bernarda's brutality with her daughters. Just as Evaristo clearly loved his birds, so we might imagine Antonio loved his daughters. On the other hand, Bernarda, as we have seen, has no difficulty with physically beating her daughters. In the end it is Poncia who tries to warn Bernarda that her belief in the power that the unmoving, integral *fachada* has to preserve the house from change or upset is a false hope. While Bernarda clings on to her conviction in the façade's immovable, static protection, "[a]quí no pasa nada" (II, p. 369), the protection of the Mask,

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<sup>60</sup> Ronald Cueto, "On the Queerness Rampant...", p. 32.

Poncia realises that the *fachada* can only offer an outward show; it is impossible for their regime of the façade to control her daughter's inner desires: "No pasa nada fuera [...] Pero ni tú ni nadie puede vigilar por el interior de los pechos" (III, p. 390).

### 6.6.2 Angustias, Amelia, Martirio, Magdalena

After the initial scene of sewing and embroidery in the second act, a vendor delivers some lace to the Alba house. Babies' lace bonnets are mentioned and the conversation between Poncia and the daughters turns briefly to having children. Amelia's comments are notable, not only for the 'unfeminine' disinclination she expresses at the thought of being burdened with children, but for the depiction she makes of those women neighbours who do have children, whom she views as: "sacrificadas por cuatro monigotes" (II, p. 355). Amelia's pejorative portrayal of the neighbours' "cuatro monigotes" is an apt description of herself and her three sisters, excluding Adela. Like the initial image of Perlimplín and following in their mother's mono-dimensionality, the sisters never manage to assert themselves in an independent or substantial way as distinct identities. Their grandmother dismisses the sisters as "granos de trigo" and "ranas sin lenguas" (III, p. 396). We recall the Prestidigitador's warning to the Director in El público that the charade of the "teatro al aire libre" will result in a such a dissolution of human identity that individuals will lose all sense of distinct self: "el hombre te parecerá una brizna de hierba" (VI, p. 151). For María Josefa, Bernarda and at least two of her daughters (two of the four *monigotes*) appear, not as people of flesh and blood, of depth and dimension, but rather she sees them as Masks, as the faces they wear – faces of cruelty and pain – hence: "Bernarda, cara de leoparda [...] Magdalena, cara de hiena [...] Martirio: cara de martirio" (III, pp. 394-5). The character of María Josefa is strongly connected to the figure of the Pastor Bobo in El público. Both make a strategic intervention (several, at least vocal ones, in María Josefa's case) into their respective dramas, bringing to bear the perspective of the mad Fool, who none the less speaks the truth of the matter. Both use the form of a childish ditty to make their point: María Josefa sings her little rhyme about the faces, or Masks, of her daughter and granddaughters,

addressing the sheep she carries in her arms; the Pastor Bobo is accompanied by a large display case full of “*Caretas blancas de diversas expresiones*” which bleat like sheep (pp. 144-5), and intones a short doggerel around the word and idea of *careta*. We might recall Magdalena’s caricaturing of Amelia and Martirio as “las dos, siempre cabeza con cabeza como dos ovejitas” (I, p. 331).

Certainly, the four *monigotes* have all the shallowness of Masks and lack any true, essential identity. Without spiritual depth, the four sisters are best characterised by their evident physical properties, and not in terms of distinct personality. Angustias is considered weak and sickly by the others, with Magdalena distinguishing her as “enfermiza” (I, p. 332). The pitiless Magdalena depicts Angustias memorably and mercilessly as “un palo vestido” and “una mujer que, como su padre, habla con la nariz” (I, p. 332). Significantly, Angustias is described as “la más oscura de esta casa” (I, p. 332), and with all the women dressed in mourning black, it seems Angustias casts the darkest, perhaps oldest, shadow. We know that the torment suggested by Martirio’s name is a physical suffering: Amelia asks if she has taken her medicine and makes reference to her having seen a new doctor (I, p. 327); meanwhile, Adela refers to Martirio’s obvious physical deformity “la joroba” (II, p. 350). Indeed the sisters, including Adela, are scorned by Poncia as Bernarda’s “cinco hijas feas” (I, p. 311). This unattractiveness is admitted by Martirio, at least, who is resigned to the belief that “Dios me ha hecho débil y fea” (I, p. 329). The unfortunate Martirio is condemned by Bernarda’s lackey Poncia in the strongest terms as “un pozo de veneno” (III, p. 393), reminding us of the noxious curse of the village, wells that serve as the only sources of water “en este maldito pueblo sin río” (I, p. 319). Martirio has perhaps become a fount of poison because she, within the walls of the Alba house, like the water in the village wells, has no outlet and shares with the New York cycle’s “Niña ahogada en el pozo” the stagnant “agua que no desemboca”.

