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University of Durham
School of Modern Languages and Cultures
Department of Spanish



Thesis submitted June 2005 for the degree of
M.A. by research

‘The Representation of Masculinity in the Theatre of
Federico García Lorca’

Christopher James Sherwin

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ABSTRACT

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A theoretical framework is established by presenting an overview of Lorca criticism and of relevant work in gender and men's studies. Male invisibility (man viewed as universally human, woman, branded as different, viewed as the only sex), as expounded by De Beauvoir, emerges as a key issue. The thesis aims to demonstrate that Lorca's theatre refuses to accept male invisibility, preferring to use every opportunity to draw men out of the shadows and into the spotlight.

It is argued that Lorca's theatre is constructed around defamiliarization techniques that set the theatrical space apart as a place in which the spectator is prompted to reflect on masculinity as an object of curiosity rather than as an unchallenged norm. The myriad processes that prompt the spectator to do so emphasise male characters. Men reflect on their own identity and women capture them in a powerful gaze, the inverse of the male gaze that objectifies women (as analysed by Mulvey with reference to cinema). An emphasis on female sexuality as need and on male eroticism as resolution further demonstrates male characters to be objects under observation.

Chapter 4 shows male absence to be a variation of the above processes, ensuring that a man's masculinity is brought into focus even when he is not present. Offstage sound effects, the projection of the audience's gaze offstage, and the penetration of the stage space by metonymical objects are some of the techniques that achieve this, allowing reflection on concepts of masculinity without specific association with the male body and, therefore, alluding to the disassociation of sex and gender.

Questions about the substance of masculinity are problematic due to frequent assaults on notions of innate fixed identity and the suggestion that gender may be nothing more than the process by which it is represented. It is the process of representation, therefore, that is the protagonist in the performance of gender, and whilst masculinity might be a hollow shell in Lorca's theatre, it is not, at least, one that hides in the shadows.



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INTRODUCTION



At times it seems as though no stone has been left unturned in the literary criticism of this most celebrated of Spanish playwrights. Yet it also seems true that if there is any approach to his work that has not been adopted as frequently as the others, it is one centring on the concept of the masculine. It should be clear from the outset that for masculine one ought not to read homosexual, as many are tempted to do. Much has been written discussing the influence of Lorca's sexuality on his theatre, at least some of which can be viewed as excessively allegorical. Paul Smith (1989) has developed a Lacanian approach towards the psychoanalysis of literature, which neither searches for meaning in accident, nor imposes it. This approach undermines the author function that seeks to create "a single monolithic unity" (1989: 107). By accusing Paul Binding of implying "the existence of a collective solidarity uniting women, gays, and proletariat" (1989: 118) he warns against the flattening of difference that saw earlier critics ignore Lorca's experimental works and encouraged Binding and others to search for and impose homosexual meanings beneath the surface of the text. To what extent I agree with Smith in suggesting that "the shimmering epidermis of his [Lorca's] language conceals no hidden essence" (1989: 113) will be discussed later, but suffice to say I agree insofar as I consider that obsessively hunting for indications of the playwright's repressed sexuality is as unhelpful to my analysis as imposing any other allegorical reading is to the wider forum for discussion of his work.

Having established that this thesis will not seek to draw on the experience, homosexual or otherwise, of the esteemed playwright in order to impose an artificial reading that is presumed to unite the spectrum of his plays, it will be clear that I hope to formulate a fresh interpretation of Lorca's plays. Nonetheless, it is first necessary to plot the arguments that have already been made insofar as they relate to my approach to the texts. Therefore, in this chapter I will offer an account of those issues that arise on the one hand from the field of gender and men's studies, and on the other hand from significant critical readings of Lorca's work, which have most directly influenced my own assessment of the plays, which I will also outline.

* * * *

In order to establish the masculine as a meaningful concept at work in the plays, it is important to grasp something of the discourse of Men's studies that will, inevitably, underpin the discussion. In mapping out the theoretical framework of contemporary men's studies successfully, it is essential to dedicate at least some time to a discussion of the bedrock of cultural studies in which this (relatively young) discursive vein has formed. In due course reference will be made to the emergence of men's studies from a predominantly feminist discourse. But a first step towards understanding the crystallisation of male self-examination in the form of an academic discipline is to examine the dichotomies that underlie an understanding of sex (defined according to physiological differences) and gender (cultural construction). Evelyn Fox Keller (1997) casts light on this distinction between 'natural' sex and 'cultural' gender by comparing it with the contrast between nature and science, highlighting similarities in both the historical development of the two oppositions and their epistemological uncertainties. To describe the natural as the root of gender would expose me to attack by those who are (justifiably) sceptical of such biological determinism, but, as Fox Keller makes clear in comparing the historicity of gender and science, sex has typically been perceived as the foundation for gender, and, as a result, it would seem appropriate to start by discussing the rigidity of sexual dichotomy.

Despite there being variations in the way sexual identity is attributed, (the Olympic committee relies on genetics, the midwife scrutinizes primary sexual characteristics, whilst in everyday encounters people rely on secondary sexual characteristics) every such decision is firmly grounded in the universal acceptance that most animal species are biologically divided into two distinct reproductive groups. Binary sexual identity, therefore, appears to be well grounded. Yet even this most certain of natural laws is problematic.

Amongst others, Kessler and McKenna (1978) have discussed the scope for error in various approaches to the assignment of sexual identity, and the psychological damage that can result from mis-assignment. But even in suggesting that this scope for error exists, it is not the fundamental existence of

two distinct sexual identities that is questioned, but simply the ability to recognise them with consistency. Nonetheless it is not unknown to encounter such cases that prevent blind acceptance of this dichotomy. The work of Judith Butler, for example, does not highlight potential errors of sex assignment, but questions the very foundation of the compulsion to make the assignment at all. Those who theorize along these lines suggest that genital deformity and genetic mutation are illustrative exceptions to the sex-binary mindset. Furthermore, surgical procedures allowing sex reassignment are more accessible than ever, allowing many effectively to reject the sexual identity with which they were born in favour of an alternative. But it is important to maintain a degree of perspective. Occasions when different scientific methodologies disagree about the assignment of sexual identity, or when anatomical or genetic factors preclude a simple male/female assignment, are extremely rare.

The reassuring sense of certainty that results from the acceptance of this relatively concrete biological polarity feeds the desire to seek a similar degree of certainty in approaching the cultural definition of gender. There is a tendency to seek to understand gender as two distinct alternatives that can be mapped neatly onto the biological blueprint described above. Regardless of the interpretation of gender that is in vogue at any one time in a given society, what remains constant is the thirst for an easily understandable polarity: the rooting of the masculine in the male, and the feminine in the female. Susan Hekman (1994) highlights the extent to which the concepts have become shackled together so that cultural definitions of gender are traced to a sexual root, and then this biological determinism is used to justify and perpetuate the very gender ideologies we set out to identify. This is clearly cyclical and flawed, but it does reflect a common desire for an easily locatable sense of gender identity to accompany a (perhaps overly simplistic) sense of sexual dichotomy. Whilst it is true to say that, “in our culture, the reproductive dichotomy is assumed to be the basis of gender and sexuality in everyday life” (Connell, 1995: 66), it shall be seen that defining gender along the lines of a reductionist dichotomy is highly problematic.

Whereas in making evaluative judgements about sexual identity one can fall back on the relative certainty of reproductive capabilities, when one attempts to orientate oneself in relation to gender identity, itself an artificial construct, there are far fewer landmarks to use as references. Instead of the reproductive

basis of sex allocation, it is necessary, when deciding about gender identity, to navigate a complex labyrinth of imprecise indicators, ranging from the physical to the behavioural. Taken individually, each factor loses the bulk of its gender value; long hair alone does not make someone feminine, and neither is a masculine label assured for those with low singing voices. This variety leads to inevitable questions about why gender has been limited to two options, (provided by sexual identity), but furthermore why gender has been so persistently tied to sex. In aiming her arguments towards a “radical discontinuity” between gender and sex, Butler has the following to say on the subject: “Even if the sexes appear to be unproblematically binary in their morphology and constitution (which will become a question), there is no reason to assume that genders ought also to remain as two.” (1990b: 6)

Thus Butler successfully challenges conventional assumptions about gender dichotomy, by first blasting gender from its traditional sexual foundation, and then proceeding to deal a second blow by releasing understandings of sexual identity from any restrictive definitions based on unworkable biological criteria. The further one travels along the lines explained by Butler, however, the more both sex and gender acquire the almost mythical status of free floating concepts that defy all attempts to anchor them in any genuine perception of reality. What stands out from my reading of Kessler and McKenna’s work is not the inadequacy of a binary approach to gender in the light of the complex network of indicators that are typically relied on, but is in fact the extreme lengths to which people are prepared to go to perpetuate this polarity, and to secure it firmly in an understanding of biological sex identity. They recount an experiment in which a random sequence of yes or no answers are given to the subjects’ questions, as they attempt to discover the sex of a third and undisclosed person. The inevitable result of the random selection of answers offered is a veritable cocktail of indicators that fit no coherent pattern of gender assignation. Yet the subjects consistently display an overwhelming willingness to search for meaning within this blend and to impose a conventional gender binary, in keeping with a dichotomous understanding of sexual identity. Fox Keller describes this desire to rationalize gender according to a bipolar model as follows: “Attempts to occupy a “middle ground” (...) must contend not only with the conceptual difficulty of

formulating such a position, but also with the peculiarly insistent pressures of a public forum urging each concept [gender] to one pole or another” (1997: 196).

It has been shown, therefore, that the sexual dichotomy is revered for the certainty it is presumed to afford. Furthermore, the criteria used in making decisions about sex are not concrete and so some doubt persists as to whether sexual identity is as certain as may be believed. Yet the process of distinguishing between the sexes, with all its imperfections, appears watertight when compared to the pretence of binary gender. Several vague factors combine in haphazard form to create an extremely loosely defined gender opposition. That these indicators have been contorted to support an opposition at all is indicative of a need for certainty and a desire to map the discomfiting imprecision of gender assignment onto the relative certainty of sex. It is clear that modern western society has favoured this arrangement, but it is also evident that it is indefensible. There is little reason for gender to remain binary, or to continue to be rooted in sex.

David Morgan notes that the question of gender in our culture is reducible to the concepts of difference and of power. Morgan discusses the interplay between these two contributory factors with a sterile and mathematical logic, considering the various ways in which these might combine to influence our understanding of gender identity (1992: Chapter 9). He considers four different scenarios in which power and difference operate and he examines the impact each would have had on the historical construction of gender inequality. First it is possible that neither difference nor power operates between genders to create inequality. Secondly a disproportionate level of power, historically held by men, might fully account for inequalities, despite there being no meaningful difference. Thirdly inequality might principally flow from genuine, inherent differences between genders, rather than from an imagined artificial male power base. Lastly he suggests that inequality might have resulted both from genuine difference and also from a disproportionate level of male power. Michael Kimmel focuses on the causal link between difference and power, positing that rather than innate gender difference leading to an inequality of power, the discrimination that results from artificial male power causes an exaggerated myth of gender difference (2000: Chapter 5). Whatever the role played by genuine difference in supporting the gender dichotomy at work in society, it remains clear

that men persistently hold more power than women despite the growth of the feminist cause. This division is rigid and can be seen to manifest itself in many contexts. Susan Hekman (1994), for example, discusses the role of power in ensuring that the opposition between rationality and irrationality is reflected onto that between male and female. She highlights that power over discourse has historically been centred on men, enabling them to perpetually distance femininity and tarnish it as irrational. Sherry Ortner explains that women have no power to liberate themselves from the interpretation of male/female as culture/nature. A woman's body carries associations with childbirth which do not afflict the male body, and which encourage women to be cast as the child carers, who are consequentially perceived as being closer to nature than men. Henrietta Moor echoes Ortner's work in her study *The Cultural Constitution of Gender*, citing this nature/culture link to female/male identity as part of a universal assumption of female inferiority.

If placing the spotlight on the female to reduce the importance of difference and to equalise power distribution has not yet achieved its goal in completely removing inequality between the sexes, it has had significant and irreversible consequences for men and their understanding of male identity. Typically men have seen themselves as archetypal homo sapiens, so that humanity is accepted as male 'by default' and femininity is distanced as different. However close the acknowledgement of a collective *humankind* might appear, there are many in whose eyes the human race continues to be *mankind*. According to this assessment of the human condition, the masculine becomes the ideal, the universal, the norm. If the masculine is considered in this way, however, then the emphasis is once more thrown on the feminine as different, or defective. The supposed 'difference' represented by the feminine, or indeed the homosexual, causes them to stand out against a homogeneous background, whereas the boundary between the specifically male and the universally human has been eroded. Thus men are able to veil themselves in an impenetrable cloud of invisibility, a habit that Lynne Segal acutely sums up as follows: "When men have written of themselves....they have done so as though presenting the universal truths of humanity, rather than the partial truths of half of it" (Quoted by Green and LeBihan, 261).

De Beauvoir (1968) observed this unfortunate tendency for men to represent the universally human and women to be distanced as different, stating that

The terms *masculine* and *feminine* are used symmetrically only as a matter of form, as on legal papers. In actuality the relation of the two sexes is not quite like that of two electrical poles, for man represents both the positive and the neutral, as is indicated by the common use of man to designate human beings in general, whereas woman represents only the negative (De Beauvoir, 1968: 15).

This model will be extremely important to the argument I make in this thesis and it is constructed on two very specific theoretical suppositions. In discussing De Beauvoir, Butler suggests that “implied in her formulation is an agent, a *cogito*, who somehow takes on or appropriates that gender” (1990b: 8). Rather than viewing sex and gender as synonymous, they are posited as conceptually distinct, but at the same time there is a tacit acknowledgment of a traditionally accepted causal link between the two “whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it” (1990b: 6). Whilst both women question the mapping of gender (as cultural construct) onto sex (as biologically determined), De Beauvoir by examining the compulsion for gender to grow out of sex and Butler by considering whether sex can have any meaning without gender, both recognize the conventionally accepted “mimetic relation of gender to sex” (Butler 1990b: 6). Kessler & McKenna (1978) recognise that common differences in approach to locating sex and gender suggest them to have distinct meanings, and they also demonstrate the extent to which the two are inevitably conflated insofar as, for example, masculinity is interpreted as the edifice that both signals and is determined by the male sex of an individual.

The second supposition that is implicit within De Beauvoir’s theorisation is that sex and gender are both necessarily to be categorised as dichotomous in the sense of being reducible to two, and only two, classes of person. I have already referred to Fox Keller’s concept of a gender “middle ground” (1997: 196), which is both difficult to theorise and hard for public opinion to swallow. I have also cited Kessler and McKenna’s work (1978) on the incorrect assignment

of sex identity as illustrative of the human resistance to the possibility of an overlap of sexual identity. Instead of acknowledging that some people might not conform to norms of sexual characteristics and might in fact lie outside the sexual dichotomy, it is maintained that incorrect sex assignment demonstrates nothing more than a mistaken decision. Beneath De Beauvoir's statement, then, lies the acceptance that sex is reducible to male and female, and gender to masculine and feminine.

The collective denial of the existence of a unique masculine identity has clear ramifications for the study of literature. Any discussion about the work of a male writer is almost inevitably blind to the gender of the author in a way that analysis of female writing is not. In fact it would seem that many find it hard to resist the temptation to brand a female author a feminist, or conversely to highlight her desire to distance herself from overtly feminist discourse. In this manner any authors who lie outside the dominant male order (essentially women and gay men) find their work immediately being positioned in relation to the difference that their gender identity is presumed to demonstrate. The heterosexual male power base that has allowed for difference to be perpetuated and exaggerated in this way is being weakened, and therefore, as a result of the wakening sense of female agency in the world, male identity will no longer be able to define itself by simple reference to female identity. As was made clear at the start of the discussion, Connell's "middle ground" has, in practical terms, proved to be a barren no man's (or woman's) land into which men have been unable to escape, and thus men have been left having to face up to, define and even justify their male identity, without any recourse outdated stereotypes about the 'weaker' sex. Indeed the momentum of this fall has left men with no choice but to reformulate their own perception of masculinity, to consider what it will mean to be male in a new and radically different world. So it is thanks to feminism that the groundwork was laid for a reflection on the meaning and nature of masculinity. Connell (2000), Brittan (1989: Chapter 7), Morgan (1992: Chapter 1) and Clatterbaugh (1997: Chapter 1) have all acknowledged feminism as being absolutely key to the appearance of men's studies, the latter saying that each of the many perceptions of contemporary masculinities that he identifies "begins with a feminist viewpoint, whether or not it is ultimately opposed or endorsed" (1997: 14). In *Gender through the Prism of Difference* the editors'

introduction takes this one step further, proposing that not only were men's studies born out of feminism, but furthermore its development mirrored the early growth of feminist discourse, in theoretical terms at least.

Having adopted the field of gender studies as a theoretical framework, then, moving from the abstract theory to textual analysis, it becomes necessary to confront the concept of plurality of gender identity. Formerly, understandings of gender were predominantly essentialist, in that they were based on biological definitions of sex and imputed gender with certain unalterable and inherent qualities that were assumed to flow from sexual identity. This essentialism has given way to an emphasis on variety and plurality, which precludes the reduction of male and female identity to simplified and dichotomous gender roles. Just as feminism has burst open doors that, for women, had previously been kept locked, so too masculinity has experienced a more restricted sense of liberation, which has seen the splintering of male identity to an unprecedented degree. However, in acknowledging the role of plurality in men's studies, it is important not to slip back towards unnecessary compartmentalisation. Morgan (1992: Chapter 4) acknowledges that men define themselves in terms of their career more frequently than women, but he stresses that this should not become the backbone of a system of male categorisation. Instead masculinities should be understood as transcending age, class and career. Nonetheless the kind of extreme individualism that Connell dubs a "post-modern kaleidoscope of lifestyles" (1992: 736), and which would acknowledge as many masculinities as there are men, would be extremely unhelpful. In aiming to provide a framework for literary and cultural discussion this is as unproductive as flawed and outdated stereotypes.

To bring this part of the discussion to a close, the specific role of power must be considered, not within contemporary understandings of gender discrimination as was mentioned earlier, but of differentiated male identity. In the first published work in which he refers to the Oedipus complex, Freud claims there are four requirements for a man to fall in love, the most significant "may be termed the precondition that there should be 'an injured party'" (1910: 166). The desire for this power to hurt a male adversary stems, according to Freud, from the complex itself. The realisation that the mother has granted sexual favours to the father and not to the son inevitably results in conflict, and so the "thirst for

revenge” becomes a “driving force” (1910: 171) which will resonate throughout the son’s life as he seeks a mother substitute to satisfy his feelings of desire. The desire for power, then, to which men are bound in their need to effectively demonstrate the end of their own oedipal development and the separation from the mother, remains key to an understanding of masculinity. Indeed Connell suggests that masculinity is the male “defence against regression to pre-Oedipal identification with the mother” (1995: 33). Furthermore it can be suggested that this desire for power is manifested in the willingness to resort to violence. In discussing violent crime it is easy, as Kimmel has highlighted (2000: Chapter 11), to allow masculinity to disappear into the invisible cloud, mentioned previously. Because whilst one can draw attention to the high proportion of men from ethnic minorities that commit violent crime, for example, it is easy to fail to mention (or even notice) that whatever factors can be seen to subdivide violent criminals, the overwhelming majority of them are united by their sex. It is interesting to note that the male desire to control and dominate can be observed operating not only between the sexes, but also between men. Men have continually expressed their masculinity as much by leading and dominating their fellow men as by lording it over their women. Brandes has commented on the importance of clear demonstrations of status within the male hierarchy of rural Andalucía, for example. This can also be witnessed in the ‘chingón’ culture of the Mexican patriarchy, a masculine ideal that, according to Connell’s examination of the history of academic and social thinking about masculinity, stresses “domination of women, competition between men, aggressive display, predatory sexuality and a double standard” (1995: 31). So great is the need to dominate fellow men in this environment that homosexual violation, whereby the ‘active’ male penetrates the ‘passive’ (inferior) victim whilst fending off any threat of counter-penetration, is seen to reaffirm the masculinity of the violator (the ‘chingón’). It must be noted that this is predominantly a metaphorical penetration achieved through aggressive banter and joking, rather than any physical attack. As women continue to smash the remaining strongholds of exclusively male power in our culture, men still feel the need, perhaps more than ever, to exploit whatever power over each other they can grasp. To what degree violence and a desire for power can be said to underpin the complete gamut of masculinities would merit more discussion than I could hope to achieve here. Yet

it is clear that they occupy a privileged position within the collective male identity, and must therefore be treated with particular attention if men's studies are to be adopted as a vehicle for the exploration of cultural studies

* * * *

PREVIOUS CRITICISM OF LORCA'S PLAYS

There is little doubt that Lorca is famed, above all, for his rural tragedies. When Lorca's theatre is read, studied or staged outside Spain it is invariably *Bodas de sangre*, *La casa de Bernarda Alba* or *Yerma* that is selected and not *El maleficio de la mariposa* or even *El público*. The prominence of his realist theatre is partially a consequence of the formidable commercial success that plays such as *Bodas de sangre* achieved domestically in his lifetime. Following his death this commercial success has, to an extent, been repeated internationally, seeing him temporarily replace Brecht as the most frequently performed foreign playwright in Britain (Smith, 1999: 32). If Lorca's earlier works are comparatively unknown it may partly be because Lorca did not intend or expect them ever to be staged. It is also doubtful whether there was a significant appetite for the experimentalism displayed in some of those early works, either during Lorca's lifetime or immediately following it. The gap between Lorca's 'palatable' rural tragedies and his puppet and experimental theatre has become even more prominent through the actions of his heirs in delaying publication of certain plays, such as *El Público*. An apparent unwillingness by them to release some of his earlier work for publication resulted in a distorted view of his oeuvre persisting for many years, whereby critics were simply unable to access a significant part of his work. Smith has observed the impact of these delays: "There seems little doubt that an earlier publication of the unplayable plays would have counteracted the pernicious and pervasive folkloric stereotypes which still determine foreign responses to García Lorca" (1999: 34). For many years, then, critics were deprived of some of Lorca's earlier pieces and, consequently, a balanced reading of a broad spectrum of his theatre was impossible. This has inevitably had a significant impact on the overall critical approach to Lorca's theatre.

In more recent years there has been a tendency to adopt a very dismissive attitude to plays that are not part of the core of realist, commercially successful theatre. Since critics have been able to formulate an attitude to the whole of his theatre, far from celebrating the discovery of virgin material by in depth critical scrutiny, they have repeatedly dismissed the earlier plays as light hearted fripperies which at best foreshadow the themes and styles of his masterpieces, and at worst are little more than the theatrical equivalent of a Dalí scribble on a napkin. Schonberg, for example, reads Lorca's puppet plays as delightful and amusing tales, but ones that ultimately lack the gritty substance of his later successes. He describes them, rather patronisingly, as "la zone claire de lumière en bordure de l'ombre, le *sol* contre la *sombra*, la grâce, l'ironie, le rire et l'innocence de ce complexe polymorphe qui s'appelait Federico" (1966: 307) and refers to his later work as his "œuvres maîtresses" (1966: 318). Others read some value in the less well known plays, but often this extends to little more than reading them as a trial run which pales into insignificance in comparison with the magnificence of his later successes. This approach views the earlier work as a scratching post on which Lorca honed his writing talent to refine his work into a purer form. Angel del Río observes this progression from frippery to "mature works", and says of the latter "all that was marginal or merely picturesque disappears, only essence remains" (1966: 148). Compared to the confusion and muddle of the unconventional plays, he achieved, in *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, "a serene maturity" (1966: 153). Edwards also favoured the distinction, repeatedly referring to "minor plays" as opposed to "mature works". He, like Angel del Río, reveres *Bodas de sangre* as the culmination of his earlier experimentation (1980: 126).

More recently still, critics have adopted a more rounded approach to Lorca's œuvre. Wright makes clear that she believes some early works to have been overlooked inappropriately in critical terms, and seeks to redress the balance. Referring to *Amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín*, she states that many have dismissed the play as a stepping stone to greater things, but she, on the other hand, "would contend (...) that the play is in fact deeply complex, and also a 'creación clave' in Lorca's dramatic output" (2000: 40). In reality there is little justification for banishing any of Lorca's plays. Clearly some of his early works have never been a commercial success on the stage. Indeed *El*

maleficio de la mariposa was the first of his plays to be staged and met with resounding mockery. They are also less grand than the celebrated rural tragedies. But nonetheless each of his works stands alone in merit and I, like Wright, believe that the puppet plays and experimental work can offer fascinating revelations of their own.

Paul Julian Smith has discussed criticism of Lorca as typifying the role of Foucault's author function (1989: 105-137). By placing less significance on the writer as the creator of a piece, the text itself becomes dislocated from its origin and stands alongside the rest of that author's œuvre, operating as a semi-independent entity. Hence the author ceases to be an individual architect of a work and becomes a function of the work itself. This approach encourages recurrent themes and motifs to be abstracted to form a core interpretation, which is itself endlessly perpetuated by those that obsessively seek to locate the essence of the author in every text. These attempts at venerating an author's works by endlessly searching for a common essence will inevitably have the effect of discouraging innovative readings and discounting problematic elements that cannot be contorted in order to fit into the mould that has been artificially created. This practice is all the more severe and all the more damaging when the collection of work in question is unusually diverse in its nature. For the reasons outlined earlier, a very narrow range of Lorca's work has come to typify him as a playwright and has dominated criticism of his work. This has intensified the operation of the author function in the approach to the whole of his work as the three rural tragedies in particular have been interpreted as spawning key Lorca 'themes', which have been repeated so frequently in the past that they have become endemic in critical work surrounding Lorca's theatre. The desire to locate the key motifs that underpin the Lorca 'legend', many of which originate in his iconic later pieces, is so strong that they become internalised in each and every play perpetuating the myth. For a playwright whose work varies as much as Lorca's in style and content, the pre-eminence of a small section of his plays in the construction of an author function has been fatal to uninhibited interpretation of his less popular work. Instead of overlooking the dissimilar or the dissenting in Lorca's work, we should celebrate difference and "make visible the multiple subjectivity confined within the single 'individual'" (Smith, 1989: 108). Thompson anticipated that the Lorca Fiesta, which accompanied the

collection of essays he edited with Doggart (1999), would not merely continue the mundane search for a monolithic author function, but would instead seek to propagate new readings and novel thinking so that “a number of Lorcas could be let loose” (1999: 10).

Although my own research will seek to re-evaluate Lorca’s plays objectively rather than relying heavily on the conventional themes that have typically been attributed to his work it is nonetheless interesting to identify the nature of some of these generalisations. Edwards considers that, throughout the majority of Lorca’s plays, “the theme of frustrated women was clearly a central one” (1990: 171). In *Yerma*, for example, it is the female protagonist’s desire to give birth that is frustrated continuously while her husband is alive, and which is ultimately destroyed when she herself destroys her husband. In this respect her anxiety that her desire will remain permanently denied is tragically self fulfilling, which she acknowledges in her final words: “¡No os acerquéis, porque he matado a mi hijo, yo misma he matado a mi hijo!” (*Obras Completas*, García Lorca, 1986, vol. 2: 880¹). In *Bodas de sangre* the female protagonist finds her desires split as she faces a life changing choice between two paths. Her sexual desires are denied if she chooses the Novio, but her dream of living a respectable and comfortable life is shattered by favouring Leonardo. Once again she is destined to be frustrated permanently as the two potential suitors destroy each other. Marful Amor also considers “la frustración amorosa de la mujer” (1991: 77) to be a key source from which Lorca’s theatre draws. MacMullan has noted that marriage is actually a cold and empty institution. The Mujer’s marriage is shown to be miserable and bitter, the Novio’s is short lived and ends in bloodshed and the only happy marriages – the Madre to her late husband and the Padre to his late wife – are viewed through the distorting lens of the many years that have passed since they came to an end. Far from providing sublime satisfaction of female desire, marriage acts as a further tool for frustrating Lorca’s female characters.

A further constant that has been found in Lorca’s theatre is the strong sense of causality that is built up between the denial of love and death. Miró González (1988) in particular has highlighted this causal role and it not hard to

¹ This volume will be cited hereafter as OC.

see why. In *La casa de Bernarda Alba* the intensity of feeling within the house increases as the love of the women that live there remains unreturned, not only by men, who are forbidden from entering, but even by their mother. The pressure of love denied becomes overwhelming for Adela when she mistakenly believes Pepe to have been shot and she fulfils her destiny as tragic heroine by embracing death as the final solution. Ramsden has discussed the conflict between vitality and repression in the play as well as its tragic outcome and describes the opposition as “a Lorcan constant” (1983: xv). In *Así que pasen cinco años* the ultimate fate of the Joven is also destruction. He is twice disappointed by women whose love he hoped to win and is symbolically shot through the heart by an arrow. Cupid’s spell has brought him no happiness as his love has not been returned and so the final arrow pierces his heart and ends his life. The Joven himself acknowledges that his last chance of love and happiness has slipped beyond his grasp:

JOVEN: (Agonizante.) Lo he perdido todo.

ECO: Lo he perdido todo.

JOVEN: Mi amor...

ECO: Amor. (OC: 595)

Dougherty has pointed to Lorca’s use of silence as a medium that serves to heighten the tension in the space between love and death. Following the horrific deaths of the Novio and Leonardo in *Bodas de sangre*, for example, the curtain falls “*en medio de un silencio absoluto*” (OC: 788). In *Yerma*, on the other hand, it is precisely because of Juan’s silence, that is his refusal to communicate on an emotional level with his wife, that his death is precipitated.

Lorca’s theatre also lends itself to readings that applaud the playwright for succeeding in capturing at once the universal and the individual. His rural tragedies in particular are praised for portraying emotions so faithfully that the dilemmas onstage are readily tapped into by the spectator. This universal appeal, it is claimed, is all the more remarkable for having emerged from the plays’ backdrops which are often so heavily weighed down by the cultural specificities of rural Andalucía. The personal accounts are individually credible for being rooted in easily recognizable social settings, but also find themselves projected

effectively onto the universal plane of the human condition. Smith has commented that “the beliefs that the playwright embodies both the particular character of the nation and a universal human condition” is fundamental to what he dubs the “cult of García Lorca” (1998: 105). Edwards is particularly keen to read Lorca’s characters as individually believable but at the same time as reflections of us, the audience, even in the plays which have a less recognizable social backdrop. He says that the fundamental proposition behind *El público* is “the revelation of the characters both as facets of each other and, beyond that, of ourselves” (1980: 65). He is even willing to find this duality in the play which is least obviously a faithful account of human feelings, *El maleficio de la mariposa*, suggesting that the characters “acquire, despite their insect nature, human dimensions, passions with which we can identify, and, as in the later plays, the figures onstage ultimately become ourselves” (1980: 30). Note once again his readiness to brand an early play as a mere precursor of the works still to come.

The attitude that must necessarily be adopted in order to value generalised accounts of Lorca’s theatre is one that does not appreciate difference, but seeks to smooth it out. For example Smith suggests that many critics’ willingness to read every one of Lorca’s plays as operating both on a universal and an individual level is “a projection of inconsistencies unresolved in their [*the critics*] own critical discourse” (1989: 109). To achieve this end critics have, according to Smith (1989), tended to adopt one of three approaches, which he terms the allegorical, euhemerist (anecdotal) and elegiac modes. This categorisation of modes of Lorca criticism is insightful and further explanation of it will be useful in understanding how various facets of the playwright’s work have, historically, been plastered over.

Those that adopt a euhemerist reading of Lorca’s plays have tended to be blind to the fact that meaning can be represented without reference to historical or contemporary reality. A refusal to acknowledge this truth will inevitably result in the search for reference beneath every element of his theatrical compositions. Of all people who might seek to express meaning through poetic imagery or association, Lorca, the playwright who saw theatre as poetry that gets up of the page and becomes human, is the prime example. Perhaps because of his general iconic status, and almost certainly because of his homosexuality, it is common for these critics to attempt to pin down resonance to the lived experience of the

playwright himself. Smith criticises those that seek to root Lorca's plays in the lived experience of their creator and, by obsessively searching for reference, are blind to the potential to extrapolate meaning and further resonance from the plays. Marcelle Auclair, he says, interprets the three men of *Así que pasen cinco años* as three aspects of the playwright, but fails to fully appreciate the "dizzying spectacle of temporal paradox and personal splitting" (1998: 82). I would suggest that MacMullan (1993) also harbours this need to locate meaning in anecdotal reference. Referring to *Bodas de sangre*, for example, he suggests that "the anatomy of wedlock with its catalogue of trials and tribulations offers an oblique apologia for Lorca's permanent bachelorhood" (1993: 71). MacMullan makes some very interesting points about marriage and it is a shame that he tried to root the meanings he expounds in the life of the playwright himself. Indeed it is surprising that MacMullan considers the homosexual playwright would justify his failure to marry by revealing the flaws of heterosexual matrimonial union.

If those critics that fall into the category just outlined are guilty of mapping every meaning that Lorca's plays convey onto a single historical plane, then a second band are guilty of plotting out profound meaning onto mere historical reference. According to Smith this mode "treats the text as 'surface' and claims to discover a 'deeper' meaning beneath it" (1989: 110). This is the allegorical approach, which fails to recognise that the theatrical medium is capable of signifying simple, honest experience without the representation being weighed down by complex meanings or associations. Smith is critical of those that have adopted this approach and is particularly disliking of Schonberg, who, he suggests, "cannot tolerate desiring relations between men" (1998: 81). Schonberg's prejudice coloured his criticism of the playwright's work to such an extent that he hoped to find seedy homosexual meaning beneath innocent reference on every page, and even concluded that Lorca had syphilis (Smith 1998: 80). He points also to those that would see the elemental struggle at the heart of their own cause united with that which is supposed to lie at the centre of Lorca's plays. He suggests that Paul Binding's reading of Lorca's plays (*Lorca: The Gay Imagination* (London: 1985)) imposes a solidarity on the women of the plays and gay men that is not justified by him (1989: 118). Binding adopts a classically allegorical point of view by imposing his own meaning on Lorca's

feisty women, specifically that these women's frustration has grown out of the playwright's own endless frustration as a gay man.

Smith spoke specifically about the difference between anecdote and allegory, which he interprets respectively as reference without resonance and resonance without reference (1998: 72). As has been seen, criticism of Lorca has been guilty, at times, of falling too heavily on one side or the other of this opposition. Yet it is clear that Lorca's plays operate on both levels and there is room for both of these modes to be adopted in approaching his work. Smith himself asserts that "the emergence of homosexuality as a theme in García Lorca criticism is thus split between anecdote and allegory" (1998: 73). In *El público*, for example, the references to Lorca's own experience of denied homosexual desires are unavoidable, whereas in other plays, veiled homosexual desire is signified without explicit reference to lived reality. The warning to be taken from this distinction is simply to let the texts speak for themselves rather than attempting to justify an artificial reading. In accordance with these ideals I hope neither to hunt for false autobiographical reference beneath the portrayal of meaning nor to delve beneath representation in search of absent meanings.

The final mode that can be identified in Lorca criticism is referred to by Smith (1989: Chapter 4) as elegiac. This stems from the playwright's sudden and dramatic death at such a young age. The iconic status he achieved in life, combined with the mystery surrounding his tragic death, results in a fascination with his life and its influence on his work. Few playwrights have had so much said or written about the biographical detail of their lives, and even fewer have their work so closely connected with their death. Lorca's plays are interpreted as "an unfinished monument to a life cut short" (1989: 110) such that his life and works merge, creating an "equivalence of life and work" (1998: 105). Hence the tragedy of Lorca's own life is read into his plays, and the sense of inevitability that surrounds death in his plays is transposed into his life.

Finally it is important to have an understanding of the ways that concepts of identity have been approached in critical discourse, because this theme will recur in later discussions. *El público* has been the focus of much of this discussion and has given rise to two opposing interpretations of the meaning of identity and the search to find it in many of Lorca's plays. Both sides of the argument agree that surface, in Lorca, is rarely to be accepted as ultimately

genuine as layers, masks, costumes and disguises are removed again and again to undermine confidence in superficial appearance as authentic identity. If critics agree that the exploration of identity is common to most of Lorca's plays, and that the characters hope to reveal an authentic inner self by a process of shedding outer layers, then they fundamentally disagree over the plays' comment on the achievability of this search for self discovery. The motifs of disguises and masks, and, more specifically, their removal, are to be found throughout Lorca's plays but never with such frequency as they are in *El público*, and interpretations of this play reveal the very different attitudes to the question of authentic identity. On the one hand, Gwynne Edwards has found endless optimism in the imagery of the play, suggesting that tirelessly rejecting our own masks and disguises leads us to the truth about our own identity. The X-rays at the windows are significant in his reading of the play, reminding the audience, who will watch the protagonist agonise over his sexual identity, that beneath every body is a core, a structure on which every external feature is hung. Images of a transparent moon and a wall of sand, he suggests, are further signs that the battle to penetrate the mask is ultimately achievable. The blown up image of a leaf is a reminder of the intensity required of the scrutiny that will peel back the layers successfully. He maintains that the three horses are the three men, a tenuous pointer to the forces of nature that operate on human identity in its most elemental form. There is something quite appealing about Edwards' reading of the play. Perhaps it is the tone of optimism that accompanies the suggestion that it is possible to achieve knowledge of inner identity through a long and difficult process of self scrutiny. He points to the episode when the Director emerges from behind the screen, transformed from the model of conservative sobriety into a picture of gay flamboyance, as evidence of the achievability of this search, and his argument seems reassuringly credible. He finds further confirmation in other plays too. He suggests that the servants' banter in *Bodas de sangre* fulfils a revelatory function in removing the fiancés' contented mask to "expose the reality beneath" (1980: 139).

Perhaps the appeal of Edwards' reading of the plays, for me at least, lies partly in an unwillingness to accept that authentic identity is a fiction, and that beneath the surface the human condition hides nothing but a depressing emptiness. This is Smith's interpretation of Lorca's theatre. In contrast to the

visual motifs put forward in defence of Edwards' reading, Smith focuses on the verbal wrestling that undermines belief in authentic identity. He refers to the conversation about ash apples and their historic connotations. The surface of the apple appears natural and genuine, but attempts to break the surface or peel the fruit will lead to disappointment as there is nothing authentic or pure to be found beneath the mask. Similarly he highlights the "rather abstract (indeed topographic) repartee" (1989: 129) that shatters the hope of identity (volume) lying beneath the mask (surface) by reinterpreting a lake as a thousand surfaces. If identity is reducible to a thousand masks then "the quest for depth or volume will be interminable" (1989: 129). According to this reading the search for identity in the plays is acknowledged to be real, but abortive, and the consequence is that identity of any sort is interpreted as nothing more than a function of the eternal and ongoing search. For this reason Smith shuns any suggestion that identities can be traced to an origin as this carries connotations of coherence or essence. Instead he favours the vocabulary of descent or emergence, descent being typically random and emergence being violent or out of control. This chaotic and uncontrollable path inspires Smith to class *El público* as a 'genealogical' text (1989: 130) in what he considers to be the Foucauldian sense of the word, acknowledging the plurality of influences operating on Lorca's characters and suggesting the instability of human identity. In summary, Smith considers that "metamorphosis in Lorca's drama (...) implies the lack of an authentic origin, and that the shimmering epidermis of his language conceals no hidden essence" (1989: 113).

More recently Sarah Wright has advanced a similar reading to Smith. Like him and Edwards, Wright acknowledges that the mask or, to use her term, the veil, is frequently represented in the plays in order that its removal might be the focus of attention, symbolising the difficult process of assessing one's own identity. She is also aware of the weight of meaning that this motif carries, as this simple image epitomises the conflict between known exterior and unknown interior, and she acknowledges a degree of inevitable anxiety surrounding the "suggestive dialectic of surface and depth" (2000: 41). She discusses the search for feminine identity in *Amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín* and suggests that the veil of a voracious female sexual appetite is constructed as an invitation to the spectator to question whether any authentic identity lies beneath

it: "If femininity is constructed as a mask/veil which begs one to look beneath it (...), then the question is posed – is there a truth or essence of femininity to be found" (2000: 53). She concludes that the female protagonist's search for essential identity is destined to failure: "This play seems to suggest that once the veils have been torn back, there is no essence to be discovered" (2000: 53). In agreement with Smith and Edwards, she also recognises that the fruitless self-scrutiny is, nonetheless, a highly motivated experience: "the epistemological search is illusory, although driven" (2000: 44). Wright goes beyond interpreting the journey of self discovery as perpetual and unproductive to discuss, not just self examination, but also the damage that can flow from the process. She suggests that the human condition is mocked in the plays on the basis of its self-indulgent desire to find authentic identity. Furthermore she draws out the ultimately fatal consequences for those characters in the plays who engage in this self-scrutiny. If the human condition is typified by a desire to strip away the masks, beneath which meaningful identity is supposed to lurk, then the human condition is ultimately self-destructive as beneath the disguise lies death. Again referring to *Amor de Don Perlimplín* she states:

The play simultaneously mocks our desire to know the truth and suggests that perhaps we would be wise not to look too closely. Our search for knowledge is nothing more than a game of the imagination where the only certainty is physical decay and death (2000: 61)

Fernández Cifuentes has made some interesting observations about Lorca's ability to convey, simply through his choice use of experimental styles and puppetry, a provocative message about the identity of his characters. He suggests that *El maleficio de la mariposa* differs from puppet theatre because the puppet epitomises a process of making life-size reality small, whereas actors in that play are occupied in making fantastical creatures larger than life. There can be no pretence of authentic identity, actors are neither themselves nor real bugs, but demonstrate the humans adopting a grotesque and exaggerated disguise. The effect on the audience of this portrayal is undeniably unsettling as the spectator is forced to confront the artificial masks which shield the human condition from scrutiny. That play serves an important role as an introduction to the theme of

identity in later works, as it forces the spectator to challenge and question the reality of the human masque. It is his puppet theatre that completes the picture started by *El maleficio de la mariposa*. An actor that assumes a role will, typically, perform the role with the aim of suggesting an outward projection of an inner identity. The puppet on, the other hand, does not suffer the same “contaminación” (Fernández Cifuentes, 1986: 68), being free from the pretence of action flowing from authentic identity. Instead the work is able to take on a life of its own. The audience is confronted with a representation of the human condition that does not even attempt to cling to the fiction of identity existing beneath the surface of the beings that walk and talk onstage. This is a stark image of humanity, devoid of essential identity.

Antonio Monegal (1994) has advanced another reading of *El público* that stresses the role of mask and disguise, considering that essential identity is shown to be illusive, and that only the search is real. Layer upon layer is removed during the frantic search for meaning beneath the surface but ultimately nothing more genuine than the exterior is revealed: “The naked body of *El público* is never exposed; underneath each disguise there is always another disguise, and they all coexist on stage, proclaiming the indeterminacy of the reading” (1994: 211). By expressing the frustration of the search for identity through the image of a naked body that is never exposed, Monegal seems, at first sight, to acknowledge that authentic identity exists. The frustration would then be a consequence of the ineffectual process of searching and not of the phantasmal quality of the identity searched for. He summarises the relationship between the process of searching and the thing searched for as follows: “Truth is invoked and demanded, but it is never uttered” (1994: 212). This interpretation differs to some of those already discussed insofar as it allows inner identity to persist as a reality, albeit a reality which is unknowable, remaining forever out of reach. Monegal also discussed the devastating consequences that flow from the futile but compelling search for the unknowable, suggesting that the “conflicts about identity and representation seem to reach a conclusion; they conclude with death” (1994: 212). If death is perceived as the natural consequence of an exploration of identity that cannot be satisfied in life, Monegal offers a note of optimism that isn’t found in Wright’s interpretation of the search as ultimately

fatal. He suggests that in death, finally, the process is completed and the truth can be known: "Only in death can we find the truth" (1994: 212).

Monegal has also made some interesting observations about transvestism in *El público*. He interprets the transvestite as a metaphor of confused identity, characteristics and personality traits being switched and suppressed to create a blend that is as discomfiting as it is inauthentic. He dubs this confusion "undecidability" (1994: 204), suggesting that it is permanent and irresolvable, and he highlights the extent to which this unease draws attention to masks and disguises, and demonstrates the impossibility of accurate representation of authentic inner identity. The undecidability of transvestism "questions the possibility of truth, of authentic representation, both in theater and in life, and conjures the masks and disguises that make it elusive" (1994: 206). He is interested to note that transvestism is turned upside down in the play. He interprets the moment the Director emerges in feminine costume as undermining typical connotations of the naked body. Instead of emerging from behind a screen naked, in essential form, the Director appears to have removed one mask to reveal another. Yet the mask which is revealed beneath is also, as was suggested by Edwards, presumed to signify the 'truth' that lies beneath the disguises. Instead of the male transvestite putting on a disguise to become female, the Director takes off a male disguise to become female. His female appearance is at once presumed authenticity beneath a costume and a costume beneath presumed authenticity. In summary, Monegal interprets inverted transvestism and the general confusion of identity as pointers that remind the audience of the unreliability of surface reality and perpetuate the eternal, but tragically abortive search for essential identity. Wright ascribes a similar function to androgyny in Lorca's theatre. Unlike the hermaphrodite, who is characterised by a state of being, the androgynous figure is categorised according to mere appearance. She too has referred to "undecidability" (2000: 90), regarding gender identities. Androgyny, she suggests, is a process of setting apart to create a liminal space in which to analyse and discuss surface identity. This discussion will ultimately be fruitless, but nonetheless it is interesting to note that androgyny, like transvestism, establishes confusion over identity and betrays surfaces to be unreliable.

A NEW APPROACH TO LORCA'S MEN

Having reflected on existing work relating to Lorca and also to Gender Studies, I will begin to outline the approach I intend to pursue in analysing the representation of masculinities in Lorca's theatre. In this respect De Beauvoir's famous essay *The Second Sex* is significant in that it expresses the contradiction at the heart of the relationship between masculine and feminine, specifically that the feminine is, in a sense, the only gender (the masculine being taken as synonymous with the broadly human). As was discussed in the first section of this introduction, it is in the light of an acceptance of binary sex and gender and of a high degree of determinism being inferred as working between the two polar opposites that the passage quoted there is to be read. But it is the relationship between the sexes, not between sex and gender, that De Beauvoir is renowned for analysing. Therefore, whilst I will be interested to find subtle ways that Lorca's theatre undermines the mapping of gender onto sex, or rejects a binary view of sex and gender in favour of a plurality of meanings, my focus will remain the question of male invisibility that De Beauvoir and others have discussed.