Equally and disastrously enamoured with Pepe, the unhappy Angustias is neither valued nor recognised “como mujer”, but instead is viewed only in terms of the financial bounty left to her



by her father, Bernarda's first husband, and augmented by her step-father (I, p. 322). At least, Angustias has some substantial material attraction, while her sisters, as Poncia points out, are left with much showy finery, the superficial trappings of material comfort, "mucha puntilla bordada, muchas camisas de hilo", but "pan y uvas" for their maintenance (I, p. 311). It cannot be said, however, that these sisters have no desires beyond the physical. Leaving aside Adela again for the moment, the four *monigotes* demonstrate, on one level an interest in the world (of men) outside: Angustias's curiosity for the departing group of male mourners (I, pp. 322-3); the four sisters join Adela in attentiveness for the passing band of reapers, with Magdalena accompanying Adela to try to catch sight of them as they pass by (II, pp. 356-9). But, elsewhere, this interest is dampened by doubts over the unpleasant reality of the life of a woman who does become involved with a man, as we note from the sisters' discussion of Adelaida (AMELIA: "Ya no se sabe una si es mayor tener novio o no", MARTIRIO: "Es lo mismo", I, p. 327), and the aforementioned belittling of those young women neighbours who have husband and children (II, p. 355). The desire is there in each of the sisters, but in the final count it will only be Adela who will pursue this desire to her tragic end. For Angustias, the desire she feels in Pepe's presence makes her aware of an interior self, a heart of being, that wants release, but cannot manage any expression in the end: "*Casi me salía el corazón por la boca*" (II, p. 346; my italic). Likewise, we are made aware that Martirio's poisoned, misshapen body is, significantly, the object of sensuous pleasure for her, revealing an inner desire that seeks outlet: hence we observe her gratification in luxurious undergarments, "me encanta la ropa interior" (II, p. 354), and the intimate hiding place she has for Pepe's portrait, "entre las sábanas de la cama" (II, p. 363). But we also note that Martirio appears dressed similarly to Bernarda in the final act, in her underclothes covered with a black shawl (III, p. 395 & p. 400) – her sensuality ultimately remains masked. Finally, Martirio's desire is in direct competition with Adela's over Pepe. Coming out of the 'shadows', "con la cabeza fuera de los embozos", Martirio warns that her pent-up self is about to explode her pomegranate red inside out: "que el pecho se me rompa como una granada de amargura. ¡Lo quiero!" (III, p. 398).

However, the desire harboured in the interiors of the four *monigotes* should not be confused with Adela's search for something beyond the physical. While Adela looks for meaning in the signs of the skies above (the "estrellas como puños", the apparition of the double-sized white stallion that fills the sky, and the shooting stars and lightning flashes with which the Saint Barbara verse is associated, III, pp. 387-8), Amelia refuses to look upon these non-physical events: "Yo cierro los ojos para no verlas" (III, p. 388). The same disinclination toward the world beyond the material, of illusion and dream, is held by Magdalena. Unlike the Monja gitana who "quisiera bordar/ flores de su fantasía", Magdalena is unenthusiastic about embroidering the sisters' trousseaux (I, p. 320). For Martirio also, the elements of the immaterial realm have no relation to the physical world she knows: "estas cosas nada tienen que ver con nosotros" (III, p. 388). We recall María's incomprehension, fear even, of the world "más allá" in *Cristo* (I, 5; pp. 267-8), and Juan's limiting of himself to the empirical world of "lo que tengo entre las manos" (III, 2; p. 492) in *Yerma*. Indeed, the world beyond the limits of the house, in the heavens, holds no interest for Martirio: "A mí las cosas de tejas arriba no me importan nada" (III, p. 387).