Butler summarises De Beauvoir's approach by suggesting that she, and many after her, "would argue that only the feminine gender is marked, that the universal person and the masculine gender are conflated, thereby defining women in terms of their sex" (1990b: 9). In contrast to Luce Irigaray (1977), who interprets the female sex as being unrepresentable (the male, fully excluding the female, being the only sex), De Beauvoir saw humanity as being male by default, thus defining the female sex as the Other in terms of the difference it is presumed to display. Whilst the male sex is transcendent, she observes, the female sex is immanent, and as a result the curbed female sex is, in truth, the only sex. Acknowledging this reality encourages recognition of the processes that shroud masculinity in a cloud of invisibility, akin to Butler's "universal person", and allow it to remain hidden from sight and discussion. The idea that in literature, as in life, masculinity can be subtly camouflaged is of great importance to the broader discussion of this study. It is rare for a reader or spectator to be aware of

a uniquely masculine discourse for the reasons outlined above and the practice of turning attention to focus specifically on masculinity lies at the very heart of this study. Within the reduced reality that Lorca's theatre creates I suggest that, by multiple processes and techniques, he ensures that the concepts of masculinity in the plays are given maximum attention. It is these processes and techniques I intend to outline. Today if there is a tendency towards assuming gender to be an artificial construct that is formed under the influence of a number of factors rather than an invariable condition or state, it is hardly surprising that a significant emphasis is placed on the representation of gender, not least of all because the manner of representation can easily be internalized into an understanding of the concept. I suggest that the way in which Lorca *represents* the concept of masculinity in his theatre is as important to this discussion as the statement he makes *about* masculinity. Does Lorca's theatre betray what Nancy Chodorow dubs the male "psychological investment in difference" (1994: 47)? That is to say, does Lorca emphasise oedipal separation from the mother by putting a spotlight on the female other, whilst "defining maleness as that which is basically human" (1994: 47)? These questions about the extent to which Lorca can be seen to allow masculinity to camouflage itself as the human 'norm' are fundamental to an analysis of the methodology adopted for the representation of gender in his plays.

The physicality of human presence that is intrinsic within the idea of theatre means that it will be appropriate to focus, above all, on the male characters in his plays as Lorca's methodology for representing masculinity is considered. Interestingly, however, a significant amount of time will be spent discussing the representation of masculinity not through male presence, but male *absence*. Gwynne Edwards briefly touches upon this technique in his discussion of *La casa de Bernarda Alba* and I hope to broaden this new perspective, suggesting that by repeatedly eulogising the masculinity of his male characters whilst they are physically absent, Lorca attempts a separation of sex (with its locus in the male body) and gender.

As the body of my thesis will discuss questions of process and method it is appropriate, at this early stage, to reflect on the question of the separation of sex from gender in Lorca's plays. Biological sex is the pedestal that is conventionally assumed to support gender and by infrequently alluding to their

separation Lorca calls broad issues of gender into question. It seems clear that masculinity can only remain hidden as long as the feminine can be looked upon as 'different', a status quo that itself relies on a bipolar understanding of both sex and gender. Going a step further than merely recognising sex and gender as distinct, one can question, as Butler does, whether gender need remain shackled to sex at all. As a result the determinist dichotomous understanding of sex, the foundation of the edifice that has kept masculinity hidden behind the façade of universal humanity, is removed and masculinity is no longer camouflaged.

Whilst I would not agree that Lorca's theatre in general represents the fundamental disassociation of gender from biological sex (on the contrary, some of the most interesting ways that Lorca places masculinity centre stage rely on the premise that gender and sex are indeed linked), there are some localised examples of what could be described as unsubtle shock tactics. *El público*, for example, shows a remarkable disregard for the conventional view of sex and gender, a disregard that gives weight to the suggestion that Lorca did not expect this piece to be staged in his lifetime. A significant example is the doubt that is established over the sex of the actor playing Juliet in the production taking place out of sight of the audience:

MUCHACHO 1. Yo descubrí la mentira cuando vi los pies de Julieta. Eran
pequeñísimos.

DAMA 2. ¡Deliciosos! No querrá usted ponerles reparos.

MUCHACHO 1. Sí, pero eran demasiado pequeños para ser pies de mujer.
Eran demasiado perfectos y demasiado femeninos. Eran
pies de hombre. (OC: 651-52)

Juliet is the epitome of femininity from the most famous of heterosexual love stories, so by suggesting that a man might successfully have performed the feminine gender ideal, Lorca strikes a blow to the belief that gender must always flow from sex. Yet historically the idea of a male actor playing the role of Juliet is entirely accurate. The irony of Shakespeare's female characters being played by young men has not been lost on Lorraine Helms, who suggests that it "could foreground the social construction of gender" (1990: 197). Similarly the spectator confronted by an idealised feminine character being 'outed' as a man is

inevitably going to question the meaning of gender labels as well as the fundamental relationship between sex and gender. Estudiante 5 suggests that the sex of Julieta is irrelevant with regard to his attraction to her: “ Parecía muy hermosa y si era un joven disfrazado no me importa nada” (OC: 659). The view of these independent (but fictional) spectators appears to legitimise the “truco del Director de escena”(OC: 659) and strengthens the impact on the genuine audience.

The spectator is likely to be equally taken aback when the Director reappears from behind the partition at the end of scene 1: “*Los hombres 2 y 3 empujan al Director. Este pasa por detrás del biombo y aparece por la otra esquina un muchacho vestido de raso blanco con una gola blanca al cuello. Debe ser una actriz*” (OC: 606). The earlier part of the scene establishes the male Director as a conventional representation of masculinity in the audience’s eyes, and yet on re-emerging from behind the partition, obviously played by a woman, the play once more suggests that what Butler dubbed a “radical discontinuity” (1990b: 6) between gender and sex is a possibility.

Examples of the removal of sex as the foundation that underpins gender can also be found in *Así que pasen cinco años*. A stage direction says of Amigo 2 “*De no ser posible que este papel lo haga un actor muy joven, lo hará una muchacha*” (OC: 526). The possibility of a female actor performing the masculinity of Amigo 2 once again presents the audience with the incongruity of female form and masculine character. On the other hand Lorca’s aim was to have the masculinity performed by an “actor muy joven”, suggesting that ideally he would have masculinity (gender) performed by an unsexed body and that a child who is not yet a fully developed man is as close to an unsexed body as he could hope to achieve. Whether masculinity is shown to rest on the shoulders of the female sex, or of a neutral body, the resultant disassociation of sex and gender is the same in the audience’s eyes.

During one of the surreal interludes of the play, confusion is created as the dead cat suggests he should not be referred to as male, but as female:

GATO. No me digas más gato.

NIÑO. ¿No?

GATO. Soy gata.

Niño. ¿Eres gata? (OC: 516)

It is questionable whether one can talk meaningfully of gender and sex as distinct, and therefore separable, with reference to an animal, and yet this is a surreal character (not only an animated dead cat, but a talkative animated dead cat) that takes on human characteristics by his association and conversation with the Niño. His character is initially perceived to be masculine, and, in the text, he is labelled as Gato every time he speaks, but he undermines this perception by referring to himself as “*gata*”, suggesting female sex. This subtly introduces the audience to the possibility of sex and gender becoming severed, creating ambiguity in the minds of those who relate to a character who, although not human, projects a human image.

Fox Keller imagines a “utopia in which gender and science run free, no longer grounded either by sex or by nature” (1997: 196). Whether or not Lorca’s audience would agree that such a situation would be utopian, they certainly witness occasional and radical suggestions that gender can be dislodged from sex. However, not all of the techniques he employs are this radical, in that he can weaken the bond between sex and gender without severing it altogether. This represents a distinct aspect of the process of suggesting the separation of sex and gender, whereby Lorca slowly chips away at the assumption that the masculine is exclusively rooted in the male by frequently attributing masculine characteristics to his female protagonists. The dominance and self assurance that typify many of Lorca’s empowered women (the Madre in *Bodas de sangre*, the Novia in *Así que pasen cinco años* and of course Bernarda Alba) could conventionally be described as masculine. Lima comments that Bernarda “has become manlike in dominance and attitude” (2001: 139). It is worth remembering that, in the case of the Madre and Bernarda Alba, the reason for their empowerment is the death of their husbands. On the other hand, there are many subtler references to essentially feminine women having some masculine traits. The Zapatera, whose femininity is praised and desired by the men of the village, says of herself “Que yo tengo la sangre de mi abuelo” (OC: 338). Similarly in *Bodas de sangre* we hear the following exchange:

NOVIA. Suelta he dicho.

CRIADA. Tienes más fuerza que un hombre.
NOVIA. ¿No he hecho yo trabajos de hombre? ¡Ojalá fuera! (OC:
732)

Whilst it could be said that it is the Novia's feelings of inadequacy or ineffectiveness as a woman that compel her to acknowledge or even exaggerate her masculine side, the impact of her statement clearly lies, in part, in the fact that the Novia's femininity has elsewhere been extolled. In *Yerma*, the protagonist's empty womb is a constant reminder of her status as a woman, both to herself and to the audience, and yet the way she conducts herself resonates, in her own ears at least, as being masculine: "mis pasos me suenan a pasos de hombre" (OC: 848). Lorca does not challenge the gender of the protagonists, opting instead to suggest questions about their sex by means of corporeal discourse. Why would any of these hyper-feminine protagonists have their *grandfather's* (not grandmother's) blood? Why would they have more physical strength than a *man*? Why would they have footsteps that ring out like those of a *man*? By comparisons with corporeal or biological traits of male individuals or men in general, Lorca's female protagonists find their sex undermined, albeit to a very mild degree. Lorca once again alludes to the separation of sex and gender so as to implore his audience not to accept culturally sanctioned norms of gender identity.

I have already made it clear that it is not my hope to prove that Lorca permanently severs the supposed sexual root of gender, as the evidence for this disassociation is not widespread. The action in most of the texts is contained within a framework of values and ideology of early 20th century Andalucía, including a dependence on the rural economy and a preoccupation with honour and the family. These frequently combine to reinforce traditional gender stereotypes rooted in a biologically defined sexual opposition, ensuring that the drama unfolds within the boundaries of a conventional acceptance of the association of gender with sex. On the other hand I do consider the examples I have offered to show a certain willingness on Lorca's part to entertain the possibility of moving away from what Butler calls "phantasmic efforts of alignment" (1993: 105) between sex and gender. With this in mind it is reasonable to conclude that Lorca encourages an inquiring attitude in the

audience with regard to concepts of masculinity by occasionally pulling them away from conventional understandings of gender being determined entirely by sex.

It is not only by occasionally severing sex from gender that Lorca employs defamiliarization techniques in order to build what I refer to as an inquiring attitude in his audience. A much broader strategy can be seen to underpin many of Lorca's plays, which unsettles the audience to distance them from an artificial reality and to prevent them from unthinkingly accepting its truth. These techniques are varied but are united in their effect: the establishment of an atmosphere of curiosity amongst the audience. It will be apparent that I liken these estrangement effects to the Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*, and yet their functions are quite different. To understand the similarities between Lorca's use of defamiliarization in a broad sense and the Brechtian concept of distancing, a summary of the German theorist's approach is necessary.

As a reaction against the conventionality and commercialism of the mainstream theatre in Germany in the 1920s Bertolt Brecht sought to provoke, in his audience, an opposite reaction to the cathartic experience to which they had become accustomed. Instead of being pulled into the readily accessible realism of the action he wanted, in fact, to push the audience away just sufficiently to remind them of their relationship to the action. As impartial spectators, rather than emotionally involved participants, the audience is given an objective viewpoint from which to analyse and critically assess the key themes of the play. Whilst being asked to disengage emotionally, the spectator is instead invited to engage in a more cerebral sense with the play. At first sight this new epic theatre seems an unusual path into the representation of masculinities in the theatre of Federico García Lorca. Indeed there is nothing to suggest that Lorca intended to provoke purely rational, intellectual analysis of his plays in the same way as Brecht, who hoped that by doing so his theatre would be a powerful tool for political change. But whilst Lorca's theatre is more about changing emotion than political ideology there is room for an aesthetic comparison with the estrangement effect that Brecht viewed as an instrument for achieving his aims. Whilst Brecht sought to highlight the historicity of a play by using the *Verfremdungseffekt* to sever his characters from the 'universally human', Lorca's distancing techniques achieve this severance to encourage reflection on

the plays' intense emotions, which might otherwise lead to Aristotelian catharsis. Brecht himself acknowledged the historical use of distancing techniques, particularly in Asian theatre, contrasting it to what Sacks terms "their more politicised use in German theatre" (Thomson & Sacks, 1994: 192), and even contemplated the evolution of his own techniques to become a "purely aestheticised V-effect, separated from its social reference and purpose" (Thomson & Sacks, 1994: 194). Processes of audience estrangement in general, then, construct a contemplative relationship between audience and action and as such are conducive to, and indicative of the methodologies to be discussed later in relation to drawing masculinities out of the 'universally human'. Therefore it will be interesting to spend some time discussing the distancing techniques at work in Lorca's plays.

Thompson (1999) highlights the particular success of Lorca's theatre as poetic performance. Rejecting a reliance on the inclusion of self contained poetic fragments within a non-poetic framework, Lorca subtly and inseparably infuses the whole of his drama with poetry. As Thompson makes clear, instances of dialogue in the form of verse are rare, whereas the use of music and verse within the logic of the drama (lullabies and wedding songs in *Bodas de sangre* for example) is relatively frequent. Close attention is paid to setting the mood that acts as a backdrop to the action, for example through the use of lighting, colour and symbolism in set design. Lorca's skill as a poet and playwright ensures that the poetic element is not merely bolted onto the drama, but is constantly operating beneath the surface of the production, such that the audience is invited to consider its response to an overall poetic structure, rather than being drawn into the illusion of realist presentation. By stating in his editor's introduction that, for Lorca, "the boundary between lyrical poetry and drama was hazy and often non existent" (1962: 11), Durán highlights the extent to which poetry and theatre are fused in the playwright's work. Johnston has commented that "the poetry of Lorca's own original Spanish text has in performance something of the effect of an estrangement – and specifically in the way in which Brecht described his *Verfremdungseffekt*" (1999: 62), although he suggests this to be a rejection of behaviourism rather than an invitation to rational analysis.

Lorca also limits the audience's identification with the emotions of the action by allowing the coherent flow to be disrupted. Occasionally these

interruptions are poetic dialogue, such as the Luna's monologue in *Bodas de sangre*, which stand out as distinct from the rest of the text and therefore interrupt the continuity of the spectator's experience. More frequently these disruptive events are surreal insertions within the comparative realism of the rest of the play, such as the conversation between the dead child and cat in *Así que pasen cinco años*. These episodes often appear separate from the main storyline to such an extent that one could imagine cutting them altogether. Whilst at first sight their removal might only represent the loss of a comparatively peripheral part of the story, in reality they often serve to illuminate or give meaning to the story they punctuate, and in this sense can be interpreted as examples of a Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*. Similarly the Leñadores in *Bodas de sangre* provide insight and offer comment on the drama they interrupt without directly influencing events onstage, not unlike a traditional Greek chorus. Although not surreal in nature like the events mentioned earlier, they, along with all the episodes under discussion here, serve a disruptive function that distances the audience from the continuous flow of action and causes the spectator to critically assess the message being presented to them.

The Brechtian ideal can also be achieved by shattering notions of originality in performance, that is to say removing the "illusion of watching an ordinary, unrehearsed event" (Brecht, 1964: 36). Reminding the audience that they are in a theatre watching a performance prevents them from grounding themselves in the constructed reality onstage, pointing instead beyond the action to the ideas that the repetitive performance conveys. An emphasis on the process of performance is apparent in many of Lorca's plays, most noticeably in the direct link that is established between the director (or the playwright) and the audience. What are the monologues of the narrator figures who introduce *El maleficio de la mariposa* and *Tragicomedia de Don Cristobal y la señá Rosita* if not the words of the playwright spoken directly to the "Hombres y mujeres" (OC: 105) of the audience? The playwright reminds us of his creative influence over the production less subtly in *La Zapatera prodigiosa* and *Comedia sin título*, both of which are introduced by the "autor", and in *Retablillo de Don Cristobal*, in which the "poeta" not only speaks the prologue, but then argues with the "director" over the wording of the script. The audience is reminded of the playwright even more abruptly in *Los sueños de mi prima Aurelia*, where a small

child claims “Me llamo Federico García Lorca” (OC: 1119). The spectator is made to feel this link to the process of writing and staging most powerfully in *El público*, where scene 1 takes place in “el cuarto del director” (OC: 599) and the whole play is, arguably, a reflection of the author’s own inner (sexual) identity. The link that is established between the audience and the creative mind of the poet, playwright and director, is, in the plays in which it is most apparent, a forceful Brechtian distancing technique that encourages the spectator to consider the “sermón” (*Comedia sin título*, OC: 1070) of the creator. These figures create a degree of ambiguity by at once participating in the action as characters and guiding the spectator’s thoughts as echoes of a superior creative force. Wright (2000) discusses these figures who introduce the play as ‘tricksters’ or ‘agents provocateurs’ who invite the audience to participate in a dialogue centred on the drama that is about to unfold. She observes that, “rather than escapist entertainment, this type of theatre will focus the audience to face up to things” (2000: 33).

Beyond emphasising the onstage action as performance through the creation of a direct and personal link with the director or playwright, Lorca also highlights the wider creative process at work by using strong metatheatrical devices. *El público* contains references to an offstage production of *Romeo and Juliet* and the actors from this performance are not only discussed in the onstage action, but also make occasional appearances. The arrival onstage of the Traspunte clearly undermines the theatrical illusion of authentic and original events unfolding in front of the audience. Similarly in *Comedia sin título* spectators are reminded that the action is fictitious and constructed by onstage presence of the Apuntador, the Traspunte, the Actriz, the Tramoyista and even the Espectadores. In *Así que pasen cinco años* a recognisable early scene is recreated in Act 3 within a miniature theatre on the stage, a clear reminder to the audience to interpret what takes place on stage as a carefully constructed theatrical unity, and not the natural evolution of a course of events. Lastly it seems clear that it is harder for the audience of a play intended for puppet theatre (or for performance in a style reminiscent of puppets), *Tragicomedia de Don Cristóbal y la señá Rosita* for example, to be drawn into a cathartic experience than the audience of a performance by human actors. That audience is inevitably conscious of the omnipresent creative control of those who are pulling the

strings. With this in mind it is worth noting “Lorca’s use of what are essentially puppet-play techniques” (Gwynne Edwards, 1999: 51) in several of his plays, such as *La zapatera prodigiosa* and *Amor de Don Perlimplín*. Similarly his use of masks serves to remind the audience that ordinary men and women temporarily adopt a role on stage to present a message, again reminding us of the inauthentic nature of the production: “Masks serve in Lorca’s text to parody the real (and) to disassociate the spectators from fixed identities” (Smith, 1989: 139).

The epic theatre developed as a critical response to very specific cultural issues and sought to bring about radical political change. It is not my intention to give a complete account of Lorca’s theatre as being intrinsically Brechtian, because, “unlike Brecht, he [Lorca] would not expect people to rush from the theatre to right the wrongs portrayed there” (Durán, 1962: 14). Instead it is the aesthetic effect on the audience of the *Verfremdungseffekt* that I have compared to Lorca’s plays, suggesting that a similar process of distancing is at work, preventing a passive, cathartic experience in the theatre and promoting active engagement with the themes that are offered for contemplation. It is clear that not all agree that Lorca intended these examples to have the effect of distancing his audience in order to encourage discussion and analysis. Johnston, for example, argues that “Lorca does not superimpose an estrangement effect on his theatre in order to prompt the spectator towards a rigidly rational analysis” (1999: 63). Yet these and other examples remain prominent features of Lorca’s theatre which, by its very nature, encourages the audience to focus on the issues at its heart, one of which, I shall argue, is the concept of masculinity. Estrangement does not, of itself, draw attention to individual masculinities in the plays, but it can be interpreted as a broad strategy used to establish an atmosphere of curiosity which prepares the audience to be receptive to the effects of other methodologies that will be discussed later. I suggest that the atmosphere of curiosity that I refer to is comparable to the liminal space that Wright (2000) believes to be created in Lorca’s theatre through various processes that challenge the perception of authenticity, such as the blurring of boundaries and the crossing of borders. The construction of this liminal space or atmosphere of curiosity is a highly significant part of an ongoing process that seeks to make masculinity visible. The omnipresent challenge to the very notion of fixed beliefs stimulates spectators to re-evaluate firmly held assumptions and prepares them to be receptive to

processes that isolate masculinity as a topic for debate. These are the very processes I intend to outline in this thesis.

CHAPTER 1: MEN CAPTURED VISUALLY



SPECULAR SELF-ANALYSIS

Previously an outline was given of wide-ranging strategies employed by Lorca to promote curiosity, even a degree of a unease, making the spectator receptive to the specific processes I shall now discuss, which are aimed at persuading the audience to contemplate individual male characters. By encouraging the audience to engage in critical discourse, assessing the men of the play with a critical gaze, Lorca goes beyond simply making the characters distinctly observable, guaranteeing that they are actually observed. The very fact of the audience witnessing a man on stage who is seen to be assessing his own identity is sometimes the call to action in this respect. The process by which a man studies a portrayal of himself is made tangible in *La zapatera prodigiosa* when the Zapatero is seen “mirándose en un espejo y contándose las arrugas” (OC: 315). When the male protagonist of a play is studying himself to this degree, it is clear that the audience is invited to look on with an equally critical gaze, contemplating not only individual masculinities, but also the broader concept of masculinity.

Así que pasen cinco años is another pertinent example of this specular self-analysis. The overall impression of the play is certainly dreamlike and an interpretation of the whole action as one self-contained dream is possible, with the inevitable result that it is viewed as the surreal expression of the subconscious. With this in mind it is unsurprising that some have commented that “the characters of *When five years have passed* are seen to be different facets of a single individual” (Edwards 1980: 99), or that the play represents “fragmentary elements of a masculine psyche” (Wright, 2000: 66). It is to be assumed that this surreal act of self-examination is an expression of the subconscious of its main protagonist, the Joven. The analysis of each component of this exploded self is all the more authentic for not being restrained by the censorship of the conscious mind, and reaches a focus on the idealized masculinity of the Jugador de Rugby. If the play is interpreted along these lines, then there is no room for reading the athletic young man, with his phallic cigars,

good looks and “gran vitalidad”(OC: 532) as the object of the Joven’s homosexual desire. Instead “the figure of the Rugby Player, all masculinity and animation, [...] is the young man’s idealized vision of himself”(Edwards, 1980: 104), or at the very least the idealized vision of masculinity he fears the Novia is comparing him to. As the audience witnesses the protagonist playing out on stage a subconscious assessment of the reflection of multiple accounts of his own masculinity, including the fantasy of an idealised self, they are inevitably drawn to participate by judging the protagonist according to their own standards. In critically assessing the performance of his gender they also compare him to the epitome of masculinity that he himself has brought into being.

Edwards interprets *El público* in a similar way suggesting that whereas *Así que pasen cinco años* portrays the subconscious self-analysis of an average heterosexual male, *El público* offers the audience an account of the Director’s attempt to delve beneath the mask of his own exterior in search of the essence of his own identity. He points to the X-ray motif, the close-up image of a leaf, the transparent moon and even references to theatre under the sand as being indicative of this play’s role as a constructed reflection of the playwright’s identity, which acts as a vehicle in the search for authentic inner essence. Those that paint Lorca as being constantly tormented by the internal conflict of his sexuality would warn that for Lorca, this journey can be nothing but highly charged, and would undoubtedly be quick to agree with Edwards’ statement; “The transformation of the Director into the figure of *a young boy dressed in white satin* reveals to us immediately, with no need for words, his homosexuality” (1980: 87, original italics). Paul Smith on the other hand suggests that the apparent revelation of the Director’s true identity is nothing more than an artificial symptom of searching for a non-existent inner essence. Such rapid changes in characters’ identities are to be interpreted, he claims, as a “focus or locus of discursive warfare” (1989: 127). Keen to emphasise that there is no true internal identity to be located, he, in contrast to Edwards, prefers to emphasise references to ash apples as well as the following exchange:

CABALLO BLANCO 1. Un lago es una superficie.