By the end of the drama, Adela is established as Pepe's lover, as the one who has transgressed Bernarda's *fachada*, and is the one out of Bernarda's daughters who effects a kind of release from her mother's regime through death and metaphysical transcendence. But the other sisters, the four *monigotes* remain locked into Bernarda's order of "decencia" and the public façade. These four daughters of Bernarda are the extensions of their mother's vigilance, from Magdalena's early concern that the Criada might overhear Adela's fit of tears and cries for escape: "Ha estado a punto de oírte la criada" (I, p. 335); to Angustias's final denunciation of Adela as "deshonra de nuestra casa" (III, p. 401). Angustias's censure is echoed by Martirio's rebuke to Adela as she attempts to leave to join Pepe: "No es ése el sitio de una mujer honrada" (III, p. 397). At the end, it is Martirio who literally stands in the way of Adela's escape (III, p. 400), and who, for the sake of maintaining the integrity of the façade brings the walls of the

house of Bernarda Alba closing in on Adela: “si hablo se van a juntar las paredes unas con otras con vergüenza” (II, p. 364).

### 6.6.3 María Josefa and Adela

According to María Josefa the inner essences, or hearts, of Bernarda’s daughters are “haciéndose polvo” (I, p, 339). Indeed, the sisters, save Adela, find their interior sense of self eroded, poisoned and corrupted, until all that remains are these integral masks of Bernarda’s ‘decency’. Adela, as we shall argue, is attempting to move beyond the physical enclosure of Bernarda’s house, and the restrictive behaviour assigned to her feminine body, to a spiritual world of (masculine) freedoms, and incorporates into her flesh an inner life of the soul. The realisation of Adela’s struggle will mean a relinquishing of her physical life in the style of other Lorcan martyrs: Mariana Pineda, Perlimplín, Gonzalo and Jesús. If Adela can occupy the position of the martyr or Christ-figure in La casa de Bernarda Alba then the symbolically named María Josefa completes the trio of the Holy Family, Mary and Joseph.<sup>61</sup> This interpretation is reinforced in the final act when Adela’s grandmother enters carrying a young sheep in her arms, which she addresses in the words of her childlike doggerel as “niño mío”(III, p. 394), and we remind ourselves of Christ’s epithet as the Lamb of God. The cradlesong she sings to her “ovejita” takes her lyrically “a los ramos del portal de Belén”. Reminding us of the Bethlehem-born Christ’s triumphant entry into Jerusalem (the same “Jerusalén” of Cristo that causes María to fear for her son) at the start of Holy Week on “el Domingo de los Ramos”, María Josefa presages the time of Adela’s passion and ultimate sacrifice. As her grandmother, María Josefa is Adela’s literal forebear, and in several other ways the grandmother functions as herald to Adela’s martyrdom.

Within the walls of Bernarda’s house, María Josefa preempts Adela’s transgression of space and flaunting of the Bernarda’s order of the *fachada*. While the family are at the funeral mass, the

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<sup>61</sup> As Eutimio Martín and others have pointed out. See for example Eutimio Martín, Federico García Lorca, heterodoxo y mártir. Análisis y proyección de la obra juvenil inédita, (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 1986).

servants have been instructed to keep her locked in her room, to where she is usually confined – an internment within an internment. But the servants fear it is impossible to subdue her, the old woman having “unos dedos como cinco ganzúas” (I, p. 309). The Criada has had much trouble subduing her, complaining to Bernarda of her mother’s rather masculine strength: “es fuerte como un roble”; Bernarda confirms revealingly “[m]i abuela fue igual” (I, p. 321). Now with Adela such masculine vigour and transgressive tendencies appear to run in the family. Bernarda’s suggestion that her mother may be mad (I, p. 137) points to further common ground between Adela and her María Josefa, as Angustias observes of Adela: “Se lo noto en los ojos. Se le está poniendo mirar de loca” (II, p. 349). It would be easy to view the old woman and her ‘madness’ simply in terms of farce, to dismiss her impact as a comic jibe at the senile, a laugh to ease the dramatic tension. But like any theatrical fool, María Josefa’s impact on the drama is much greater.