HOMBRE 1. ¡O un volumen!

CABALLO BLANCO 1. Un volumen son mil superficies. (OC: 638)

Whilst Edwards and Smith markedly disagree about whether or not *El público* portrays human essence as real and locatable, they agree insofar as the play is fundamentally a portrayal of the Director's desire for, and journey in search of, a meaningful inner identity. The implications of both scholars' interpretations of this play on the debate over the *meaning* of masculinity will be discussed later. At this point it is enough to conclude that Lorca encourages the audience to participate in an examination of masculinity by offering one man's elaborate quest to understand the meaning of his own masculinity by projecting his identity on stage in a fragmented form, in order to gain an external perspective and make an objective assessment.

* * * *

THE GAZE:

DIRECTION OF DESIRE INVERTED

The spotlight that was seen, in the previous section, to be cast onto a plurality of reconstructions or facets of individual men by themselves encourages the audience to adopt a critical mode in looking upon them, but one in which the man is as much active observer (the audience join his own viewpoint) as passive observed. He cannot be captured by a predatory stare if he invites the onlooker to join him in his scrutiny. With regard to men in film looking upon themselves or their like Mulvey has observed that "according to the principles of the ruling ideology and the psychical structures that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification" (1989: 20). But a sexual gaze that is loaded with desire and targeted at male characters does operate in Lorca's plays, once more placing men under intense scrutiny. In this regard I will argue that the culturally sanctioned 'direction of desire', whereby the active male gazes upon the passive figure of the female is reversed, that this reversal is prominent in Lorca's theatre, and that it is a significant device for drawing attention to his male characters. However, before charting the inversion of the sexual gaze in the drama it is important to provide some background to the gaze as a theoretical device.

Those who would agree with Freudian theorisation suggest that the Oedipus complex is ultimately resolved by the construction of a female “other” as the male can no longer identify himself with his mother. The stability of male identity is therefore dependent on the perpetuation of this opposition, giving men what Chodorow terms “a psychological investment in difference” (1994: 47). Rampant male sexuality, centred on the phallus as “transcendental signifier” (1989: 47) and the female lack of the penis are emphasized in order to continually brand the female as both different and deficient. The result is an exaggerated account of difference which, in order to perpetuate itself, must abhor the absence or lack of a penis, and is manifested in what Luce Irigaray has dubbed the “*horreur du rien à voir*” (That is the “horror of nothing to see”, 1977: 25). It is men, therefore, who must emphasise their own sexuality by being active, even predatory.

As this dynamic is transposed into literature it manifests itself in the very act of a man, having the function of bearer of the gaze, looking upon a woman. The ongoing need to demonstrate separateness by exaggerated sexuality leads to a visual experience of women that is loaded with sexual meaning. Mulvey’s work interpreting these power inequalities in the visual medium of the cinema has been highly influential in this respect. Referencing Freud’s isolation of scopophilia (pleasure in looking) as a component instinct of sexuality she observes that deriving this pleasure necessarily creates an imbalanced relationship between one who is actively looking and one who is passively observed. Furthermore the man is invariably the subject, having the power to look, and the woman who is objectified, embodying what Mulvey termed “to-be-looked-at-ness”. She observes that, “in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly” (1989: 19). There has been much filmic analysis, after Mulvey, using the gaze as a theoretical device, especially in relation to the peculiarities of that genre such as choices of camera angle and framing. But there is no doubt that the gaze as a device can inform a study of the theatre as an alternative visual medium.

What is most interesting in the context of this discussion is not the fact of this desiring gaze being seen at work in the plays but rather the reversal of what I

have referred to as the direction of desire: “No es lo mismo una mujer mirando unas rosas que una mujer mirando los muslos de un hombre” (OC: 833). These mysterious words from Act 2 Scene 1 of *Yerma* express the intensity and the power of a gaze that is loaded with sexual desire, and which targets not the female form, but the male. The suggestion of a woman being active in gazing at the male body at once depersonalises, objectifies, and sexualizes the man. That Lorca chooses a man’s thighs, which can be interpreted as framing his sexual organs, as the focus of this female stare ensures that no one could suggest that this gaze is in any way asexual. Neither can it be argued that this gaze is fleeting or clandestine. On the contrary, the genuine and permanent sense of power behind this gaze is evoked by the Lavandera 4 when she says of Yerma “cuando no lo mira, porque está sola, porque no lo tiene delante, lo lleva retratado en los ojos” (OC: 834). Lorca suggests the possibility of a continuous, pervasive and sexual gaze that is aimed at the male form and which is both inescapable and discomfiting in an almost violatory manner. A similar objectification and sexualization of the male form is hinted at in Scene 5 of *Tragicomedia de Don Cristóbal y la seña Rosita*, when the Jovencita sings “Tengo los ojos puestos en un muchacho, delgado de cintura, moreno y alto” (OC: 141). This female looking at an anonymous man’s slim waist can be interpreted as being loaded with sexual desire and her willingness to recount it in song demonstrates that once again there is nothing illicit about the powerful sexual gaze that she casts, and she makes no attempt to hide it.

Lorca objectifies the male characters of his plays in order that they not only be objects of a sexual gaze originating from onstage, but also of a critical gaze originating from within the audience. In order to understand the full extent of this strategy it is important to interpret the texts in the light of a culture dominated by the rigid conventions of the Catholic Church. The romantic discourse of Lorca’s least experimental plays takes its lead from these conservative codes of morality, including the strict conformity to heterosexual norms. In the light of this heterosexual discourse, which underpins the majority of Lorca’s plays, it can be argued that by presenting female characters whose point of view is accessible to the audience, Lorca necessarily distances and objectifies the male. *La casa de Bernarda Alba* illustrates this very well. Given that its spectators read that it is a ‘drama de mujeres’ (Subtitle to the play) even

before taking a seat, and that no male appears onstage, it seems inevitable that their perception will be founded on the female point of view of the women they encounter. Critics have suggested that a female viewpoint is established in the majority of Lorca's plays: Edwards, for example, highlights frustration of female emotion as a theme that is central to his work (1980). My reading of the texts concurs with this understanding, in that the female point of view prevails in the majority of Lorca's plays, such that the audience watches them through female eyes and perceives the male as a distanced object of desire.

Shortly I will draw attention to the use of character development as a tool for ensuring that the women of the plays be credible channels through which the audience's gaze can be recast. But first it is fascinating to observe that the identification of the audience with the female character, insofar as they adopt her outlook and sexualise the male characters, precisely reverses the practice observed by Mulvey. She considers the woman to be the object of the spectator's gaze in two distinct modes:

That of the spectator in direct scopophilic contact with the female form displayed for his enjoyment (...) and that of the spectator fascinated with the image of his like set in an illusion of a natural space, and through him gaining control and possession of the woman within the diegesis (1989: 21).

In Lorca's theatre, I argue that the audience is in direct scopophilic contact with the *male* form, and is fascinated with a *female* "like, set in an illusion of natural space", through whom they control and possess the *men* who inhabit the drama. I suggest that the textual evidence I put forward in this chapter demonstrates that the inversion of the gaze, as formulated by Mulvey, is complete in Lorca's plays.

It is not hard to find substantial evidence in the plays to give weight to the claim that Lorca gives precedence to the female point of view in his plays, thereby positioning the male characters as different and as objects of sexual desire. Lorca is aware that for his women to fulfil the role that Mulvey dubbed the 'surrogate', that is, credible channels for the audience's perception of the action and for their objectification of men, it is fundamental that their characters be developed as autonomous and self directing. This independence of thought is

driven home by a repeated emphasis on their desire to make choices. Lorca overturns the stereotype of a good Christian woman who leaves decisions to her husband and acts only on his will and in so doing he spotlights the female desire and ability to make choices. At once they become a more plausible channel for the audience's attention and when their readiness to make sexual and romantic choices in particular is affirmed, the spectator, peering through the window of female sexual desire, inevitably gazes at the male. The Zapatera's opening monologue of *La zapatera prodigiosa* ensures that her ability to make decisions and direct her own life is drawn to the audience's attention from the outset. Whilst her tears reveal a degree of dissatisfaction (due largely to the venomous tongues of local gossips), she does not attempt to deceive herself by pretending that anyone else made the decision for her:

Cállate, larga de lengua, penacho de catalineta, que si yo lo he hecho...., si yo lo he hecho, ha sido por mi propio gusto... Si no te metes dentro de tu casa te hubiera arrastrado, viborilla empolvada. Y esto digo para que me oigan todas las que están detrás de las ventanas (OC: 309)

This early insight into her character reveals two things of particular interest. Firstly, as has just been suggested, it is clear that the Zapatera made the choice herself. In this respect the female standpoint is privileged as the play opens by reminding the audience of a woman's right to make a decision, even perhaps to make the wrong decision. Secondly there is no attempt to shy away from admitting having made the decision herself. A parallel can be drawn between those female characters mentioned previously, whose desiring gaze was not timid or fleeting, but bold and permanent, and the Zapatera. Her willingness to defend her choice in the street so vocally suggests that Lorca aimed to ensure that her mental resolve could not be interpreted as one temporary moment of uncharacteristic determination in a lifetime of female indecision.

In *Bodas de sangre* the female right to choose is made even more apparent, as it can be suggested that the essential conflict at the centre of the play is reducible to the grave decisions taken by its female protagonist. As if to remind the spectator that the Novia is not the archetypal heroine, who surrenders herself fully to the hyper-masculinity of the male hero figure, but is in fact a self-

directing individual whose own decisions contribute to her tragic fate, the following exchange takes place:

LEONARDO.	Ya dimos el paso; ¡calla! Porque nos persiguen cerca y te he de llevar conmigo.
NOVIA.	¡Pero ha de ser a la fuerza!
LEONARDO.	¿A la fuerza? ¿Quién bajó primero las escaleras?
NOVIA.	Yo las bajé.
LEONARDO.	¿Quién le puso al caballo bridas nuevas?
NOVIA.	Yo misma. Verdad.
LEONARDO.	¿Y qué manos me calzaron las espuelas?
NOVIA.	Estas manos. (OC: 783-84)

Her agency is made apparent to the audience here as she herself denies that Leonardo has in any way forced her hand.

Issues of choice recur in a number of Lorca's plays, as his strong female protagonists demonstrate their right and their will to make their own decisions. This reinforcement of female agency is most remarkable when it comes to questions of romantic or sexual partners. As María reads aloud from a novel in *Los sueños de mi prima Aurelia*, adding her own commentary to the text, she identifies herself with the female character from the narrative. As a result when María comments that Liduvina "no está para el primero que llega" (OC: 1100) she is proclaiming her own independence of thought as well as that of the heroine. Whilst a certain association is created between María and the discernment of Liduvina, there is, nonetheless, a degree of distance between the character onstage and the female discernment being recounted. This gap collapses altogether amid the highly charged exchanges of *La casa de Bernarda Alba*. Adela, foreshadowing her ultimate rejection of the influence that others have over the decisions that affect her so closely, says "Mi cuerpo será de quien yo quiera" (OC: 1013). The Novia in *Así que pasen cinco años* is equally adamant with regard to her right and determination to maintain a firm grip over the direction of her own life. In a brutally honest outburst at the Joven she says "¡Soy yo la que se quiere quemar en otro fuego!" (OC: 547). Indeed the title of the play is nothing less than the dictation of terms of a relationship made not by

one female protagonist, but by two. Yet again the audience is encouraged, even before entering the theatre, to accept female terms as the basis for perceiving the events that unfold onstage.

Paul Smith has also discussed the importance of female choice in the plays of Federico García Lorca. The prominence of female liberty to select their own sexual partner and the accompanying “superfluity of the male” (1998: 87) has, he observes, more in common with nature than with human society. Like the female praying mantis, Lorca’s women have ultimate (and devastating) control over the selection of their partners.

A reflection of the underlying emphasis on female choice in the plays is the extent to which they also highlight the multiple options open to female protagonists. As if to accentuate the sense of female agency that allows the audience to adopt a predominantly female stance in observing the action, a plurality of male sexual partners, or potential sexual partners, is fundamental to several plays. In *Amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín* Perlimplín’s comical naivety and blinkered devotion contrast starkly with Belisa’s evident desire to play the field. Indeed her mother advocates marrying Perlimplín not because of his personal qualities or because she believes he will make her daughter happy, but because she views the match as a launch pad for a greater assortment of romantic liaisons:

MADRE.

(A Belisa) Don Perlimplín tiene muchas tierras; en las tierras hay muchos gansos y ovejas. Las ovejas se llevan al mercado. En el mercado dan dinero por ellas. Los dineros dan la hermosura... Y la hermosura es codiciada por los demás hombres.
(OC: 465)

Later in the play it becomes clear that Belisa needed very little encouragement to abandon virtuous monogamy. The shining cuckold’s horns that Perlimplín wakes up wearing after their wedding night are testament to five illicit encounters with five different men, each entering through a different balcony and each symbolic of a people: “Representantes de las cinco razas de la tierra. El europeo, con su barba; el indio, el negro, el amarillo y el norteamericano”(OC: 480). The

boldness of her promiscuity and the motherly encouragement referred to previously qualify her actions, suggesting that Belisa should be interpreted not so much as a loose woman, being used and abused by dominant men, but more along the lines of a *femme fatale*, in cool, calculating control of the relationships she chooses to enter into. It is also clear that Lorca did not intend the fact of her refracted sexual gaze falling on a plurality of men to be echoed in the male characters, who would typically be expected to be the active bearers of the gaze rather than the passive objects of it. Not only is it clear from the beginning that Perlimplín is incapable and unwilling to make his own decisions, but furthermore no alternative options are presented as possible for him. He is oblivious to concepts of choice or plurality of options:

BELISA.	(<i>Intrigada</i>) Pero ¿y las otras mujeres?
PERLIMPLÍN.	¿Qué mujeres?
BELISA.	Las que tú conociste antes
PERLIMPLÍN.	Pero ¿hay otras mujeres? (OC: 471)

That Perlimplín is to adopt a more mysterious and attractive persona later in the play, “with the purpose of satisfying Belisa by proxy” (Wright, 2000: 41), only emphasises this contrast further as one man becomes two very different male characters. In this respect concepts of choice are played out for Belisa, not only in the breadth of men available to her, but also in the plurality of identity confined within the person of her husband.

In *La zapatera prodigiosa* Lorca repeats the motif of a marriage in which the wife is faced with an array of potential lovers whilst no suitor other than his wife is shown to be possible for the husband. Although the Zapatera does not stray from her husband as Belisa does, and the Zapatero, unlike Perlimplín, is old and wise, the plays are fundamentally alike in showing selection of partners for the wife but no such variety for the husband. Having hinted at a sense of regret about her choice of husband, the audience witnesses the Zapatera dancing merrily with imaginary boyfriends who, presumably, are not mere chimeras but reflections of potential suitors whose attentions she once courted: “*Se levanta y se pone a bailar como si lo hiciera con novios imaginarios*” (OC: 325). The interruption by a gentleman’s compliments translates her fantasy into a tangible

male presence, adding credibility to her reminiscence. The opening of Act II, immediately following the discovery that her husband has left “para no volver más” (OC: 333), sees her framed with the man whose compliments earlier cut short her dream, as well as two other young men. It is clear that a heightened sense of realism is desirable in the portrayal of these men: “*Al actor que exagere lo más mínimo en este tipo, debe el director de escena darle un bastonazo en la cabeza. Nadie debe exagerar. La farsa exige siempre naturalidad*” (OC: 336). An attentive reading of this introduction might undermine my continuing assertion that the direction of desire with regard to the gaze has been reversed. The character to whom Lorca’s appeal for realism principally refers is, just prior to the above quote, described entering the room: “Lleva los brazos caídos y mira de manera tierna a la zapatera” (OC: 336). Interpreting this as a stereotypical male gaze capturing and objectifying the female form is made easier by the comparison the playwright draws with the cinema. Yet this rare example of the female being gazed upon with desire does not impact significantly on the audience as it is immediately combated by the Zapatera who “deja de fregar y mira al mozo fijamente” (OC: 336). By returning the stare the woman is once again empowered and her gaze reinstated, such that the man in the doorway is reduced to be one among many whom she can freely gaze upon. The comparison with *Amor de Don Perlimplín con su Belisa en su jardín* extends to the Zapatero’s perceived lack of options. He sums this contrast up himself succinctly when he suggests “las mujeres les gustan a todos los hombres, pero todos los hombres no les gustan a todas las mujeres” (OC: 315).

Although these two plays in particular share the same fundamentally imbalanced dynamic with regard to issues of choice, many others display examples of women who have found a plurality of partners on offer. *Tragicomedia de Don Cristóbal y la Señá Rosita* is one such example, the fearsome matriarch of *La casa de Bernarda Alba* has been married to two different gentlemen, and the Vieja 1 who gives council to Yerma has not only been married twice, but also points to the countless others she turned down by saying to Yerma; “Pude haberme casado con un tío tuyo” (OC: 817).

In summary it can be seen that an emphasis both on the female ability to make autonomous decisions and on the multiple options that are the basis of those decisions recurs again and again. I suggest that building the female

characters of the plays to be self-directing individuals empowers them in relation to the men they appear alongside, and, in light of the predominance of heterosexuality in most of plays, results in the reversal of the direction of desire, causing men, uncharacteristically, to be objectified by being gazed upon by both the women and the audience.

* * * *

THE REJECTION OF COLLECTIVE MALE IDENTITY

Earlier in this chapter it was argued that there is, in Lorca's plays, the opportunity for an uninhibited and empowered gaze to fall upon male characters in a way that is moulded to be inquisitive and analytical. Before continuing to the next chapter, which will analyse the sexualisation of the processes currently under discussion, it is interesting to note Lorca's strategic reluctance to show a group of men. In *El maleficio de la mariposa* "un grupo de curianas campesinas" (OC: 34) enters onstage. The group of widows that brings *Bodas de sangre* to a solemn conclusion is surrounded in the closing scenes by "las vecinas, arrodilladas en el suelo" (OC: 799). In the opening scene of Act 2 of *Yerma* Lorca instructs that "las lavanderas están situadas en varios planos" (OC: 830), and in Act 3 Scene 2 the "Macho" and the "Hembra" are surrounded by "muchachas corriendo, con largas cintas en las manos" (OC: 869). The wake that opens *La casa de Bernarda Alba* is attended by "doscientas mujeres" (OC: 979). Whilst there are clearly occasions on which multiple male characters appear onstage together, these instances differ fundamentally from the female gatherings just cited. Whilst every female group cited is clearly intended to be interpreted as an anonymous collective, any occasion on which several males are onstage at once is established as a meeting of individual and distinct male characters². Lorca's aim to allow only women to be presented together as one homogeneous unity is underlined most forcibly when he uses one plural noun to refer to a group who make no contribution to the dialogue at all. In this respect the group

² Occasional references are made to groups of anonymous male characters off stage, such as the Segadores in *La Casa de Bernarda Alba*. Yet their banishment from the stage is, in itself, interesting, and is discussed further at p76.

of weeping Vecinas in *Bodas de sangre* might just as easily be described as a stage prop used to heighten the overall impression of despair, rather than a gathering of independent and individually relevant characters. Lorca never presents any group of men as being this uniform, ensuring that they are almost always introduced individually, often by name, and that a man rarely appears alongside other men without some contribution to the dialogue, even when he is not the protagonist. It is not Lorca's willingness to use a collective of women as a theatrical device that is startling, but his refusal to do so with his male characters. It seems self evident that by refusing to allow the audience to witness an anonymous group of men, Lorca is also refusing to allow individual representations of masculinity to be subsumed into a collective masculine identity, thereby effectively preventing any suggestion that this collective identity represents the universally human. In short by maintaining the individual stage presence of his male characters, Lorca makes a profound statement to his audience, suggesting that these characters be considered as individual and varied representations of masculinity, rather than as representatives of a universal human condition.

CHAPTER 2: MEN CAPTURED SEXUALLY



THE PROMINENCE OF FEMALE DESIRE

In Lorca's theatre I have argued that a meaningful gaze, loaded with desire, originates with strong, independently minded women and focuses on men. I have shown that this relationship of observer and observed is a predatory one, through which the passive man is objectified. In terms of the dichotomy of power that operates within this relationship the woman is readily defined as active. Yet outside the specific meanings associated with that power dichotomy, the one gazing is invariably passive, in the sense of being inactive. Although the relationship of dominance that is constructed through the gaze can be mirrored in, and continue throughout an episode of physical (rather than visual) intimacy, direct sexual contact, whether suggested or actual, should be discussed separately. There is, in these plays, an accompanying discourse, which is sexualised more by direct and explicit reference than by indirect inference from a voracious sexual gaze, and which continues to undermine the stereotypical sexual dynamic that paints man as a creature of appetite and woman as mere sustenance to satisfy that appetite. The reversal of this relationship in the plays sees women established as having deep desires that are to be satisfied by men. As will be made clear, this is achieved by a twofold emphasis on female sexual desire and on a heightened sense of eroticism surrounding the male body.

Repetitive allusions to female thirst are unavoidably obvious suggestions that the explicitly sexual discourse of the plays promotes accounts of female desire. It is not necessary to catalogue every use of this motif, but mention must be made of it nonetheless. The excessive heat and dryness that are often vocalised accompany references that are made time after time in the plays to women who are thirsty and in need of water. For example, as her frustration intensifies Yerma expresses her emotions in terms of thirst: "Quiero beber agua y no hay vaso" (OC: 845). She adds later "de mí sé decir que he aborrecido el agua de estos pozos" (OC: 852). The all-female scenes that are painted in the words of *La casa de Bernarda Alba* are positively saturated by the tension that results

from the frustration of intense female desire and this yearning is expressed in similar terms:

ADELA.	Voy a beber agua. (<i>Bebe en un vaso de la mesa</i>)
LA PONCIA.	Yo te suponía dormida.
ADELA.	Me despertó la sed. (OC: 1055)

The dryness is lamented not only by the young, but also the older generation of women. By saying “hace años no he conocido calor igual” (OC: 980) the *Mujer 1* echoes the words of the *Madre* in *Bodas de sangre*: “¿Has visto qué día de calor?” (OC: 713). Whilst in anticipation of Belisa’s adultery in *Amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín* she expresses the depth and endurance of her desire on her wedding night: “Mi sed no se apaga nunca, como nunca se apaga la sed de los mascarones que echan agua en las Fuentes”(OC: 469). The extent to which there is a corresponding attempt in the plays to cast men as the water that quenches this thirst will be discussed in due course. At this stage it is enough to note that female sexual desire repeatedly manifests itself in this way. The heavy use of this motif is effective, if unsubtle, but is not the only way in which female sexual drive is given a voice in the texts.

Whilst the stress on the variety of options available to the female protagonists of the plays sometimes goes hand in hand with an emphasis on female sexual desire, there is no inherent link between the two. On the one hand Belisa is shown to be insatiable in her pursuit of several men, but on the other hand the *Zapatera*’s consciousness of the men around her is not coloured by the expression of her sexual desire for any of them. *Retablillo de Don Cristóbal* is a third example of this group of plays that portray women with a selection of men on offer, but is by far the most sexualised of the three. The following explicit expression of Rosita’s sexual desire must surely have been shocking to contemporary theatregoers;

Yo quiero estar:
en el diván
con Juan,
en el colchón

con Ramón,
en el canapé
con José,
en la silla
con Medinilla,
en el suelo
con el que yo quiero,
pegada al muro
con el lindo Arturo,
y en la gran “chaise-longue”
con Juan, con José, con Medinilla,
con Arturo y con Ramón.
¡Ay!, ¡ay!, ¡ay!, ¡ay! (OC: 687)

This externalisation of her desire is fantasy nonetheless, but minutes later she is witnessed kissing several men (with loud sound effects to avoid any doubt) whilst her husband sleeps. Unlike Belisa’s activities, the manifestation of Rosita’s desires is not hidden or hinted at, but unfolds on stage for all to see.