Eventually the old woman is allowed out, but only after repeated cries of “¡déjame salir!” (I, p. 320). This refrain is of course picked up by Adela’s “¡[y]o quiero salir!” (I, p. 335), and Angustias (I, p.337). The old grandmother’s appearance is signalled by the flowers that dress her head and chest (I, p. 394) and the jewellery she asks to wear because “se quiere casar” (I, p. 321). Her ‘bridal’ garb, and white hair is a probable gesture of ethereal whiteness that counters the mourning black of the household. The trope of whiteness we have discussed at length in previous chapters, but we ought to highlight María Josefa’s connection to the apparitional, ghostly figures who intervene in other dramas to voice truths and realities among falsehoods, doubts and ambiguous scenarios: these include Gabriel from Cristo, the Pastor and Niño from Yerma, and the Niño muerto from Así que pasen cinco años. In such company we view María Josefa’s desire to leave, “irme de aquí” and go to the shores of the sea, a sea like Julieta’s in El público “mar de sueño” (III, p. 108), that is to exceed the boundaries of her natural life (i. e. return to the non-physical realm), so that she can “casarme con un varón hermoso [...] y para tener alegría” (I, pp. 338-9). Her fanciful, super-natural dreams have the sheen of whiteness, white hair, white snow, and white foam on the waves running through them:

Como tengo el pelo blanco crees que no puedo tener crías, y sí, crías y crías y crías. Este niño tendrá el pelo blanco y tendrá otro niño y éste otro, y todos con el pelo nieve, seremos como las olas, una y otra. Luego nos sentaremos todos y todos tendremos el cabello blanco y seremos espuma. ¿Por qué no hay espumas? (III, p. 396)

Above all, María Josefa's desire is to escape as she repeatedly demonstrates within the limits of the house: (CRIADA:) "¡Se me escapó!", "Me escapé" (I, p. 338); "Me escapé" (III, p. 395); and as she asks Martirio "¿Vas a abrirme la puerta?" (III, p. 395). She also prefigures Adela in her ambition to transcend earthly boundaries. Despite spending most of her time under lock and key, María Josefa passes through the house freely, openly and without fear, voicing her inner thoughts and desires. Announcing Adela's resistance to Bernarda's regime, she expresses the reality of the longings in the others' hearts, "[t]odas lo queréis [a Pepe]" (III, p. 394), and the reality of their prospects, "ninguna de vosotras se va a casar. ¡Ninguna!" (I, p. 338). María Josefa is a close variation on the Camp axiom 'the lie that tells the truth': she represents the fantasy, or fiction, that proclaims the advent of Adela's truth. Occupying a Camp extreme: María Josefa's appearance and conduct are at the very least eccentric, possibly mad, as Bernarda suggests; but her conduct needs to be hyperbolic, her words lyrical and image-laden, her costume outlandish and excessive, in order to bring the truth into relief. The character of María Josefa serves to establish an extreme, unreal figure against which the dark, mono-dimensional shadows of Bernarda, her servant, and those four daughters who fail to resist the regime of the *fachada* can be appreciated.

Adela's very name resonates in the standards she sets for herself, as someone who has capability and someone who puts herself forward (while the others stand back): "Hace la que puede y la que se adelanta" (II, p.373). From the first act, Adela proclaims her longing for a spiritual existence, to transcend the boundaries of the *fachada* of Bernarda's house. All around her she witnesses the essential character of her sisters dim and darken into the indistinct, featureless shadows in their black garb of mourning. She understands that to stay within the confines of Bernarda's regime will mean death ("he visto la muerte debajo de estos techos" III,

p. 397); but it is not a physical death Adela fears, rather a loss of spirit, of sense of distinct identity, that would render her a 'shadow' like those her sisters have become. Adela is different to her sisters, holding, as she does from the early part of the play, onto a belief in her dreams, a sense of hope, however ill-founded, that there is something more than their confinement to the house: an "ilusión" both she and Magdalena refer to (I, p. 330 & p. 333). In common with her sisters Angustias and Martirio, Adela's physical condition gives her cause for concern: "tengo mal cuerpo" (II, p.349). But this is no physical ailment – it is a fear that her brilliance will recede into the darkness of the shadowland, half-lives lived by her sisters. The same whiteness that is later represented by her undergarments in the final stages of the play ("*enaguas blancas*" III, p. 393), Adela first associates with her skin: "¡No quiero que se me pongan las carnes como a vosotras! ¡No quiero perder mi blancura en estas habitaciones!" (I, p. 335). Hence her sisters' taunting that her fresh face and young body will decay into the empty form of Mask that the others represent: "¡Qué lástima de cara! ¡qué lástima de cuerpo [...]!" (II, p. 350). However, Adela is not interested in her body for herself, offering to give hers to the deformed Martirio as a replacement: "Si quieres te daré mis ojos [...] y mis espaldas para que te compongas la joroba"; or to whomever she pleases: "¡Mi cuerpo será de quien yo quiera!" (II, p. 350). Adela's body is of no use to her when what she seeks is a spiritual existence, hence Angustias's threat in the final scene "de aquí no sales con tu cuerpo en triunfo" (III, p. 401) is irrelevant to Adela. Adela's martyrdom will see no assumption of her being intact; instead there will be a purely spiritual ascension. Her triumph will not be a physical one, overcoming Bernarda, Poncia and the rest to leave and join Pepe. Nothing can stop Adela. Poncia warns Bernarda of Adela's trajectory telling her mistress how it seems wrong "hasta al aire" that Adela "[se desvía] de la verdadera inclinación" (II, p. 370). What Poncia refers to, significantly, is Adela's orientation *toward* the truth of her being. Eventually, Adela will overcome her physical limitations, and those placed on her by Bernarda's *fachada*. Through the very act of her self-immolation Adela succeeds in achieving transformation in the manner of don Perlimplín.

Adela elsewhere echoes the triumphant opponent of honour's false code, Perlimplín, when she appears in the first act wearing her cheerful, green dress (I, p. 333). The prominent luminosity of the primary colour in the black and white staging revisits the green frock coat worn by Perlimplín, itself drawn from the green on black and white print of the comic-strip *aleluya*. The cause of Adela's eventual martyrdom is also presaged by the ending of the second act. A furore rises in the village when it is discovered that one of the local, unmarried girls, the daughter of the significanty-named La Librada, had a child by an unknown father, killed it and hid the body. The child's remains were found and the body, and guilt, laid at her door. A mob is gathering threatening to kill the girl, and Bernarda immediately joins the hue and cry. Adela, horrified by the turn of events, remains symbolically separate from the others, whose silence adds complicity with Bernarda's cry for 'decency' and 'honour' to be reasserted. Bernarda's demand is for an appropriate and vicious retribution, "[c]arbón ardiendo en el sitio de su pecado!" (II, p. 376), and we view the appalled Adela clutching her belly. Of course, this visual sign is commonly, and by all means justly, read as Adela's terrified identification for another young woman who has transgressed, and as a consequence become pregnant. But we recall the circumstances of the 'crime' of La Librada's daughter: the mother kills her child because she cannot publically recognise nor identify the father. The child then appears to be like Yerma's wished-for 'child', an autonomous reproduction of Self. And if Adela is indeed with child it is a 'child' like Yerma's, a symbol of her nascent inner being. While Bernarda's cry of "[m]atadla! ¡Matadla!" as the curtain falls is an ominous presentiment of the end of Adela's physical self, Adela's plea echoes throughout the drama as a call to liberate her inner self: "¡Que la dejen escapar!" (II, p. 375).

Adela's final self-sacrifice is, as we have already suggested above, a Christ-like martyrdom. Like Mariana Pineda, she dies not for love of a man who runs away, but for the very freedom of a transcendent Love. In the end, her rebellion against the rule of Bernarda is not successful in material terms, and her death itself is nothing short of tragic. But Adela's triumph is that of Christ: her renunciation of her physical life achieves a metaphysical freedom; her young body