The process of turning upside down conventional understandings of the sexual dynamic that promotes accounts of male desire is also seen at work in *El público*. Indeed this complex and disjointed work challenges preconceived assumptions in a number of areas, each of which has the potential to sidetrack this analysis of Lorca’s theatre as a whole. Within the context of the suggestion that insights into female sexual desire are significant in establishing the female characters as a lens through which the audience looks, the exchanges between Julieta and the Caballos negros in scene 3 are of particular interest. During the horses’ furious tirade they scream “¡Queremos acostarnos!”(635), they boast of their “bastones” and they even mark their territory in a bestial display of urination. It could be argued that a deep insecurity over sexual identity and oedipal separation results in the need to suppress that insecurity by such exaggerated displays of aggressive domination as are witnessed in this scene and elsewhere in Lorca’s theatre (Alacranito el cortamimbres in *El maleficio de la mariposa* and Cristóbal in both *Tragicomedia de Don Cristóbal y la Señá Rosita* and *Retablillo de Don Cristóbal*, for example). Hombre 2 earlier asked the

Director about Romeo urinating, linking the archetypal male lover (and, if he is interpreted as a metonym, every man), with these desperate attempts to demonstrate successful separation from the feminine. Therefore it is interesting that Lorca does not legitimise the male projection of a falsehood by allowing the female to be dominated. On the contrary she responds as follows: “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”(OC: 635). She adds shortly after; “¡Nadie a través de mí! ¡Yo a través de vosotros!” (OC: 636).

On occasions it is justified to talk of the genuine predominance of highly sexualised accounts of female desire in the plays, such as Rosita's, but questions arise over the interpretation to be made of them. The inclusion of women who are sexually active in the drama is problematic as female sexual activity has tended to acquire very negative interpretations. Brandes (1980) observes this extreme negativity in rural Andalusian culture even in comparatively recent years. Whereas male sexual activity is, he observes, to be encouraged and discreetly ignored, female sexuality is viewed with fear and suspicion. This approach sees women denigrated as dangerous and deceitful, cunningly using their sexuality to seduce, corrupt and entrap men, which gives justification to the prevalent association of man with good and woman with evil. In acknowledging this attitude to have its root in the biblical account of the Fall of Man, Brandes notes that this rampant sin is curbed by constraining the women themselves. There is, therefore, a danger that the predominant accounts of female sexual activity and fantasy in the plays serve no more purpose than to reinforce this rigid dogma, impliedly branding the instigators corrupt and wicked temptresses. But such a criticism is undermined by the masterful portrayal of women, not as passive seducers who wreak havoc by taking advantage of *male* desire, but as active seekers of gratification of their own *female* desire. De Beauvoir has illustrated this fundamental distinction:

This difference of attitude is manifest on the sexual plane as on the spiritual plane. The ‘feminine’ woman in making herself prey tries to reduce man, also, to her carnal passivity; she occupies herself in catching him in her trap, in enchanting him by means of the desire she arouses in

him in submissively making herself a thing. The emancipated woman, on the contrary, wants to be active, a taker, and refuses the passivity man means to impose on her (1968: 674)

I hope I have established that the women discussed above, who engage in or fantasize about physical intimacy with men, are not timid or restrained in their conduct and in this sense are not engaged in subtle entrapment. There is certainly no doubt that their behaviour is not motivated by the need to capitalise on the arousal of men, but is, in fact, fuelled by their own insatiable sexual desires. Of course this distinction is well made by the thirst motif that recurs so frequently in the plays. Although I have criticised this for its unsubtle repetitiveness, perhaps Lorca is to be applauded for using such a strong and easily identifiable tool to evidence the motivation of his female protagonists. I maintain that Lorca's women are engaged in the pursuit of their own strong desires through determined and purposeful action, and are not, therefore portrayed as the 'feminine' women that De Beauvoir talks of, but are, on the contrary, emancipated women.

* * * *

THE EROTICISED MALE BODY

Whilst this emphasis on female desire deflects attention towards men as satisfaction, a concurrent emphasis on the eroticism of the male form attracts attention to a similar extent. Lorca's theatre is laced with a highly charged sexual energy that centres on the poetic eroticism that envelops the male body in the plays. This eroticism is not to be confused with farcical demonstrations of exaggerated masculinity, which reveal a heavy reliance on excessive violence and a comical dependence on the possession and use of the 'bastón' or the 'porra'. It seems certain that the comedy inherent in the displays is not aimed at devaluing universal masculinity. In *Tragicomedia de Don Cristóbal y la Señá Rosita* the excessively violent bully, who has "matado trescientos ingleses, trescientos constantinoplos" (OC: 159) is revealed to be an automaton. The implication is that the stereotype he embodied was not the outward behaviour of a sentient inner being, but the mere performance of function, surface prevailing

over volume to borrow terminology from *El público*. In the light of his reading of *El público* Paul Smith would, perhaps, compare Cristobita to an ash apple, whereby the apparent surface of dominant masculinity crumbles to reveal the ultimate absence of substance beneath. He observes that “masks serve in Lorca’s text to parody the real, to dissociate the spectators from fixed identities and to disabuse them of the faith in absolute knowledge” (1989: 130). Having put words into Smith’s mouth I am inclined to agree with them, insofar as these ridiculous displays of extreme masculinity appear to substantiate a performative interpretation of gender. Yet I also share the Hombre 1’s optimism that a lake is not just surface, but also “un volumen” (OC: 638) in the sense that I do not believe Lorca hoped to brand the whole of masculinity an absurd caricature or an unachievable ideal.

At this point it is not necessary to elaborate on the plurality of other meanings of masculinity that coexist in the plays alongside the exaggerated violent form described above, because at this stage I am concerned more with the process of representation than with the meaning of the represented. However, it is necessary to tease out one further strand of that plurality, centring on the eroticism of the male body, in order to demonstrate that an emphasis on the male body is just as significant in drawing the audience’s attention to concepts of masculinity as the previously mentioned emphasis on female sexual desire. In comparing two unpublished translations of *Bodas de sangre* from the 1930s, one by Weissberger, the other by Langston Hughes, Paul Smith acknowledges the centrality of male eroticism to that play, an eroticism that he considers to be fundamentally lacking in Weissberger’s text. In fact he goes so far as to say that, in that translation, which was first staged in New York, “hostility to male beauty is combined with prudery” (1998: 54). An obsessive faithfulness to the original grammatical structures has a clumsy, archaic air about it, which Smith terms a “precocious formalism” (1998: 58) and which fails to convey the fluidity and lucidity of Lorca’s work. Worse than the lumbering syntax, however, Smith also accuses him of removing or failing to translate important text, which should support the mood of eroticised masculinity that permeates the original. By way of example Smith gives the use of brackets around the word ‘body’ in Weissberger’s translation of the Madre’s embittered tirade against guns, knives and dangerous tools. In opposition to the frigidity of Weissberger’s translation

stands Langston Hughes' version, in which Smith finds a refreshing willingness to deviate from the text as far as is necessary to accurately convey the mood of the original, and about which he declares that "both lyricism and eroticism emerge unscathed"(1998: 58).

The "eroticization of the male body which is shared by García Lorca and Hughes" (Smith, 1998: 58) in the text of *Bodas de sangre* can also be found elsewhere. Emilio Miró González suggests that "la exaltación de la hermosura varonil" is "presente en todas las obras lorquianas" (1988: 56). For example the Jugador de Rugby in *Así que pasen cinco años*, who Edwards suggests to be "the epitome of masculinity"(1980: 96), swaggers about the stage like a proud peacock and "*da muestras de gran vitalidad*" (OC 532). The fierce intensity of this male beauty is evoked powerfully in the words of the Novia, during her passionate exchange with Leonardo, following their flight in *Bodas de sangre*: "Que te miro y tu hermosura me quema" (OC: 786). The erotic essence that pervades these plays emerges from constant attempts to focus the discourse of the text on male corporeality, such as the symbolism of his theatre, which repeatedly seeks to reinterpret the image of the male form. Pepe in *La casa de Bernarda Alba* and Leonardo in *Bodas de sangre* are associated with the animal power and beauty of their horses and men in several of the plays are identified with the fertility of their crops. The knives to which both the Novio and Leonardo in *Bodas de sangre* become linked and with which they ultimately penetrate each other are symbolic of a powerful, indeed fatal male homo-eroticism. Paul Smith has observed that "the mechanism at work here (within the text, within the theater) is one of incorporation or introjection" (1998: 46). The penetration of each of their bodies by the other's knife signifies the internalization of an eroticized male form that has its locus in the patently phallic symbol of the knife. This construction is expressed in brutal violence, which is, according to Smith, representative of the Freudian masochism at work in the play.

Without question the most recurrent poetic motif in the discourse of masculinity at work in the plays is one that complements the image of female thirst outlined above. Time after time men in the plays are described as being, containing or providing water, to a lesser or greater extent. In *Bodas de sangre*, for example, the Novia looks back in judgement of her actions and describes herself as a "mujer quemada", before offering the following metaphorical

assessment of the two men she had to choose between: “tu hijo era un poquito de agua de la que yo esperaba hijos, tierra, salud; pero el otro era un río oscuro, lleno de ramas” (OC: 796). The unsubtle imagery of male characters providing water to satisfy the thirst of the female characters creates a sexual dynamic in which the male is objectified as a means of satisfaction for the desire of the woman. The assessment of male ability to fulfil female desire is also expressed in these terms in *Yerma*, where a polarity is created with Víctor at one end, of whose singing Yerma says “parece un chorro de agua que te llena toda la boca” (OC: 826), and her husband Juan at the other end, who “tiene un carácter seco” (OC: 827). Having previously discussed the emphasis in the plays on the fact of multiple options being portrayed as available to the female characters, it is interesting to note that plurality echoed here. Both *Yerma* and *Bodas de sangre* feature women whose choices are broadly polarised according to the men’s ability to quench female ‘thirst’. The passion of Víctor and Leonardo is separated by an immeasurable gulf from the dryness of Juan and the Novio. Despite the fact that the development of the rugby player’s character in *Así que pasen cinco años* is far from rounded, he nonetheless acts as one half of a now familiar duality of choice that faces the Novia. His worth to the Novia centres, as ever, on his ability to satisfy her to a greater extent than his rival. It is not surprising that his erotic value is once again conveyed with recourse to the water motif, as the Novia describes him as having a “torrente” (OC: 533) in his chest.

The frequency with which Lorca applies this motif is almost tiring and when he does so in an attempt to convey the varying degrees of erotic worth of a woman’s potential male suitors, as if revealing a hidden aquatic pedigree, the impact of the poetic symbolism is blunted. More subtle is the use of this recurrent imagery in *La casa de Bernarda Alba*. Of course in this play the women are not able to choose between men, indeed no man ever penetrates the stage space. The absence of potential male partners is poignantly expressed through the lack of clean drinking water in the town, described by Bernarda as a “maldito pueblo sin río, pueblo de pozos” (OC: 984). However, there is one eligible bachelor of whom the audience is aware and when the time comes for his masculinity to be expressed in terms of thirst quenching eroticism Adela’s words are tremendously powerful; “Mirando sus ojos me parece que bebo su sangre lentamente” (OC: 1016). Here the male is no longer *compared to* a thirst

quenching liquid, instead the very life force that rushes through his veins *becomes* that liquid. Paul Smith has observed that the Novia in *Bodas de sangre* seeks to consume Leonardo through each of her senses, and refers to incorporation through a “devouring orality” (1998: Chap 4). Adela’s statement has similar overtones, but impacts more profoundly as the expression of satisfaction through consuming Pepe’s blood acquires a spiritual dimension through a possible comparison with the ultimate fulfilment of the Holy Sacrament. In *Bodas de sangre* the ingestion of male blood can also be read as an attempt to incorporate the male body in order to satisfy female desire, although in this case neither sexual nor romantic. The Madre is perpetually haunted by the memory of losing her husband and her son and describes the moment she found the latter to the Padre; “Cuando yo llegué a ver a mi hijo, estaba tumbado en mitad de la calle. Me mojé las manos de sangre y me les lamí con la lengua. Porque era mía. Tú no sabes lo que es eso” (OC: 757). Throughout the play male blood grows to signify the physicality, indeed the mortality, of its owner, and to see male blood spilled is to see life drain from the body. The terror that faces the Madre as she contemplates the permanent physical absence of her son inspires a desire to incorporate the essence of his physical existence; his blood. That his blood is indeed her blood is a reminder that the need to incorporate the male body is not sexual desire but instead is part of a maternal bond. Although not sexual, however, the desire is profound and contributes significantly to the process of directing the audience’s thoughts to the male body as the locus of masculinity. Although in both of these examples the expression of female desire of the male body as a metaphysical energy is perceived as a positive and pure force of attraction, at other times the blood of the eroticised male form is presented as the means of satisfaction for a thirst that, whilst it transcends the physical, is neither pure nor positive. The Actriz in *Comedia sin título* again expresses a desire to drink blood and projects her yearning onto the Autor without just cause:

ACTRIZ.

Y si te gusta la sangre, te la bebes y me das una poquita a mí

AUTOR.

¡Mentira! (OC: 1082)

And the thirst for the life blood of the male body is quickly revealed to be very distant from the sexual and romantic desire of the Actriz when she transforms herself into Lady Macbeth:

ACTRIZ. *(Se quita la peluca blanca y enseña al viento una cabellera negra. Se despoja de una gran capa blanca y aparece con un traje rojo fuego.)*

(El telón del fondo se levanta y aparece otro telón en el que hay pintado un sombrío claustro de piedra con cipreses y árboles fantásticos.)

Lady Macbeth, sí; y, además, ahora me tienes miedo.

(La luz se cambia lentamente por una luz azul de luna.)

Porque soy hermosa, porque vivo siempre, porque estoy harta de sangre. ¡Harta de sangre verdadera! Más de tres mil muchachos han muerto quemados por mis ojos a través del tiempo. Muchachos que vivían y que yo he visto agonizar de amor entre las sábanas. (OC: 1083-84)

The fatal burning gaze that has consumed three thousand young men is as indiscriminate as it is desirous and by referring to their agony between the sheets she makes clear that this indiscriminate sexual desire is targeted, above all, at the body. This episode offers a snapshot of the erotic male body satisfying a much darker form of female desire; the indiscriminate yet overwhelming thirst for male blood, not as a metaphysical means of incorporating the object of pure romantic desire, but as a means of soothing a selfish and sinister yearning for death. This yearning is repeated in *Bodas de sangre*, in which Death is made present as a woman, the Mendiga and the “luz azul de luna” of *Comedia sin título* also recurs, this time appearing in physical form. The Mendiga’s sexual desire for the Novio

is made apparent as she describes him as an “hermoso galán” and continues by saying “¡Qué espaldas más anchas!” (OC: 781), comments that reveal the eroticism of the male form that the Mendiga craves. The masochism at the heart of this eroticism is made clear by the Mendiga’s triumphal act of spreading her ‘wings’ whilst two men perish, frozen on stage like an immense vampire who celebrates the spilling and drinking of blood, and also by her association with the Luna’s compulsion to consume “dulce sangre” (OC: 777). Yet by being linked so chillingly with the presence of the moon, who gives voice to the mystical pursuit of blood, her character is unmistakably shackled to a deep and indiscriminate yearning for death that transcends the individual boundaries of her person. Again female sexual desire has merged inextricably with a morbid yearning for death, which requires nothing less than for male blood, a metonym for the body through which it surges, to be violently spilled and consumed. Removing female desire from the purity of a relationship that inspires a desire to incorporate the object of that love through his blood, and combining it instead with a blood lust whose inspiration is a morbid yearning for death, Lorca challenges the audience to reinterpret the male body as an object capable of satisfying even the most destructive forms of desire.

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CHRONOLOGY SUPPORTING THE CONSTRUCTION OF WOMEN AS PREDATORS

Several processes are at work in the plays, sexualizing and objectifying men, and the dynamic at the heart of this relationship sees women crowned the active contemplators and desirers, and men bound as the passive objects of contemplation and desire. It is interesting to note that this dynamic is often supported by the order in which the events of the play unfold. The use of a precise and orchestrated chronology to reinforce the unconventional relationship is illustrated in *El maleficio de la mariposa*. The dialogue between Doña Curiana and Curianita Silvia reveals that the cause of Silvia’s sadness is her desire for romantic fulfilment, for an “amante bueno” (OC: 17). She even expresses her yearning in the now familiar vein of water satisfying her thirst;

CURIANITA SILVIA.

(*Con angustia*)

¿Dónde está el agua

tranquila y fresca

que calme

mi sed inquieta? (OC: 16)

Lorca chooses to offer this revelation of female sexual and romantic desire before any male character has set foot on stage so that the audience identifies with the agony of her unfulfilled longing and with her pursuit of satisfaction. Men are established in the audience's eyes as a resource to be called upon to fill the vacuum that is created onstage by the woman's unsatisfied desire. Therefore from this moment on the mutual gaze searches for men and anticipates their arrival so that a neutral and impartial first impression is precluded. Soon this sense of anticipation is targeted more specifically when it is made clear that one man in particular is perceived by Silvia to be the likely means of filling the vacuum of her desire. Now the audience is not only preparing to assess every man that appears onstage, considering him as a *potential* resolution to the tension of Silvia's desire, but is also eagerly awaiting the appearance of Curianito in particular, being the most *likely* resolution to that tension. The audience looks forward to his arrival, through Silvia's eyes, wondering how he will compare to the account of physical beauty she gives of him in reply to Doña Curiana's question:

DOÑA CURIANA.

¿Qué tal es [él]?

CURIANITA SILVIA.

Me deleitan su cuerpo chico y sus ojos
soñadores de poeta. Tiene un lunar amarillo
sobre su pata derecha, y amarillas son las
puntas divinas de sus antenas. (OC: 20)

In *Tragicomedia de Don Cristóbal y la Señá Rosita* a similar sense of anticipation is established following the words of Rosita's first monologue; "En verdad el cañamazo es una labor difícil. Uno, dos... (*Suelta la aguja*) ¡Ay, qué ganitas tengo de casarme!" (OC: 107). Such an early declaration that she is so

eager to marry is nothing less than an incitement to play matchmaker from the comfort of the auditorium, an invitation that the audience cannot resist. It could be suggested that the close juxtaposition of her evident aversion to “labor difícil” and her exclamation in favour of marriage suggests that, in her mind, the latter might offer some alleviation of the former. If this is the case then the brief which will act as the audience’s point of reference as they look forward in eager anticipation of a male presence onstage (no men have appeared prior to her comments) expresses not an account of female sexual desire, but of material desire for comfortable living. Whether or not it is justified to tie these two comments together in this way and suggest that men who are presented later are evaluated according to the level of comfort they can provide Rosita, the expression of her desire to marry before any man has been seen undeniably loads future male characters with a degree of expectant burden. On the other hand she is soon heard to say, following a conversation with her father about her betrothal, “El dinerillo, para las gentes del mundo; yo me quedo con el amor” (OC: 109). Whilst her happiness at the idea of marriage seasons this monologue as it did her first, her desire is now articulated through the language of love and romance in a way that contradicts the suggestion that her desire for a man reflected a desire for material comfort. A hint of confusion is introduced and a duality is established, with the result that the audience’s appraisal of the play’s male characters will be mapped onto a polarised romantic model with a familiar dilemma at its core: to marry for love or money.

Los sueños de mi prima Aurelia also conforms to this blueprint, where the expression of female desire acts as a catalyst that influences the chemistry between the audience and male characters that are presented later. The women that open the play are uninhibited in the company of the all-female group and talk freely about the behaviour and desires of the protagonists of the novel being read aloud. Soon discussions turn to their own lives and aspirations, and the following exchanges occur:

AURELIA.	Que no me gusta el médico, ¡que no me gusta! ¡¡Qué desilusión!! Es lo que se dice un tipillo.
MARÍA.	Es una lástima.
CLORINDA.	Pero, ¿es que te ibas a casar con él?

AURELIA. No. Pero estoy deseando que me hable un hombre de carrera y que lleva botines.

CLORINDA. Yo creí que te gustaba Antonio. Todo el mundo dice que se te va a declarar de un momento a otro. Yo lo estoy deseando.

AURELIA. No sé. Pero es un labrador. Yo rabio por ponerme sombrero y que me lleven al teatro. Me encanta el teatro.

MARÍA. Y te lo pondrás.

CLORINDA. Antonio es un dije. Acabarás casándote con él.

AURELIA. Si antes no encuentro otro. (*Mirando*) ¡Ay! (*Ríe*) ¡Si tiene dos ojos como cabezas de alfileres! ¿Y el bastón? ¡Ay, qué bastón! ¡Ay, qué bastón! ¡Me mata! (OC: 1109-10)

This conversation says little about the lives these women lead, but a great deal about Aurelia's dreams and desires. In just a few sentences a great many questions are asked, all of which point forward to their resolution later in the play. Her words express multiple and conflicting desires for material wealth and for sexual satisfaction. The Médico and Antonio are both cited as potential objects of her desire and her attitude towards each of them is left hanging in the air for the audience's contemplation until such time as the men are presented on stage. The Médico is undoubtedly the "hombre de carrera" she craves, but will he be as ghastly as Aurelia implies? On the other hand Antonio is a mere "Labrador" and cannot fund the lifestyle she dreams of, but can his physical beauty, indeed his "bastón", be as breathtaking as she claims? Unaware whether they are ever to meet the two men whose ability to fill Aurelia's desires has been hurled into the spotlight, the audience is again presented with the dichotomy of passion versus comfort. When such strong characterisation has been enunciated, is it not inevitable that the audience will look upon the men who appear before them with quizzical interest and fascination? Furthermore, by agreeing she will marry Antonio if she doesn't find another first, Aurelia blows the playing field wide open, such that any man is now to be scrutinised as a potential answer to the many questions posed during this short conversation.

By presenting female desire at an early stage of the action Lorca turns it into a lens through which the rest of the play is viewed and subjectively interpreted. Regardless of whether the men, referred to as potential solutions to the tension of female yearning, appear later on or not, the audience's perception is coloured from the early occasion when female desire is articulated. As if to reinforce the audience's identification with female hopes and wishes, a surprising number of the plays open with an exclusively female presence on stage. *El maleficio de la mariposa*, *Tragicomedia de Don Cristóbal y la Señá Rosita* and *Los sueños de mi prima Aurelia* have all been mentioned as specific examples of plays that recount female desire, both targeted and non targeted, in anticipation of a male presence on stage. As the curtain rises on the opening scene of each of these plays the audience perceives only a female presence on stage, and other plays, like *La zapatera prodigiosa* and *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, also open with only females in attendance. Other plays, like *Yerma* and *Bodas de sangre*, open with a mixed grouping, which very quickly gives way to a discourse of female solitude as the men depart and introspective accounts of women's hopes and desires gain prominence.

Therefore it can be said that positioning key moments of insight into the desires of women characters very early encourages the audience to look upon the subsequent fictional reality through the eyes of those women, above all when a future means of satisfaction is articulated, be it a named male individual, a category of men, or men in general. Yet no matter how important these key insights are in training the focus of attention onto men as a resource for satisfaction, they are very often not the defining moment in achieving this end. For example *Yerma's* expression of desire for a child during her opening dialogue forms the denial of her desire into a filter through which observation of later action must pass. Her frustrated desire for a child is a permanent point of reference for the audience which creates a dynamic in the play whereby her husband (and indeed other men) are looked to as bearers of the means to alleviate the deprivation. But I argue that this early expression of desire is not the defining moment in the process of creating a female lens through which to observe the men. Instead I suggest that defining moment to be the instant an individual reads the title of the play. The spectator is told that the play is called *Yerma* and immediately a bond is created such that on entering the theatre there is only one

known quantity from the audience's point of view; that there is almost certainly going to be a significant character called Yerma. That connection is a fundamental point of reference that endures the duration of the performance and results in the audience expecting to adopt her outlook on the events that later unfold. It seems reasonable to suggest that had the play been called *Juan* instead of *Yerma*, it might be more tempting to perceive an unreasonable nagging wife through the eyes of her husband, rather than a passionless sterile husband through the eyes of his wife. Several of Lorca's plays adopt this approach. *El maleficio de la mariposa*, *La zapatera prodigiosa*, *La casa de Bernarda Alba* and *Los sueños de mi prima Aurelia* all introduce a female protagonist and unleash a torrent of questions in the spectator's mind. What is the butterfly's "maleficio"? Who is the shoemaker's wife? What goes on in Bernarda Alba's house? Will Aurelia's dreams come true? These titles link the female protagonist to an incoming audience like an umbilical cord links mother and unborn child, a bond that will surely condition their reading of the performance.

The various ways, discussed earlier in this chapter, that Lorca guides the audience's eyes to his male characters, and in this way represents masculinity, are accentuated by his use of timing in the plays. He attempts to destabilise the balance of audience neutrality by weighting accounts of diverse female desire and positioning them early in the play to heighten the sense in which male characters who subsequently arrive are gazed upon through female eyes, and are read as solutions to a female need. This process is refined further in the careful naming of certain plays to ensure that the fictional discourse is always related back to the female protagonists who act as the stable link to the world that existed prior to entering the theatre, and in this sense are the foundation on which perception of the reality inside the theatre can be built.

CHAPTER 3: RELATIONS OF POWER



MATERIAL POWER:

A PROBLEMATIC READING

The domination of women by men, which is, as Connell points out, “the main axis of power in the contemporary European / American gender order” (1995: 74), appears to have been inverted to a large extent in many of Lorca’s plays. Gilmore (2000) has observed that the role of the female in southern Spanish society, in the 1970’s at least, was not as subservient as might be expected, noting that the wife’s day to day running of the home, her control over domestic finance and her freedom to withhold sexual relations all accord her more power than is at first assumed. Whilst the examples of female influence over men previously outlined expand on and develop the powerful female role Gilmore observes, there is also a tendency for female domination of men around them to be achieved not by drawing on accepted notions of female authority in the home, but by causing women to adopt the stereotypical role of the patriarch. One prominent example shows a female benefiting from heightened influence over male behaviour as a result of her having adopted the role of her late husband. The Madre’s control over her son in *Bodas de sangre* is absolute, as is made clear by the following exchange that sees not only the Novio pledging her his obedience, but also her bestowing fatherly wisdom:

NOVIO. ¡Siempre la obedezco!

MADRE. Con tu mujer procura estar cariñoso, y si la notas infatuada o arisca, hazle una caricia que le produzca un poco de daño, un abrazo fuerte, un mordisco y luego un beso suave. Que ella no pueda disgustarse, pero que sienta que tú eres el macho, el amo, el que mandas. Así aprendí de tu padre. Y como no lo tienes, tengo que ser yo la que te enseñe estas fortalezas.

NOVIO. Yo siempre haré lo que usted mande. (OC: 769)

Gilmore has noted the resonance of the verb “mandar” in the home, suggesting that it takes on an extreme meaning that goes beyond simple influence and incorporates a political sense of power and control. There is, therefore, a great deal of irony in the above dialogue, as the woman charges her son with the task of taking command, only for him to emasculate his own authority by replying, meekly, “I will always do as you command”. If “mandar” can be read as suggesting a high degree of power and control then it is worth noting that in *La casa de Bernarda Alba* the very first dialogue sees Bernarda, widowed just like the Madre, branded a “mandona” (OC: 974). There is little doubt that Bernarda’s dominance and her violence cut a very masculine figure in her household, and Rice has gone so far as to suggest that “Bernarda’s gender is totally masculine” (1999: 340). On the other hand there is less evidence of her controlling influence directly interfering with male characters’ behaviour, in fact no man appears on stage with her at all. But perhaps even this is, in itself, relevant. The absence of men in her house is not an accident, but is part of Bernarda’s deliberate policy of domestic control. She says of the male group that gathers in the courtyard following the funeral: “Que salgan por donde han entrado. No quiero que pasen por aquí” (OC: 981). She also exercises considerable power to influence male behaviour by firing at Pepe and sending him running. Furthermore there is the possibility that Pepe would choose Adela over Angustias as a suitor but instead bows to Bernarda’s will and accepts the older sister. It must be said, however, that by superficially acquiescing to Bernarda’s command Pepe benefits both from a formal betrothal to the richest of the siblings and a discreet intimate relationship with the prettiest, neither of which is an unhappy consequence.

However, my reading of the distribution of power in the plays is not wholly unproblematic, as it has been seen that in both *La casa de Bernarda Alba* and in *Bodas de sangre* the power that is attributed to the mothers is not unconditional. In both cases material control over the household is neither inherent in the women’s identity nor earned through a struggle for emancipation, but has, in fact been imparted to them following their husbands’ deaths. This raises two points of interest. Firstly their powerful status is defined by their relationship to (and dependence on) the man who ruled before them. This unavoidably undermines an interpretation of the widows as self-empowered

women whose right to govern stems from innate qualities of strength and leadership, supporting the opposite premise that any power they have received merely serves to perpetuate old fashioned family values and patriarchal ideals. For example Rice has observed that Bernarda's "declaration of eight years of mourning demonstrates a rigid adherence to social rules and family tradition taken far beyond the normal custom" (1999: 338-39). Secondly there are clear restraints operating on these women's sphere of influence. In the following chapter I will refer to the rigid division between inside and outside space in the plays, which evidences this restriction of female power to the domestic environment. It is clear from the Madre's failure to prevent her loved ones' violent deaths and from Bernarda's pursuit of a hermetic household that neither widow has power extending beyond the domestic sphere. Whilst Gilmore observed that, for women in 1970's rural Spain, "domestic power is real and unqualified" (2000: 318) he also acknowledged that power to be conferred by the husband and, therefore, to operate within a complex framework of interactions of power in which class, as much as gender, is to be found operating. It is important also to recognize these social structures in the rural Andalucía of Lorca's plays, revealing that when material power is centred on female characters it operates within a broad network of authority and control, which is neither radical nor unconventional. Although this problematises my reading of the two widows as *mandonas*, or bearers of material power, it impacts less on my interpretation of women in Lorca's theatre as being a source of an alternative power, one that is more psychological than material or political. This intellectual power, which is outlined in the following section, sees men controlled and manipulated by women, but is not granted by men and appears to operate quite apart from conventional hierarchies of physical power.

* * * *

PSYCHOLOGICAL POWER:

ONE-SIDED DIALOGUE AND EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION

It has already been observed that a great deal of importance is attached to male physicality in Lorca's work, as the audience's gaze is directed at the male

characters of the plays, setting them up as objects of desire and contemplation. So far no distinction has been made between physical and mental aspects of masculinity. Without going so far as suggesting the severance of masculinity from the male body, circumstances do arise in the plays that mould perception to encourage the emotions and mental states of masculinity to become the focus for contemplation. I suggest that the vehicle used to achieve this focus is a blend of non reciprocal communication and attempts to emotionally dominate.

I have already argued that the opening scenes of *Yerma* show a mixed gender grouping giving way to female loneliness, such that the emptiness of her solitude directs attention onto the male who is built up as the remedy to her lack. It becomes clear that the fulfilment she aches for centres on her desire for a child, and in this respect it is the physical 'presence' of the male that is implicitly required to satisfy her. And yet the spotlight that illuminates the male ability to perform and produce, that is to say the ability to offer both sexual satisfaction and the fruit of that relationship, is foreshadowed in the brief conversation before Juan's exit. Yerma's poignant first words exemplify the one sided dialogue that underpins their relationship: "Juan, ¿me oyes?, Juan" (OC: 804). Immediately she is seen to be taking control and attempting to establish dialogue, giving vent to her stream of consciousness which pounds against her husband incessantly but which falls away ineffectually time and time again, like waves breaking against the sea wall. Just as her husband's physical performance finds itself the focus of her maternal desire for a child, so his inability to complement her mentally and emotionally is targeted by her repeated attempts to open channels of communication. His discomfort at feeling under pressure to react to the flow of communication is very apparent. Not only does he repeatedly try to leave and escape the torrent, but he also retorts "¿Has acabado?" (OC: 805). The unease at being so exposed to mental scrutiny, which the wishful thinking of this question betrays, is highly reminiscent of the Novio's behaviour in the opening scene of *Bodas de sangre*. This time caught by a mother's inquisitive probing and wise words, he is as unresponsive and awkward as Juan, and mirrors his desire to escape attention by trying to leave the stage. He uses the few words he does utter, like "Calle usted" and "¿Vamos a acabar?" (OC: 703), as a defensive barricade aimed at repelling the verbal arsenal deployed against him to get beneath the skin, to reach his soul and stir his emotions. If emotional connection finds its

vocabulary in dialogue and physical connection finds its vocabulary in sexual attraction, then the communicatory dynamic of these plays is fundamentally the same as that of sexual desire and satisfaction, in the sense that men are established both as the passive objects of physical desire and also the unresponsive objects of emotional scrutiny. In this respect Lorca's stage direction that has Yerma "*tomando ella la iniciativa*" (OC: 807) appears to typify their relationship in a physical and an emotional sense.

Parallel to the current of communication between men and women in the plays run apparent manifestations of the female desire to influence and manipulate men. Just as the failure to respond to an expression of female emotion causes the male character to come under scrutiny, so attempts to dominate him and mould his personality attract a similar interest in the way he responds. Indeed examples of female control and influence over men are not hard to find. One of the less obvious illustrations is the relationship between Curianito and his mother in *El maleficio de la mariposa* summarised succinctly in their first dialogue together:

CURIANITO. (*Aparte*) ¡Que no me caso madre! Ya os he dicho mil veces que no quiero casarme.

DOÑA CURIANA. (*Llorando*) Tú lo que tienes ganas es de martirizarme.

CURIANITO. Yo no la quiero, madre. (OC: 21-22)

Previous events have revealed her motivation for achieving the match between her son and Silvia not to be entirely honourable. This knowledge exposes her artificial tears and exclamations of sorrow as the instruments of her emotional manipulation of her son. This attempt to dominate makes Curianito the focus of the emotional undercurrent of the scene and he is not the only male character to find himself centre stage as a result of being on the receiving end of attempts to emotionally dominate. In *Amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín* similar events unfold:

MARCOLFA. Venga ahora mismo. (*Le coge de la mano y se acerca al balcón.*) Diga usted Belisa.

PERLIMPLÍN. Belisa...
 MARCOLFA. Más alto.
 PERLIMPLÍN. ¡Belisa!

(El balcón de la casa de enfrente se abre y aparece Belisa resplandeciente de hermosura. Está medio desnuda.)

BELISA. ¿Quién llama?
 MARCOLFA. *(Escondiéndose detrás de la cortina del balcón.)*

Conteste.

PERLIMPLÍN. *(Temblando.)* La llamaba yo. (OC: 462-63)

Unlike Doña Curianita's weeping, Marcolfa's tears at her master's misfortune in scene 2 make clear that her earlier intervention was motivated by the best of intentions. Nonetheless her ability to control and influence Perlimplín are evident as she quite literally leads him by the hand. In this respect the impact of her attempts is greater than in *El maleficio de la mariposa*, such that she succeeds in dominating the expression of his emotions: "Hemos decidido que me quiero casar" (OC: 463). Her manipulation of his thoughts and wants positions his mind at the very centre of the play as the spectator is encouraged to interpret his behaviour and emotions with particular scrutiny.

It is important to highlight that in both of the examples outlined above the woman is not seeking broadly to direct the man's behaviour, but instead sets out specifically to guide his choice of wife. Aiming to govern the man's choice of wife is not simply putting a straitjacket on his conduct, as directing outward expression of inner sentiment in this way is characteristic of the need to manipulate a man's emotions. In *La zapatera prodigiosa* the Zapatero admits that his decision to marry was heavily influenced by his sister, saying "mi hermana tiene la culpa" (OC: 322). Therefore in several plays the externalisation of a man's emotional identity finds itself under attack by the dominance of female emotions and desires and as a result its outward expression is blinkered by women. This heightens the extent to which the audience pays special attention to male behaviour, hoping to strip away the trappings of female influence and to truly understand these men's heart and minds.

CHAPTER 4: FOCUSING ON ABSENT MEN



At the core of my analysis of the methodologies employed in Lorca's theatre in order to represent masculinity to the audience are the individual male characters who embody the various shades of masculinity and bring them to life on stage. I have talked about his use of distancing techniques to provoke thought not catharsis, about his reluctance to allow male characters to be hidden in a crowd and about the systems at work in the plays that, like a thousand carefully positioned mirrors, shine attention onto the male on stage. The objectifying female gaze and accounts of women fantasising or acting on their desires lead all eyes to the men of the play in search of an instrument of satisfaction and resolution, and the female readiness to control these men draws attention to their behaviour as a reflection of the inner emotional man. All of these elements combine harmoniously, wooing the audience and shaping their perceptions to ensure both minds and gazes are fully concentrated on the men that tread the boards of the stage. However the greatest of all the tools at his disposal has yet to be discussed. Whilst Lorca is successful in dragging the male characters of his plays out of the shadows and into the spotlight on stage, the most interesting of his accomplishments is the astounding success he achieves in metaphorically placing men centre stage when physically they are absent. Around this concept an intricate system is constructed that causes men to be made present through, and in spite of, their absence. This is a complex system operating on many levels, which I will explore thoroughly.

* * * *

THE VISUAL CONNECTION

The prohibitions that are at work within the stage space of *La casa de Bernarda Alba* highlight female wants and desires, which, as has been explained, encourages a search for resolution to the conflict of desire. The all-female space of Bernarda's home adds a unique layer of tension to this conflict, which is made almost unbearable by the oppressive matriarchal regime that is, for the daughters,

so inescapable. The spectator's eyes join with the daughters' frantic search for gratification and fulfilment and, as it becomes increasingly obvious that no means of resolution will be permitted in the stage space, it is unsurprising that the hunt explodes beyond the boundaries of Bernarda's home and outside the limits of the stage. In this respect the play is illustrative of the remarkable tension Lorca succeeds in establishing by heightening awareness of a sharply focused line that is drawn between the eyes of a female on stage and a male off stage. This bond is both realistic in that the originator of the gaze is visible on stage and imagined in that the one gazed upon is out of sight, and as a result the entire existence of the male object is witnessed through the vehicle of the female subject. Bernarda gives a hint of the tyrannical dominance that forces her daughter's eyes to wander beyond her four walls in the following events:

BERNARDA. (...) ¿Y Angustias?

ADELA. (*Con intención*) La he visto asomada a las rendijas del portón. Los hombres se acaban de ir.

BERNARDA. ¿Y tú a qué fuiste también al portón?

ADELA. Me llegué a ver si habían puesto las gallinas.

BERNARDA. ¡Pero el duelo de los hombres habría salido ya!

ADELA. (*Con intención*) Todavía estaba un grupo parado por fuera.

BERNARDA. (*Furiosa*) ¡Angustias! ¡Angustias! (OC: 987)

Inside and outside are acutely defined, in this play, along the same lines as female and male respectively. Transgression of the boundary between polarities is both forbidden and desired by the women whose needs and wants are so deeply suppressed. In this scene the door is the opening that should allow uninhibited movement, but which, in fact, is a mere viewpoint from which to gaze longingly. Yet the onstage / offstage split is mirrored in the power relationship between the onlooker and the looked upon such that the men have become passive objects of everyone's attention, despite their absence from the stage.

The window is also a recurrent theme in the play, established as a place to ignore boundaries, and, more importantly, as a discreet vantage point from which

to enjoy observing men. Whereas the motif of the door conveys primarily the prospect of freedom to transgress boundaries through movement, the window is a much more static symbol. The nature of the window is as a place of stationary observation and it is deployed frequently but strategically in *La casa de Bernarda Alba* to allow its repressed women a clear, uninterrupted and desiring view of the men that pass by outside. If the house is a pressure cooker of repressed desire and emotion then the windows are portrayed as release valves that allow the daughters to temporarily satisfy yearnings by catching sight of men outside. Whilst the window is a two way medium in theory, the intensity of female desire that seeks resolution outside the house results in it having a prominent role in the play as a one way lens on the men of the world outside. The following events are a good example:

CRIADA. Pepe el Romano viene por lo alto de la calle.

(AMELIA, MARTIRIO y MAGDALENA corren presurosas.)

MAGDALENA. ¡Vamos a verlo! *(Salen rápidas)*

CRIADA. *(A ADELA)* ¿Tú no vas?

ADELA. No me importa.

CRIADA. Como dará la vuelta a la esquina, desde la ventana de tu cuarto se verá mejor. *(Sale)*

(ADELA queda en escena dudando; después de un instante se va también rápida hasta su habitación) (OC: 1001)

Although the women disappear to unseen corners of the house that are never visible on stage, the audience is nonetheless present in this home and is acquainted with its inhabitants. It is those who roam outside its walls and who are visible through its windows that are the mystery. In this case it is Pepe who, unaware, is looked upon by the daughters in a physical sense and by the spectator in a contemplative sense as, once again, Lorca draws attention to the male character who is not, and in this case is never, present on stage.

In the example just outlined Adela benefits from the gentle coercion of the Criada, whose forward thinking leads the youngest daughter to a better view of the passing bachelor. The following extract highlights that Adela is quick to learn from the maternal wisdom of the Criada:

CORO. (*Muy lejano*) Abrir puertas y ventanas
las que vivís en el pueblo,
el segador pide rosas
para adornar su sombrero.

LA PONCIA. ¡Qué canto!

MARTIRIO. (*Con nostalgia*) Abrir puertas y ventanas
las que vivís en el pueblo...

ADELA. (*Con pasión*) ... el segador pide rosas
Para adornar su sombrero.

(*Se va alejando el cantar*)

LA PONCIA. Ahora dan la vuelta a la esquina.

ADELA. Vamos a verlos por la ventana de mi cuarto. (OC:

1021)

Adela, the youngest of the women in the house, is conscious of the men that pass by outside and is growing familiar with the window, her window, as a vantage point from which to look upon them with desire. The suggestion of these women spying out of their window on the Segadores heightens the reality of these virile men from the audience's perspective. But far from simply picturing the men strolling past, the spectator is persuaded to imagine the men being looked upon by women. As a result these inconsequential men are not only made present and the centre of attention, but are sexualized in the process. Furthermore it is interesting to note that this extract suggests more of a mutual relationship than the previous example. It is the men who are calling for the windows and doors to be thrown open, strengthening the observation made earlier with regard to the window being a two way channel. Poncia acknowledges the male craving to see in through the windows and look upon the women inside in her warning to the

daughters: “Tened cuidado con no entreabrir (*la ventana*) mucho, porque son capaces de dar un empujón para ver quién mira” (1022). These cautionary words hint at men looking into the stage space that is constructed for the audience suggesting that women might become the object of both the audience’s and the men’s gaze.

However, on closer examination the hierarchy of desire is still dominated by the women of the play. It is the women who want to look at the men, it is the women who choose to act in order to satisfy their desire and it is women who both give and receive advice about maintaining control over the window, the mechanism for the objectification of passing men. Nonetheless, the window does play a central role as the point at which outside and inside meet. The claustrophobic home environment on stage and the women with whom the audience grows familiar meets at the window the exterior environment and its mysterious men and as a result this transparent space inevitably plays a fundamental role in every two way male / female relationship. Paul Smith has observed that such a strongly defined polarity between the outdoor male space and the indoor female space is in itself a major contributing factor to the sexual energy that shrouds the space where the two come together. He comments that this divide “elicits the inexhaustible appetite for surveillance and transgression” (1989: 120) in the play and highlights the tension that is embodied by the ‘reja’, the only obstacle that blocks the otherwise clear access represented by the window. Robert Lima (2001) has also observed the symbolic restraining power centred on these bars. When it becomes clear that Pepe was still talking at a window during the night, three hours after he left Angustias, there is more than a hint of scandal in the air:

MARTIRIO. (*Saliendo*) Yo también lo sentí marcharse a las cuatro.

BERNARDA. Pero ¿lo viste con tus ojos?

MARTIRIO. No quise asomarme. ¿No habláis ahora por la ventana del callejón?

ANGUSTIAS. Yo hablo por la ventana de mi dormitorio.

(Aparece Adela en la puerta)

MARTIRIO. Entonces...

BERNARDA. ¿Qué es lo que pasa aquí?

LA PONCIA. ¡Cuida de enterarte! Pero, desde luego, Pepe estaba
a las cuatro de la madrugada en una reja de tu casa.
(OC: 1035)

The scandal implied by these dramatic revelations discloses the nature of the window space as a highly sexualized area that is sought and experienced privately by each of the women, but even here Bernarda's divisive omnipresence is symbolically present in the grilles that restrict the daughters' access to the delights that lie beyond their four walls. On the other hand the duality of this sexualised experience is inescapable insofar as Pepe is to be imagined peering *into* the house longingly just as much as the daughters are imagined to be peering longingly back out at him. To some extent the suggestion that the window is an instrument of female pleasure, employed to gaze with desire on the forbidden fruit outside is balanced by the establishment of the space as a zone of mutual enjoyment. Yet if the use of the window is a symptom of the heightened yearning for what Smith dubs "surveillance and transgression" (1989: 120), then I maintain that whilst the transgression can be seen to be mutual, the surveillance is decidedly not. In this respect it is the men, inhabitants of the forbidden outdoors, beyond the stage and out of the audience's sight, who are the objects of surveillance and who are made present in absence. This point is made clearer through examples in which the element of transgression is removed such that the window's sole purpose is as a platform to observe the outdoors. In *La zapatera prodigiosa* the female lead is the character with whom the audience is most familiar, and she too is obliged to spend much of her time in the home that is recreated on stage. Once again the outdoors is built up to be a male space and the men who dominate it reveal themselves to be hopelessly incapable of resisting the power of the sexual hold that the Zapatera can wield, culminating in a frenzy of riots in the square. It is against this background that the Niño declares "Desde la ventana de tu cuarto puedes ver el jaleo de la plaza"(365). These words are reminiscent of the Criada's comments to Adela and are followed by the

Zapatera's swift departure to observe the men fighting over her. Whilst it cannot be argued that it is sexual desire that draws her to look out onto the men, the result of her curiosity is to call to mind each of the men of the town who have been mentioned or seen previously, as well as many more who remain anonymous, without them appearing alongside her on stage. But perhaps the clearest example of all is the use of the window in *Los sueños de mi prima Aurelia*. Here the window is actually visible on stage, rather than being banished to an inferred but unseen extension of the stage space. As a result the audience is able to witness first hand the conduct of the group of women who "*se asoman a la ventana*" (OC: 1108) and peer out. The all-female conversation about the Médico and Antonio that was discussed earlier takes place immediately after this episode, as women look out of the window onto the carnival and "forasteros" below. Women in each of these examples act as a lens that catches the spectator's gaze and projects it beyond the limits of the stage to men who roam outside. In this example the audience is brought into direct contact with the lens that refracts their gaze, focusing attention on the identities of the men whom they themselves have been looking at outside.