dead, and dressed up on her mother's instructions to preserve a façade of purity (“¡Mi hija ha muerto virgen! Llevadla a su cuarto y vestirla como si fuera doncella” III, p. 403), it is the soul now of Adela that will live on. Unable to enjoy the freedoms men enjoy in this world, Adela transforms herself into a martyr for the freedom of all “[las] mujeres en los pueblos de España”. In the final act of the drama, Adela's eventual traversing of the divide between this world and the next is announced in stages. Adela questions her mother on the folk significance of the popular rhyme intoned whenever there is a flash of lightning or a shooting star crosses the sky: “Santa Bárbara bendita,/ que en el cielo estás escrita/ con papel y agua bendita”(p.865). There has been no lightning flash but Adela seems to be keenly aware of a greater dimension to events, a destiny related to the heavens. Similarly, Adela reports the ghostly and fantastical image of the stallion set loose in the corral: “¡Blanco! Doble de grande. Llenando todo lo oscuro” (III, p. 387). Furthermore, above in the sky Adela sees “unas estrellas como puños”. Unlike her sisters, who choose not to see beyond the limits of the house walls and roof, Adela appreciates the movements of the world beyond Bernarda's realm of the frozen façade: “A mí me gusta ver correr lleno de lumbre lo que está quieto y quieto años enteros” (III, p. 388). The portentous omens she imagines recall those witnessed by José in Cristo: “Una estrella roja se ha corrido de horizonte a horizonte, dejando en el cielo una llaga profunda de sangre hirviente” (I, 5; p. 266). Like Jesús, she senses a greater calling, beyond the confines of this world, her world of the house, one that will result in a sacrifice of mortal self. The clearest textual evidence supporting this view of Adela as Christ-symbol comes during her final confrontation with Martirio. In many ways this is Adela's acceptance of martyrdom: she recognises that staying true to her love for Pepe, and leaving the house (however that shall be) will mean public scorn and hatred but she is willing to take up “la corona de espinas que tienen las que son queridas de algún hombre casado” (III, p. 399). Angustias's and Martirio's embrace of the *fachada* is not for Adela, as we witnessed with their appeals to “decencia” and “honra”; instead Adela will accept, as a martyr, the scorn of “las que dicen que son decentes” (III, p. 395; my italic). The actual act of her self-immolation takes place off stage, and like Mariana's public execution, we never see her physical death, which again like Mariana's death by garotte, is symbolically a



strangling of the neck, where the head meets the body. The form of sacrifice is not, like Perlimplín's, a blood letting, for as we argued above, Adela 'drinks' in a soul-giving blood from Pepe, and her sacrifice is not for Pepe, as Perlimplín's was for Belisa. Instead like the pale Mariana, and "la blanca Belisa", Adela, who in the final part of the third act wears only white, gains an inner life by relinquishing her physical form.

The ending of La casa de Bernarda Alba is no different to the other tragedies we have reviewed. The protagonist dies a mortal death because h/er physical love for another remains impossibly beyond reach. But Bernarda's re-instating of the *fachada* of decency, honour and purity at the end of this tragedy does not, cannot, contain the magnitude of Adela's self-sacrifice. Adela's quest has been that of Yerma – an impossible, non-physical need for something to complete her sense of being. The sacrifice of her physical body is, like the self-sacrifices of Perlimplín and Gonzalo a reaching for truth of the inner Self. Adela's martyrdom shares with Mariana Pineda the cause of Liberty and sublime Love. And like Jesús, Adela knows that her true destiny lies in what is beyond.

## Conclusion

*Cada minuto, cada persona, cada actitud puede ser el germen de una obra dramática.*<sup>1</sup>

The final chapter of this study has attempted to move away from the (socio-)realist interpretations of La casa de Bernarda Alba, promoting instead the potential for more transgressive, experimental performance. But in the manner of doing so, we have been obliged to work within a very conventional opposition of gender values. Whether it is a reflection of the social reality of early twentieth century Spain, or an expression of the poet's understanding of the tension between body and soul and the attendant crisis in gender identity that we suggest, La casa de Bernarda Alba presents an idealised picture of the freedoms of men and their masculine domain. We recall, when faced with the tale of the outrageous history of Adelaida's father, Martirio's portrait of the masculinist power that orders the world in men's favour: "los hombres se tapan unos a otros las cosas de esta índole y nadie es capaz de delatar" (I, p. 328).

We have concerned ourselves in this thesis with an exploration of gender and identity, as the primary site of the poet's preoccupations, precisely because of the curious and, at times, contradictory presentation of this theme in García Lorca's theatre works. We have been inspired to look at the gendered basis of identity not, we emphasise, because of the peculiar tendency in some readers to insert some kind of misogynistic bias into the works of a poet who knew same-sex desire. Hence we refute the interpretations of, for example, María Estela Harretche who sees El público as advocating the superiority of love between men over love

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<sup>1</sup> "García Lorca ante el teatro. Sus recuerdos de Buenos Aires", in Federico García Lorca, Obras VI, Prosa, I, p. 678.

between women and men.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, we must deny Julio Huéllamo Kosma's notion that the women of García Lorca's theatre elevate heterosexual love over same-sex desire and stand in opposition to love between men.<sup>3</sup> Rather we see such misunderstandings flowing from the poet's ambiguous exposition of gender in works such as La casa de Bernarda Alba and Yerma. Perhaps too García Lorca's own verse, such as the "Oda a Walt Whitman", fans the flames of debate, staging as it does a stark condemnation of "maricas". But this rush to read the poet's work in a mono-dimensional way, without contextualising it in the body of ideas offered in all his work, is already being countered again and again by new studies and new research. Moreover our knowledge of García Lorca's work is being amplified by frequent additions to his corpus of work previously withheld from the public domain.