In *El público* it is interesting to note that the process of focusing on men in the outdoor space by projecting the audience's vision through the open space of the window is condensed and reinforced. The opening scene is the Director's own study, unusually therefore a male indoor environment into which the audience is invited. But the space is far from realistic and the stage direction states that "*las ventanas son radiografías*" (OC: 599). In this case the window is utterly dominated by images of the human form not simply stripped naked but exposed to the most rigorous and intimate scrutiny of rays that penetrate to and illuminate the bones at the very core of the body. Some of the first words to be uttered against the backdrop of these X-rays declare the Director's belief that "*se ha inventado la cama para dormir con los caballos*" (OC: 600). Whilst the sex of the exposed bodies is not revealed directly, it seems likely that, insofar as the play is an introspective analysis of the playwright's own masculinity and homosexuality, as is suggested by this early reference to his "Caballitos" (OC: 600), it is the outer layers of the male form that are stripped away on the images at the windows. The relationship that is created in this example sees a man at home in the indoor space able to look out of his windows and contemplate the

men of the outdoor space, clinically penetrating the skin to quite literally expose the bare bones of masculinity. There is little suggestion of the window framing elicit homosexual desire but it does fulfil the same function as the spaces described earlier through which women gazed with sexual desire in that it catches the eye and promotes mutual surveillance of the male form beyond. In reality the Director is not seen to peer out of these windows at all. But this male on male analysis stands as distinct compared to the more typical scenario of his theatre which sees women looking with interest on men, and so perhaps direct comparisons are unhelpful. In this scene the male form at the window is permanent, captured in time, unlike the fleeting glimpses of passing men that served to satisfy the women discussed earlier. So perhaps it is irrelevant that the man on stage is not witnessed gazing at the bodies on display 'outside' as the suggestion is that he can do so again and again whenever the fancy might take him. This example also differs in that the male form is directly visible by the audience, shortening the trajectory of the spectator's stare by cutting out the necessity to look through the eyes of a third party on stage.

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THE AUDIBLE CONNECTION

The examples discussed above all share a common theme in that each demonstrates a well defined separation of the indoor and outdoor spaces, which are more often than not marked as female and male respectively. This reflects a distinct gender regime centring on the 'street', which Connell has discussed (1994), where (particularly young and aggressive) men dominate, and where women are not able to be free. The audience has direct experience only of the indoor space that is recreated onstage but is invited to transgress the wall that separates them by joining with the women in looking through the window. As a result the male form is perceived by the female characters and the notion of the male form is conceptualised by the audience that witnesses these events, with the result that masculinity and the male form are made tangible, despite their absence from the stage. The nature of the connection between the onstage female and the offstage male, being a visual capturing of the male, adds to the suggestion that it

is the physical male form as well as the abstract ideal of masculinity that is made present. However, another kind of bond, which is not so much visual as audible, is also constructed in many of the plays. Whilst not relying on visual contact this connection nonetheless causes the female on stage and the audience observing her to remember a male character and in this respect she is seen to be contemplating a more rounded concept of the identity and masculinity of the man who is on her mind, rather than simply ogling his body. Whilst the use of offstage sound effects is not, in itself, out of the ordinary, examples of their use to point to offstage male characters are numerous and recur in almost all of the plays, in contrast to female characters whose absence from the stage is generally absolute insofar as the audience is not encouraged to think of them when they are not present.

Yerma provides an interesting illustration of this method in Act 1 Scene 2. Following an exclusively female conversation about marriage and men the female protagonist is left alone temporarily and the voice of the virile Víctor is heard offstage singing suggestively:

VOZ DE VÍCTOR. (*Cantando*)
¿Por qué duermes solo, pastor?
¿Por qué duermes solo, pastor?
En mi colcha de lana dormirías mejor.
¿Por qué duermes solo pastor? (OC: 825)

This is followed by Yerma listening intently, appearing to join with his words and rhythm in a poignant display that suggests not only harmony in their words but also in their hearts. However it could not be said that the poetry of his words penetrating the stage space reveals only a spiritual process of identification between two souls. On the contrary, the suggestive edge to his invitation to share a bed is apparent to all. The appearance of Víctor with her onstage immediately after the song combined with the innuendo of the lyrics seriously reduces the extent to which this can be interpreted as an audible indicator of the non-physical aspect of the offstage male's character. But nonetheless the male is separated spatially and visually from the female when the poetry drifts to her ears and so the words that vent his masculinity make him present in a way that stands quite

apart from those occasions on which a visual link emphasizes his physicality. Gwynne Edwards remarks on the importance of this interruption: “Suddenly she [Yerma] hears Víctor singing a traditional Shepherd song. For Víctor it has no meaning but for Yerma it has every meaning” (1980: 202). In noting the significance of the intrusion of his innocent song into the personal space of the female lead, Edwards also draws attention to the dynamic at the core of this episode. The male sings contentedly, unaware that his words are being overheard and eagerly internalized by the female in the audience’s view. Mention was made earlier of the recurring motif of female thirst being quenched by the water of the men they desire and it is interesting to note that for Yerma the quenching of her thirst is achieved by the internalisation of Víctor’s offstage song: “Parece un chorro de agua que te llena toda la boca” (OC: 826).

A similar situation arises in *Tragicomedia de Don Cristóbal y la señá Rosita* where Currito, a mysterious and attractive figure is heard singing offstage:

(Fuera, se oye cantar)

VOZ. Rosita, por verte
 la punta del pie,
 si a mí me dejaran
 veríamos a ver.

ROSITA. ¡Oh Santa Rosa mía! ¿Qué voz es esta? (OC: 144)

The relationship that is established through the use of offstage sound mirrors that which was discussed earlier between the female perceiver and the male perceived in that the power of surveillance is again seated in the woman. In both cases the women are seen to use their senses as a medium to consume male characters, drawing the men into themselves.

Robert Lima has commented on the episode in *La casa de Bernarda Alba* mentioned earlier when the men return from the fields and “their lyrics penetrate into the household” (2001: 143) piercing the heavy atmosphere like an arrow. For Lima these distant voices serve as a sharp reminder of men’s absence from the stage, a significant fact in itself as he maintains that the play is a homosexual masterstroke by which the heterosexual male is “systematically belittled” (145),

criticized and even banished from the stage and he suggests that an “antimale mindset (...) permeates the play” (139). Lima’s reading of such plays seems extreme and if his observations about the level of negativity shown towards (heterosexual) male characters in general are dubious, then his comments in respect of *La casa de Bernarda Alba* are wholly unwarranted. In maintaining that the softly heard singing acts as a reminder of the ‘punishment’ of exile to which the men have all been condemned, he relies heavily on absence being interpreted as negative. My own position interprets the dichotomy that Lorca creates between inside and outside, present and absent, not in terms of inclusion as power and exclusion as punishment, but as a device to be exploited for the contemplation of masculinity as distinct from the male body. As with Yerma’s experience the words of the songs bring to mind the men who uttered them despite their permanent absence from the stage, unlike Víctor who was only temporarily out of sight. The thick walls of Bernarda’s fortress and the iron grip of her rule ensure that no man can enter and so the rigid division of outside and inside spaces is maintained and the male singers are by necessity exiled out of sight forever. But the separation of voice as a vehicle for male identity from the men themselves underlines the extent to which it is the idea of masculinity and the dream of a husband that is evoked by the song and so it is the male spirit which is made present in the women’s midst, rather than male physicality.

The audible signifiers that indicate male existence in a theoretical space imagined to be located out of site are by no means exclusively vocal. The two examples already cited feature men’s singing voices as a medium which carries the emotions and passions of the male character and releases them gently into the ears of the woman on stage. But many of the plays contain less direct audible reminders of men who are not present and very often these subtle signals make a very powerful statement about the men from whom they originate. Perhaps because the male is not allowed to enter the stage space, *La casa de Bernarda Alba* is illustrative of these indicators too. Lima has noted the significance of the funeral, itself a fundamental precursor to the events of the play, being conducted by a priest, “another invisible male” (2001: 139). The air of omnipresent authority that surrounds the Catholic priest is made tangible by the tolling of the church bells that punctuate the earliest exchanges of the play. The inescapability of the hold of the patriarchal church is well illustrated insofar

as the play opens with the tolling of bells at a funeral and ends with the certainty of renewed mourning, this time for Adela, and renewed tolling of the bells: “Bernarda: Avisad que al amanecer den dos clamores las campanas” (OC: 1066). Bells are heard again in the play but this time they are no longer associated with the ritual of mass but with the passing of the agricultural working day: “(*Se oyen unos campanillos lejanos como a través de varios muros*) Magdalena: Son los hombres que vuelven al trabajo.” (OC: 1018). On the one hand the bells are used to remind the audience of the authority of the male priest and his control over the ritualistic timetable of the service and on the other to remind the audience that the passing of the day is mapped onto the timeframe of the male working shift. But in both cases the sound has the effect of making men present in the minds of the women onstage and the spectators in the audience.

In the final few moments of the play another carefully positioned sound effect draws attention to a man offstage. Bernarda has just left the stage in a hurry, searching for a gun, when “*suenan disparos*” (OC: 1064). The impact of this gunshot on the audience is problematic for my argument in that they are led to assume it to be the direct consequence of a female action. The female protagonist now appears to be flaunting her dominance not only within the defined territory of her house but also beyond its borders and in this regard it is female power that is conceptualised as a result of the shot being overheard onstage. However the specific relevance of the offstage sound being a gunshot should not be underestimated as the firing of a bullet carries a heavy burden of symbolic meaning. The gunshot evokes the idea of Bernarda targeting the male form of Pepe, capturing him in her sights and firing a bullet. That her attempt was unsuccessful is not immediately apparent and for the fraction of a second during which time the gunshot reverberates around the theatre the audience, indeed the women onstage, are captivated by the powerful image of a bullet, saturated with the power to penetrate and kill, tracing a path through the air from the eyes of the woman to the body of the man. Once again a current or direction is established which sees female identity empowered as the originator and male identity shackled as the receiver, with the result that masculinity, constrained by female attempts to illuminate and target it, is offered up for analysis like a captured wild animal. During these events minds are inevitably drawn to visualise Pepe lying bleeding on the floor in the first instance and then running

scared in the second instance, rather than to Bernarda calmly taking aim and squeezing the trigger. It is interesting that this incident mirrors so closely the dynamic at the heart of the female gaze. Through the use of one simple gunshot Lorca brings to mind a complex relationship in which the woman is perceived to have the power to capture and objectify the passive male form, and yet the fact that her shot does not hit home cannot be ignored. If she is interpreted as capturing the male body in her gaze by taking aim then his escape without injury is surely emblematic of the frustration of female desire and the ultimate failure of women to capture men despite the determination in their gaze. Furthermore it is representative of the comparative weakness of female power outside the hermetic domestic environment. On the other hand Bernarda can be interpreted as using her gaze as a weapon, not for satisfaction of her own desire but precisely to emphasise the power that is centred on her. In this respect her gaze and the shot are self-referential tools whose sole purpose is to intimidate Pepe by declaring their own effectiveness.

I have already made mention of the poetic association that is established in several plays between male characters and their horses, which emphasises the physicality of the male form as well as having certain overtones suggesting sexual prowess and virility. It is worth noting that this association is frequently underpinned, not by visual experience, but by audible indicators. Of course it must be stated that it would be a brave Director who allowed the audience to actually *see* a character's horse onstage and yet despite the impossibility of creating a direct visual experience, it seems remarkable that Lorca is also reluctant to allow any indirect or recounted visual experience. After all it has been shown that women are frequently seen looking offstage at men or are later described as doing so and so it would not be out of keeping for Angustias' sisters to recount *seeing* Pepe's horse late at night with its proud master. But instead Amelia reveals that, despite not seeing Pepe: "oí los pasos de su jaca" (OC: 1007). Recounting sounds rather than sights here has the effect of distancing the subject from the male originator of the noise (that is the horse that symbolically represents its master) without diminishing in any way the extent to which it is the man who is placed at the centre of attention. It is worth stressing that this is not an approach that is restricted to this play alone. Consider, for example, what Eduvigis recounts about the novel at the centre of *Los sueños de mi prima*

Aurelia: “(Saliendo con el libro.) Pero se sienten los pasos de un caballo” (OC: 1128). Aurelia is excitable and immediately makes the connection with Armando, the hero of the novel, galloping at full speed in order to rescue the unfortunate Liduvina. Although the experience of hearing the horse’s hoofbeats on this occasion is even less direct than was the case in my first example, being first of all recounted by the author of the novel before Eduvigis gives voice to the words, the effect remains unchanged. Despite the absence of the male, both from the stage and from the scene described in the novel, the idea of his character is thrust into the spotlight by an account of an audible experience rather than a visual one. On the other hand the tense conclusion to Act 1 of *Bodas de sangre* is worth exploring further:

CRIADA.	¿Sentiste anoche un caballo?
NOVIA.	¿A qué hora?
CRIADA.	A las tres.
NOVIA.	Sería un caballo suelto de la manada.
CRIADA.	No. Llevaba jinete.
NOVIA.	¿Por qué lo sabes?
CRIADA.	Porque lo vi. Estuvo parado en tu ventana. Me chocó mucho.
NOVIA.	¿No sería mi novio? Algunas veces ha pasado a esas horas.
CRIADA.	No.
NOVIA.	¿Tú le viste?
CRIADA.	Sí.
NOVIA.	¿Quién era?
CRIADA.	Era Leonardo.
NOVIA.	<i>(Fuerte)</i> ¡Mentira! ¡Mentira! ¿A qué viene aquí?
CRIADA.	Vino.
NOVIA.	¡Cállate! ¡Maldita sea tu lengua!

(Se siente el ruido de un caballo.)

CRIADA.	<i>(En la ventana)</i> Mira, asómate. ¿Era?
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Leonardo's first appearance on stage and the subsequent conversation with his wife establishes the horse as an instrument that facilitates his infidelity and as a result the animal is quickly identified not just with its rider, but also with its rider's sexual activity. Therefore the indirect audible experience of the Criada's account of the previous night unambiguously refers the audience both to an individual male character and to issues of uncontrollable male sexuality. If there was any doubt remaining about the significance of hearing a horse approaching the property it is completely removed by the Criada's veiled accusation in time for the sound of the horse's hooves to reverberate around the theatre, which cranks the level of tension up still further as the audience participates in a direct audible experience, ensuring once and for all that Leonardo is the centre of everyone's attention. Despite the increased participation of the audience in the dramatic tension, it is clear that the same cannot be said of this example as was said of *La casa de Bernarda Alba* with regard to the separation effect of the sounds of a horse. Whereas previously the audible link usurped the central role of the visual bond between woman onstage and man offstage, now the two sensory experiences are combined. The previous night the Criada's attention was alerted initially by the *sound* of a horse, which caused her to approach the window and contemplate the *sight* of a man riding a horse. As this is being recounted these events are repeated before the audience's eyes. Unlike the previous examples, which attempted to make a male character figuratively present but without the direct and intimate bond created by visual experience, now Lorca employs hearing as just another instrument, to be experienced in conjunction with the visual, to achieve the same end.

The technique described above, which uses audible indicators to ensure that the thoughts of the audience crystallise around the idea of a male character despite his absence, recurs across the spectrum of Lorca's plays on many occasions, the majority of which need no more than the briefest of mentions. In *La zapatera prodigiosa*, for example, "un toque de trompeta" (OC: 347) serves as a prelude to the Zapatero's arrival onstage, in *Tragicomedia de Don Cristóbal y la Señá Rosita* Cristobita's reappearance is prefaced by his yelling on at least

two occasions (OC: 150 & 158), and in *Así que pasen cinco años* the Joven is heard talking outside before entering the Novia's apartment (OC: 543).

The final instance of Lorca's use of offstage sound effects to direct the thoughts of those present to a male character or male characters who are not present stands apart from all those examples previously cited. Until now the discussion has been limited to the use of diegetic sounds and noises offstage, each of which fulfils a plausible function in a chain of events that unfolds onstage. In this respect each has been a credible element of a stream of constructed reality and those that have not been recounted second hand have been audible both by the characters onstage and by the audience themselves. On the other hand the two violins in the final act of *Bodas de sangre* are neither plausible in the context of the scene nor heard by the characters onstage. However in this passionate scene it seems clear that the extradiegetic use of two distinct violins is intended to make the emotional tension of the two male leads perceptible to the senses. Going beyond the limits of strict realism in this way is masterful in conveying the sense of intense fatalism that surrounds the two male characters who drift through the dark forest, frightened and isolated. This echoes a noticeable change in approach to this act, which is obviously a great deal more stylized than either of the first two. That the music of these violins performs an almost identical function to the other offstage sounds described already is most apparent in the final moments of the act. The crescendo of violence and death is, without doubt, the emotional climax of the play and as a consequence it is quite astounding that the impact of this mortal combat is achieved despite the men's absence from the stage and is, arguably, even more emotionally engaging because of it. The overwhelming impact of "dos largos gritos desgarrados" (OC: 788) and of the highly symbolic violins stopping abruptly results in the two men and their fight to the death being elevated to become the focus of attention, not only for the few moments either side of their death, but for the play in its entirety. These few seconds of this one play form what is, arguably, one of the most memorable events of any of Lorca's plays and demonstrate a masterful ability to manipulate an audience to focus on masculinity but by harnessing only the spectator's hearing.

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THE DESCRIPTIVE CONNECTION

As part of a previous discussion about setting expectations of male characters prior to and in anticipation of their appearance the following description of Curianito was cited:

CURIANITA SILVIA. Me deleitan su cuerpo chico y sus ojos soñadores
de poeta. Tiene un lunar amarillo sobre su pata
derecha, y amarillas son las puntas divinas de sus
antenas. (OC: 20)

This excerpt from *El maleficio de la mariposa* also serves as a good illustration of another method by which Lorca draws attention to absent males, which is exploited alongside the construction of visual and audible bonds, as outlined above. In fact the use of oral descriptions to refer to the absent male is the most frequently used of all the methods currently under discussion and is so simple as to seem almost unworthy of mention. However, there is no doubt that a brief description of this kind results in the mind's eye of the audience picturing the man under discussion and, therefore, dialogue of this kind plays an important role in the plays. In *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, for example, the spectator is drawn into the process of judging Pepe el Romano, despite his absence, as a result of the descriptions of him offered by the sisters: "Es buen mozo" (OC: 907) and "tiene veinticinco años y es el mejor tipo de todos estos contornos" (OC: 998-99). The action of simply mentioning an absent male character necessarily fulfils the function I ascribe to it, that is to say ensuring that physical absence does not equate to exile from the dramatic discourse. Yet women in the plays frequently go beyond neutrally referring to men, preferring instead to vocalise a subjective analysis, which, as well as calling the spectator to sit in judgement over the missing male, also colours that judgement. This effect is strongest in *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, where the evocative words of the women onstage guide the spectators' thoughts to various images of masculinities, none of which will ever appear before them. Gwynne Edwards has observed that "La Poncia paints a verbal picture of the young men's strength and looks" (1980:

255), referring to the Segadores. The effect that is achieved by the near idolisation of physical male beauty that recurs in the all-female surroundings of this play is significant. Just as masculinity itself can so easily remain (and has for so long remained) hidden in the obscurity of a presumed gender neutrality, so it is conceivable that fleeting verbal references could escape the attention of even the most interested spectator. Alongside the multitudinous other strategies that I have outlined as being in place to bring masculinities to the forefront of these plays, it is no surprise that Lorca makes full use of verbal references to men offstage as yet another tactic. The repeated exaltation of male physical beauty that is concentrated in these descriptive references adds emphasis to what might otherwise be drab and unassuming dialogue and creates a verbal monument to the masculinity of those not present. *La casa de Bernarda Alba* provides an example of this descriptive dialogue:

LA PONCIA.	¿Y habló más?
ANGUSTIAS.	Sí, siempre habló él.
MARTIRIO.	¿Y tú?
ANGUSTIAS.	Yo no hubiera podido. Casi me salió el corazón por las boca. Era la primera vez que estaba sola de noche con un hombre.
MAGDALENA.	Y un hombre tan guapo.
ANGUSTIAS.	No tiene mal tipo. (OC: 1009)

In passages like this, where the absent male is idolised, Miró González suggests that the adulation of male beauty “alcanza [...] una categoría casi mítica al no aparecer el hombre en escena, al ser una ausencia omnipresente y dominadora, y no sólo la de Pepe el Romano. Son todos los hombres mencionados, aludidos constantemente por todas las mujeres del drama” (1988: 56).

Whether or not any man could live up to the glorious ideals of this perfect image of masculinity is a very different matter and one that will be discussed in due course. What is certain, however, is that these bursts of verbal adoration of the male form are part of a process establishing what Miró González labels the “ausencia omnipresente y dominadora”. His terminology entirely captures my own sentiments with regard to Lorca’s use of absence insofar as it is an absence

that is continually reasserted to the point of dominating the discourse with the inevitable effect of making masculinity the principal object of consideration.

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MALE ASSOCIATION WITH OBJECTS AS A FURTHER CONNECTION

Earlier it was established that positioning a male in the female line of sight creates a visual bond that brings the idea of masculinity back to the centre of the drama despite the physical absence of male characters. This approach was seen to rest frequently on a fundamental opposition between the inside space, with which the audience is familiar, and the outside space, which is beyond the spectator's field of vision. Whilst the other methods outlined (specifically the use of audible indicators and verbal descriptions) do not rely so heavily on the rigidity of this distinction, there is another technique that is also dependent on the existence of these two spatial opposites, or more specifically on the proximity between them. Indeed the occasions on which a physical object penetrates the stage space and acts as either a reminder of a man offstage, or as a metonym for him, do not only share a dependence on the distinction between inside and outside spaces with those plays that saw a visual bond established. Just as was the case with those scenes, the existence of an opening or gateway between the two rigidly defined spaces is relied upon for a foreign body to transgress the stark boundary between the two zones. Just as a woman looking at a man outside serves as a reminder of the potential for crossing the border, and so heightens the significance of her observing him, the appearance of an object *inside* that originated *outside* again highlights the scope for transgression and points back to the source from where it came. *Tragicomedia de Don Cristóbal y la Señá Rosita* contains an example of this kind.

ROSITA. (*Por la reja cae un collar de perlas.*) ¡Ay! ¿Qué es esto?
¡Dios mío, qué collar de perlas tan precioso! [...] ¡Y qué
bien me sienta! ... ¿Pero, de quién será? (OC: 113)

Whilst Rosita may still be unsure about the identity of the donor, the attentive spectator is left in no doubt at all. Cristobita, who has not yet himself been allowed to enter the indoor space that is Rosita's home, has tossed the necklace into the house. Of course there is a degree of significance to be attached to the nature of the object that he throws, as a string of pearls has unambiguous connotations of wealth and opulence which underline his potential to provide in material terms, but it is simply the role the gift plays in referring back to the absent thrower that is relevant here. It is also interesting to note that, only moments earlier, he was actually seen by Rosita through the very same window, as the subsequent entrance of the pearls can, as a result, be interpreted as mirroring the visual link that was previously established. The line of vision is less closely mirrored when a bag of money is brought into Bernarda's house as a gift from the men outside. Despite there being no direct visual link established here the familiar spatial division is strictly adhered to in accordance with Bernarda's earlier command "No quiero que [los hombres] pasen por aquí" (OC: 981). Although not allowed to enter her house and so be visible to the female mourners and the audience, "the men introduce themselves into the house indirectly through the gift that La Poncia brings" (Lima, 2001: 139). Lima does not appear to have appreciated that, once again, the nature of the gift is a revealing reminder that masculinity appears to equate with material provision. But above all the gift is a token that stands as much for the hope of traversing the seemingly impenetrable barrier that separates women from men as it does for the absent men themselves.