On the subject of "Oda a Walt Whitman", David Johnston cites Angel Sahuquillo's extensive study of homosexual themes in García Lorca's work: "The great poet of America is celebrated as pure 'not because he is chaste, but because the schism between body and soul, between homosexual practice and spiritual love, has been salvaged, at least in his poetry'" (Johnston's translation).<sup>4</sup> Even the most equivocal (most apparently conservative or moralistic) of García Lorca's work, such as this poem, is finally being reassessed in terms of the central tension of body and soul that propels the theme of gender and identity. And this is our proposition for readings, if they are at all wise to undertake, of same-sex desire in the poet's dramas: what is important about García Lorca's homosexuality is that it makes him acutely aware of the construct of gender as the foundation for the dominant culture's edifice of identity.

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<sup>2</sup> Harrette, commenting on the female character of Elena in El público, believes that "Selene (la luna) representa a lo largo y a lo ancho de su obra [de García Lorca], a la 'mujer' y a la 'muerte'. Elena = Selene es el enemigo femenino, la mujer que atenta contra el amor de los hombres [de El público]", M<sup>a</sup> Estela Harrette, Federico García Lorca: Análisis de una revolución teatral, (Madrid: Gredos, 2000), p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Huéllamo Kosma proposes that "La mujer se erige [...] en valedora máxima de la heterosexualidad y en enemiga de la homofilia", El teatro imposible de García Lorca, (Granada: University of Granada, 1996), p. 167.

<sup>4</sup> David Johnston, Federico García Lorca, (Bath: Absolute Press, 1998), p. 97.

In his earliest dramas, such as Cristo, the opposition between pure Love and physical desire is presented in a clear and straightforward manner. Love is supreme above all the demands of earthly laws and carnal longings. The poet enhances his portrait of Love transcendent in his vision of Mariana Pineda's ascension into the ranks of the martyred for Love. The same spiritual value of Love allows García Lorca to transform heroically the frail, old stick-figure of don Perlimplín into Belisa's transcendent Christ-like saviour. The Christ-figure and martyr appear again in El público, but now the poet sees Love's transformative and redemptive power tragically and inevitably opposed by life's constantly shifting forms that move toward physical death. By the time of his later tragedies, such as Yerma and La casa de Bernarda Alba, Love is still an ideal, but the transcendence of physical love offers only a grim, tragic and final escape from material circumstances. The question that prompts realist interpretations of García Lorca's dramas is the pragmatist's 'what about the reality of life here and now?' What price indeed the lives of Yerma after she kills Juan and the other Alba daughters following Adela's suicide? This relates to the broader questions we have confronted before. Is García Lorca's response to modernity and the challenges of his times a retreat into a conservatism of metaphysical truth and certainty? Does he despair before an anticipated late-modern emptying of identity and rejection of authenticity?

In part our own answer to these questions stems from our advocacy of experimental performance of the poet's theatre works. In our survey of the stagings of La casa de Bernarda Alba, we note the progressive movement (at least in the Spanish-speaking world) from the more faithful and orthodox interpretations to the more recent mobilisations of the text in favour of re-interpretation. García Lorca himself recognised that this would be the case, believing that his work was unperformable or 'impossible' to stage for conventional Spanish

theatre companies of his times.<sup>5</sup> From his earliest sorties onto the stage, the intended puppet drama El maleficio de la mariposa, García Lorca encountered staging difficulties, and this the first of his works to be performed was a noted failure. It is not surprising that the poet sought safer ground with his historical-Romantic verse piece Mariana Pineda, which gave him his first commercial success. But García Lorca was not discouraged from writing, or attempting to write much more experimental, or difficult, dramas. The initial misadventures of the amateur Club Anfistora when attempting to stage Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín in 1929, in the face of the play's censure under the Primo de Rivera dictatorship demonstrate early opposition to the subversive content of the poet's theatre works. The eventual 1933 production by the same amateur group of bourgeois enthusiasts evinced a rather genteel form of radicalism. As Paul Julian Smith has recorded, the newspaper reception of Yerma's premiere in 1934 saw more right-wing elements offended by the play's climactic woman-on-top murder. More interesting was the close critical attention paid to the author's retinue of rather effeminate young men, attending the performance, "shrieking in the intervals and archly gesturing 'with their finger on their cheek'" as it shows the earliest resistance to anything in or concerning the play that could be construed as unconventional, or worse, sexually dissident.<sup>6</sup>

The performance of García Lorca's text has, since those contemporary ones, become steadily more progressive. The fact that theatre practitioners have read in the text of the poet's dramas such experimental and often transgressive potential demonstrates what must be the underlying drive in García Lorca's work towards a radical agenda. It counters the inherent conservatism of his modernist yearning for the soul. And yet, despite the idealism of his promotion of Love over desire, we cannot escape the dark future for those characters left behind in his later

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<sup>5</sup> As we argued in Chapter Four. See also García Lorca's letter to his parents and sister from October 1929, where he writes from New York of the possible production of his Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín by an American company. Federico García Lorca, Obras, VI, Prosa, 2, Epistolario, ed. M. García-Posada, (Madrid: Akal, 1994), p. 1091.

tragedies. Nor can we contradict the poet's engagement with the social realities he saw around him in his day, any more than we can suggest that the historicity of García Lorca's (later) work positioned him at a moment in the twentieth century when the world had polarised politically into two opposing ideological camps. As Spain moved into civil war, the political tension (of the century) was between a bourgeois capitalist faith in the economic drives of individual desires – the culture of satisfying the consumer – and a socialist doctrine of communal need. To García Lorca, this would have read very much like his own philosophical crisis between the need for a soul and the cravings of the flesh.

In this thesis we have attempted to chronicle the poet's proposal to give a soul-depth of Love to the bodies of his stage characters. Running through our analysis has been the formative juxtaposition of the two-dimensional to the three, of surface to depth, of the Mask to the authentic Self. It was an easy step for such a dramatic poet to take from the static image to the fleshed-out, animated imaginings of his theatre works. It was also a symbolic step: so central to his theatre is the movement from surface, frozen reflections of materiality to the mobilised figures of his plays, given depth and *anima*, and a new identity. On a number of occasions we have, in our argument, referred to the example of the philosophies and writings of Oscar Wilde. Wilde uses the superficial and the Mask to expose ironically the artificial constructs of what the dominant culture posits as true, natural and real. In our understanding of Wilde, we see the Irish poet as a patron saint of contemporary queer theory. While we would not revise our knowledge of García Lorca, positing him too as a queer antecedent, our poet also understands all about the artifice of the Mask. The difference, perhaps, between Wilde and García Lorca is that the Granadine poet wishes to hold onto the potential for transcendent, eternal values. It is not that García Lorca does not anticipate the collapse of essential truth in these late-modern times – his avant-garde works like El público show an understanding of identity's provisional constructs. Rather, we propose that García Lorca's ambition in his

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<sup>6</sup> Paul Julian Smith, The Theatre of Garcia Lorca: Text, Performance, Psychoanalysis, (Cambridge:

theatre works was to promote a spiritual dimension of Love that is always denied to the queer who loves, the one who desires the same sex and finds that the dominant culture circumscribes h/er desire as merely physical.<sup>7</sup> And as the discourse of Love versus desire proposed in the text of his theatre works has long outlived García Lorca, so the transgressive, progressive, possibilities for its performance live on.

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Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 19.

<sup>7</sup> In this sense, we refute the argument of Carlos Jerez-Farrán who despite an obvious sympathy, writes in terms that support the dominant culture's marginalisation of queer love such as García Lorca promotes: "[García Lorca] has not [in *El público*] been able to avoid the linguistic subterfuges, ellipses, and obfuscations that attended most homosexual representations during the first half of the twentieth century, and even less the contradictions and ambiguities contained in their defense", "Transvestism and Sexual Transgression in García Lorca's *The Public*", *Modern Drama*, 44, 2 (2001), pp. 188-213, esp. p. 204.

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