The fifth scene of *El público* contains surreal events that, whilst highly confused, echo the examples cited above. Edwards has observed that "Nude, Romeo, First Man are aspects of each other and forms of all of us" (1980: 81) and in this sense the dying man onstage is linked, by the thread of his confused and splintered identity, to the play being enacted out of sight and to Romeo in particular. But as well as these facets of a plurality of identities, there are more tangible links to the invisible Romeo. Various characters come and go, "linking the onstage and offstage actions" (Edwards 1980: 79). There is one final episode that deserves some consideration and falls into this same category of tangible evidence acting as a beacon that signals the identity of the male from which it

originates. The text gives the following description of how Yerma is to behave following Víctor's departure: "*En actitud pensativa se levanta y acude al sitio donde ha estado Víctor y respira fuertemente, como si aspirara aire de montaña*" (OC: 816). This behaviour hangs only very loosely on the framework laid out for the other examples discussed previously. It is evident that Víctor's scent has not 'entered' the stage space, but has merely remained after his departure, and the extent to which his perfume and aura can realistically be classed as tangible in the same way as a necklace or purse is debatable. But the air that previously surrounded him is a material reminder that remains onstage and is sufficiently perceptible to allow Yerma to "draw into herself the vitality that Víctor represents" (Edwards 1980: 177), and therefore acts as a token reminder of his presence despite his absence, casting minds to imagine him whilst he is elsewhere and, in this sense, the perfume of this attractive man is just as significant as the tokens of wealth that were discussed earlier.

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ABSOLUTE ABSENCE

Lorca has been shown to refract the audience's gaze in such a way as to make an absent male or absent males the principal focal point and these events have been classified into several distinct scenarios. The division between the onstage and offstage space has been discussed as having a fundamental role in emphasising ideas of presence and absence, for example in *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, where this division was particularly significant by virtue of its permanence. However, even this well defined framework, which sees women onstage refer to men offstage in various ways, does not provide a final and absolute basis for the distinction between presence and absence. For example, the absence of men from Bernarda's house is subject to the constraints of time and her ability to enforce her will on the household. None of the men in the examples discussed so far is absent in an absolute sense, but each is merely located elsewhere. As a result it is possible to distinguish a further category of absent men who are not out of sight for a temporary period or exiled subject to the whims of the women onstage, but who are absolutely and ultimately absent. It is worth reanalysing *La casa de*

Bernada Alba in the light of this distinction between qualified absence (location elsewhere) and absolute absence (location nowhere). The opening scene recreates the quiet preparations for the funeral wake of an unknown character and it is hard to imagine a more emotionally loaded symbol of the ultimate and absolute absence of an individual than a ceremony marking that individual's death. It becomes immediately apparent that the father of the household is being buried and so he is soon inextricably associated with the service currently under way in the church. By many and varied means the audience's attention is drawn to that ceremony so that the father is at the heart of everyone's thoughts whilst at the same time his absolute removal from the world is, by necessity, emphatically underlined. The first minutes of the play are punctuated by constant references to this offstage action, heightening its impact. The means by which attention is cast offstage to the funeral are varied, but closely mirror the techniques already outlined. The Poncia's first words form a descriptive account of the funeral service that recounts her own direct visual experience: "Llevan ya más de dos horas de gori-gori. Han venido curas de todos los pueblos. La iglesia está hermosa. En el primer responso se desmayó la Magdalena" (OC: 973). Lorca heightens awareness of the funeral further by the doleful sound of the church bells that hangs in the air as a reminder of the unhappy events. It was suggested earlier that the tolling of bells in a religious setting might point to the patriarchal authority of the priest conducting the mass. To this, then, can be added the significance of the sound of the bells in making the deceased male, or at least his memory, present once again in the midst of his home. It is not only the high profile funeral ceremony that inspires the audience to contemplate the deceased father. Indeed when the funeral has finished and the mourners are returning to the house the Criada's monologue is very prominent:

(Vuelven a sonar las campanas.) Sí, sí, ¡vengan clamores! ¡Venga caja con filos dorados y toallas de seda para llevarla! ¡Que lo mismo estarás tú que estaré yo! Fastídate, Antonio María Benavides, tieso con tu traje de paño y tus botas enterizas. ¡Fastídate! ¡Ya no volverás a levantarme las enaguas detrás de la puerta de tu corral! *(Por el fondo, de dos en dos, empiezan a entrar MUJERES DE LUTO, con pañuelos grandes, faldas y abanicos negros. Entran lentamente hasta llenar la escena. LA*

CRIADA, *rompiendo a gritar.*) ¡Ay Antonio María Benavides, que ya no verás estas paredes ni comerás el pan de esta casa! Yo fui la que más te quiso de las que te sirvieron. (OC: 979)

The audience is allowed an insight into these intense and highly personal emotions which centre on the memory of the late Antonio and on coming to terms with his death. The energy of the monologue is enough to inspire interest in the man who is the root of her passion, but these words go beyond mere reminiscence. Her personal account of Antonio is extremely sexually charged as she recounts intimate moments together, presenting him as highly sexually active. There is even the potential for a degree of eroticism to be read into her description of his current condition as 'stiff'. Yet in the same breath as the accounts of sexual liaisons she affirms that these cannot ever be recaptured. The sexual connotations of a symbolic interpretation of the word 'stiff' are engulfed by the morbid sense which was intended to be attached to it by the speaker. The eroticism of the male character is being eulogised in such a way that the spectator envisages male sexuality and virility whilst in the same instant being reminded that the specific man being referred to will remain forever absent. This has the effect of furthering the separation of masculinity from its basis in male characters that was seen in earlier examples, but which could never be interpreted as absolute as long as the potential remained for the man to return.

The dual emphasis on a male character and on his eternal absence is also to be found elsewhere in Lorca's theatre, and plays a particularly prominent role in *Bodas de sangre*, where death and mourning are fundamental to the tragic sense of fate that hangs over the lead characters. Here too the suffering is expressed in the earliest moments of the play as the Madre's emotional outbursts reveal the pain she feels at having lost her husband and hint at her loneliness. Clearly her loss is not as recent as is that of the women who mourn for Antonio María Benavides, but the pain that is conveyed to the audience is just as intense. This expression of grief, which confirms the perpetual absence of her husband, is followed swiftly by the following eulogy: "Tu padre sí que me llevaba. Eso es buena casta. Sangre. Tu abuelo dejó a un hijo en cada esquina. Eso me gusta. Los hombres, hombres; el trigo, trigo" (OC: 705). The Madre's grief and loneliness indicate the absolute removal of her husband and father from her world and

preclude the possibility of their return, and yet the physicality of their bodies and their rampant sexuality are celebrated openly. Referring to the late husband, MacMullan says “in the Madre’s cumulative eulogies he undergoes a kind of posthumous beatification” (1993: 61). The audience has not and, more importantly, can never actually behold these men, but is nonetheless invited to join with the process of extolling their masculinities. In scene three the Madre makes a similar declaration about her eldest son, who was also slaughtered by the Felix family: “¡Veintidós años! Esa edad tendría mi hijo mayor si viviera. Que viviría caliente y macho como era, si los hombres no hubieran inventado las navajas” (OC: 727). In one breath she is both praising his fiery manliness and lamenting his unending absence from her life. It is hauntingly appropriate that the play opens with a nostalgic view of masculinity, which is by necessity severed from the men who provided the inspiration, because the play will end with not only one, but three women wallowing in grief and remembering the virility of men who are lost forever. Indeed the solemnity of the final scene is immensely powerful and highly effective in communicating tragic feelings of permanent loss. The bareness and emptiness of the space ensure that nothing detracts from the deep sense of loss that is felt by the women present, and although Lorca required that the stage “tendrá un sentido monumental de iglesia”(788), the eternal loss of the two men could hardly be any more stark even if the scene took place at the funeral itself. He has also elevated the emotions of the scene above the limitations of straight realism by adopting a highly poetic style. For example the final bitter words spoken leave the audience contemplating an unbearable image of endless, tortured grief:

LA MADRE.	Y apenas cabe en la mano, pero que penetra frío por las carnes asombradas y allí se para, en el sitio donde tiembla enmarañada la oscura raíz del grito. (OC: 799)
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However, as well as weaving the eternity of male absence into the poetic fabric of this scene, Lorca also incorporates many strands that laud the admirable

masculine traits of the deceased. Hence several poetic memorials to the departed men's virility are vocalised, in which the men are repeatedly objectified by being reduced to physical comparisons with wild flowers, droplets of water and dark uncontrollable rivers. The juxtaposition of signs of the absolute absence of the men and accounts of their impressive masculinities is potently expressed in the poetic dialogue. This combination is refined in these two accounts:

MUJER.	Era hermoso jinete, y ahora montón de nieve. Corrió ferias y montes y brazos de mujeres. Ahora, musgo de noche le corona la frente.
MADRE.	Girasol de tu madre, espejo de la tierra. Que te pongan al pecho cruz de amargas adelfas; sábana que te cubra de reluciente seda; y el agua forme un llanto entre tus manos quietas. (OC: 797)

The two threads that run through these exclamations are obvious. Leonardo was breathtakingly attractive, but for all his beauty his body has faded to dust. Once he was fit and active and controlled the direction of his life, but now he is as still and passive as the moss that grows in the graveyard. The Novio was as bright and radiant as a sunflower and was a bold reflection of the fertile earth itself. But now, like the flowers of the wreath on his chest he has been cut down and only the silk sheet that covers him is radiant as he lies motionless, waiting to return to the earth. These accounts convey the former strength and current lifelessness of these bodies and the feeling of intense physical sexuality that now surrounds the memory of the dead men is heightened by the suggestion of homoeroticism that accompanies a phallic interpretation of their knives penetrating deep into each

other's flesh. As the audience remembers these two men and ponders their masculine qualities they are forcefully made aware that these men have not survived just as every man must pass away. The audience is ultimately left remembering the words of the Madre: "¡Los varones son del viento!" (OC: 756). Whilst the bodies of men will fade, masculinity endures.

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PRESENCE DESPITE *PRESUMED* ABSENCE:

Lorca's drama has developed a style which frequently uses various modes of reference to put the masculinity of absent characters under the scrutiny of the audience. Various examples have been discussed in this context where an individual account of masculinity is called to mind despite the absence of what might I shall refer to as its 'owner', that is to say the male character who, by being remembered, offers a particular vision of masculinity. This framework can be succinctly divided into the three elements that distinguish it from those processes outlined at the beginning of this discussion. Firstly and fundamentally, the male character is absent from the scene. Secondly, the woman or women present *believe* that the male character is absent. Thirdly, by some perceptible means the essence of the male character is reintroduced back into the stage space. Whether the man is dead or just out of sight, whether it is a sound or an object that reawakens interest in him despite his absence, the examples discussed above can all be mapped onto this outline of the framework. However, there are two prominent examples, which use verbal description as the mode of stimulating awareness of the absent male, and which appear to undermine this three phase structure whilst achieving its principal function. When the woman refers to the absent man by a verbal description, the most significant element in the three-stage process is undoubtedly the requirement that she believe him to be absent. It is, after all, her belief that she is free to talk about a man when he is not present to respond that liberates her words and adds credibility to their meaning. Whilst it is common for the man actually to be, as the woman believes, absent, the following two examples add an intriguing dimension to the dynamic of this scenario.

When the Zapatero returns to his own household he wears a disguise and projects an entirely different persona. The formality with which he is greeted by his wife stands as a stark contrast to the familiarity that characterised the earliest scenes and his new clothes reflect a light-hearted, comic façade that is nothing like the grave air of respectability that he presented as a shoemaker:

(Por la puerta aparece el ZAPATERO disfrazado. Trae una trompeta y un cartelón enrollado a la espalda; lo rodea la gente. La ZAPATERA queda en actitud expectante y el niño salta por la ventana y se coge a sus faldones.)

ZAPATERO. Buenas tardes.

ZAPATERA. Buenas tardes tenga usted, señor titiritero. (OC: 348)

In adopting such a convincing and effective disguise the Zapatero creates a bizarre situation in which he is both physically present but also absent in the minds of all those around him. When the neighbours all leave the room and the Zapatera is left alone with the man she believes to be a stranger there is no reason for her to temper her words when she talks fondly of her husband, saying “¡Con lo que yo lo quería! ¡Lo adoraba!” (OC: 358), “era mi alegría, mi defensa” (359) and “¡Ay, qué zapaterillo de mi alma!” (364). There is a certain irony in this arrangement as the audience buys into a woman’s personal outlook on a male character who is absent, in that he is unrecognisable compared to the image being recreated, but yet the very man who is both absent and under review can draw on the insight on offer. This is a remarkable scene as the process of separating an account of masculinity from its ‘owner’ is in place here as elsewhere, but on this occasion it is not only the audience and woman who are able to appreciate the idealised account, but the very man who inspired it is also able to hear the result. The result of temporarily sharing his wife’s point of view with regard to the most important elements of his own masculinity (for example his wisdom, his talents and his ability to make her feel safe) is for him to be more content in his relationship and even to internalise the idealistic vision his wife recounted. That he is able to participate in the process by which his own masculinity comes under

female scrutiny, reinforced by his presumed absence strengthens the suggestion that Lorca's theatre enacts the frantic search for inner male identity. Smith has suggested that "masks serve in Lorca's text to parody the real, to dissociate the spectators from fixed identities, and to disabuse them of the faith in absolute knowledge" (1989: 130). In this case of presence despite a belief in absence it seems clear that unknown identity creates a mask that does indeed dissociate the spectator (both the audience and the Zapatera) from the fixed and familiar identity of the Zapatero. But far from undermining the ideals of absolute knowledge, this separation of identities allows an authentic appreciation of the Zapatero's inner character both by himself and by the audience.

The events that draw *Amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín* to a close are of a similar construction. The final scenes of the play are punctuated by references to a mysterious and attractive man, who is a polar opposite of old Perlimplín, and as a result a potential parallel source of fulfilment for Belisa is established. According to my reading of this complex duality, the two distinct identities diverge from one unified male character as an analytical tool invented to focus minds on the genuine meaning of identity. The fact that Perlimplín is the only person to have seen the mysterious young man's face, and that he is so encouraging of his wife's relationship point to the shared identity of the two men. Just like Cyrano de Bergerac he transgresses the constraints of his ageing body by expressing his passion through the vehicle of a constructed, youthful identity. But unlike Cyrano, Perlimplín is not living his love through a third individual, but has created a third identity, centred on his own body. The beauty and virility of the youth is refined to its most elemental form in the flowing scarlet cape he wears, which hides the true physical identity beneath:

(Aparece un HOMBRE envuelto en una capa roja y cruza el jardín cautelosamente.)

BELISA. Chist... ¡Es aquí, aquí! *(El HOMBRE indica con la mano que ahora vuelve)* ¡Oh sí..., ¡vuelve, amor mío! Jazminero flotante y sin raíces, el cielo caerá sobre mi espalda sudorosa... ¡Noche!, noche mía, de menta y lapislázuli. (OC: 491)

Her declarations reveal the love she feels for a man she has never even seen and who all believe to be an attractive young man. But shortly after he returns to the stage to reveal the truth:

(Aparece entre las ramas un HOMBRE envuelto en una amplia y lujosa capa roja. Viene herido y vacilante.)

BELISA. ¡Amor!...¿Quién te ha herido en el pecho? *(El HOMBRE se oculta la cara con la capa. Esta debe ser inmensa y cubrirle hasta los pies. Abrazándole.)* ¿Quién te abrió tus venas para que llenases de sangre mi jardín? ¡Amor!...Déjame ver tu rostro por un instante siquiera...¡Ay! ¿Quién te dio muerte?...¿Quién?

PERLIMPLÍN. *(Descubriéndose.)* Tu marido acaba de matarme con este puñal de esmeraldas. *(Enseña el puñal clavado en el pecho.)*

BELISA. *(Espantada)* ¡Perlimplín! (OC: 494)

Whereas the objective served by condensing two identities into one character in *La zapatera prodigiosa* was so that the male lead could, as a result of his presumed physical absence, gain insight into his own inner self, the goal in this scene is quite the reverse. The creation of two identities allows Perlimplín to be present whilst his physical absence is presumed in order that his wife focus on those aspects of his masculinity to which she has previously remained blind. By presenting her with a neat and credible package that emphasises his love and commitment as well as the passion he is able to express through his words, but which is severed from the prison of an old man's body, she too is able to see beyond the mask to a man she loves deeply. The separation of identities highlights that Perlimplín's body and the Zapatero's body, indeed any human body, is just as much of a mask as the puppet master's clothes or the young man's red cape. Engineering scenes where a man can be present without the



burden of being immediately associated with a mask is a masterful technique designed to allow everyone, onstage and off, to search for a genuine understanding of an individual account of masculinity without the distorting influence that would normally result from his presence. Whether Lorca's theatre depicts this search for inner identity as ultimately abortive or capable of completion will, however, remain a question.

CONCLUSIONS



REPRESENTATION: PROCESS

Of the concepts that emerged from my initial research into gender and men's studies the one that has, without question, most heavily influenced the progression of my studies has been the notion of male invisibility. I included in my introduction to this thesis a quotation from Simone de Beauvoir's celebrated work which served very well as an illustration of the paradox of men being both the allegedly superior sex and not a sex at all. It has been shown that this is a difficulty that is faced as much in life as in literature and it is not easy to counter. It has been my principal aim to assess Lorca's theatre with this anomaly in mind in order to determine whether his own attitude to gender interaction mirrors this unjustifiable and outmoded assumption. It has become increasingly apparent that a very strong argument can be constructed around the premise that, far from perpetuating the concealment of masculinity in a generic human identity, Lorca's theatre in actuality subverts this process by focusing attention onto his male characters. The motif of a spotlight is unavoidable and has surfaced again and again throughout this discussion to illustrate the way in which all elements of the plays are seen to come together to draw attention to the men that form the core of the dramatic discourse. This process of illuminating the male characters is a composite of many subtle practices and techniques that, together, guide the spectator's thoughts and eyes. For example, the playwright's approach to the question of the audience's experience in the theatre encourages examination and reflection instead of passive catharsis. His theatre is littered with estrangement effects and the overall aesthetic is bizarre, surreal and often disjointed. The tone is set for a participatory experience by the audience whereby the eye is eager to be drawn and the mind willing to be focused on whatever (or whomever) is perceived to be the subject for discussion and the object of contemplation.

Beyond questions of style, Lorca also structures his plays with the aim of maximising the level of expectation surrounding male characters in such a way that they become the objects designed to satisfy the eager anticipation of the audience. By introducing the audience to strong female characters with a credible

sense of agency *before* men appear alongside them, Lorca ensures that it is men, not women, who bear the burden of expectation. These women, who project thoughts forwards to the arrival of the men, are united into one body through this process whereas the men are greeted with such a high degree of attention that they are guaranteed not to merge into a collective unity. This rejection of collective male identity is reinforced in practice by the rarity of encountering groups of anonymous men, which contrasts with the many occasions on which nameless women appear together.

The process of undermining the camouflaging effect of the traditional gender regime by highlighting individual masculinities is furthered by the reversal in Lorca's plays of two fundamental social dynamics. The first is the culturally sanctioned relationship of power between the sexes, and interpreting it as having been reversed has been shown to be problematic. It is clear that Lorca's women are frequently imbued with a great deal of material power. This is often accompanied by an iron will and firm resolve, giving the impression of very strong women who are determined to direct not only their own lives, but also the lives of those around them, sometimes including their men. But it cannot be denied that the origin of this power base is often male. Lorca's widows are clearly strong and powerful women who undeniably maintain firm control over their surroundings, and yet the very reason for their apparent autonomy is the death of their husbands. Female power that is inherited from men can hardly be cited as an example of the reversal of a typical gender hierarchy. Nonetheless Lorca's women are frequently strong and their material power is not always derived from men. I have also, however, made the case for a second class of power to be recognised that centres on psychological manipulation and persuasion. It is in the exercise of this power that women are seen to dominate their men and it is in dominating their men that women are seen to draw attention to masculinity in a way that is not customary. Men are forced into relationships by women and are frequently perceived as being forced onto the back foot by domineering women. This relationship is typified by the flow of communication between men and women in the plays. Instructions, commands and wise words are all seen to be directed at men by women with the inevitable consequence that masculinity is both belittled and made the centre of attention, as it is perceived as being under constant and inescapable attack.

The second fundamental dynamic that is seen to be reversed in his theatre is located in the sexual chemistry between characters. Typically it is the sensuality of the female body that is emphasised, rather than the woman's own sexual desires; women's capacity to please is recounted, rather than their capacity to be pleased. Prevailing constructions of female sexuality have tended to emerge from notions of uncontrollable and inherently malevolent animal sexuality driving women to ensnare innocent men. In Lorca's theatre the opposite is true. Female sexuality is given a very strong voice and is celebrated repeatedly as women are seen to understand their desires and to know how to satisfy them. In reality their sexuality is very far removed from comparisons with Eve corrupting Adam. Far from coldly calculating to use their appearance in order to entrap men and drag them downwards, female desire itself is emphasised such that sexual relationships are presented as satisfaction of a female need, rather than as a corrupt act of revenge to get even with culturally superior men. This is reinforced by the emphasis that is also placed on the eroticism of the male form. Poetic imagery and direct references make clear that the male body is to be revered as a thing of beauty and a high level of erotic value is attributed to it. Whether the eroticism that surrounds the male body in Lorca's theatre is a reflection of the playwright's sexuality is a matter of speculation. But it is certainly evident that man is painted as the nourishment to satisfy the sexual hunger of women.

The inversion of the stereotypical sexual motif of the hunter and the hunted has also had an impact on the interaction between men and women on stage. I have talked about Laura Mulvey's work on the gaze in cinema and I hope I have shown that some of her work applies also to Lorca's plays. There is indeed a clearly observable relationship between the active person observing and the passive person being observed. This is, in its own right, a relationship of sexual power, whereby the one observed becomes prey-like, entrapped and often unable to escape. What is unusual in these plays, however, is that it is the women who are the active watchers and the men who are passively watched. There is not even the suggestion that this unusual relationship must be kept discreetly hidden, for female enjoyment only. There are several occasions when women seize the power to observe men and are wholly unrepentant and make no attempt to hide

their forwardness. This process casts men almost as victims, but certainly as objects, with the result that they are, as ever, the focus of attention.

If it is by reinforcing the individuality of his male characters that Lorca demonstrates their separation from the anonymous crowd then the notion of absence has been a significant tool. The separation of male characters from the discourse that is so frequently centred on them is a very refined mechanism. On the one hand the removal of a man from the environment in which his identity is recalled gives the impression of authenticity to whatever is said or inferred. But on the other hand the evocation of a distinct male character without his physical presence suggests the severance of gender from sex. This is an intriguingly subtle device for hinting at the possibility of this separation and its importance should not be exaggerated. But nonetheless the difference that is frequently imputed to femininity is often presumed to flow from issues centring on the female body. So a gentle move towards the separation of gender from sex removes the justification that distances women as different and draws masculinity back into the discursive arena as a distinct gender that is separate from broad human nature.

Three different examples of the absence device have evolved in Lorca's theatre. The most extreme is the absolute absence that allows the masculinity of a dead male character, who remains a stranger, to become real in the minds of those present. In this scenario the masculine gender is portrayed through an individual example that is not only clearly distinguished from humankind in general, but has also been wrenched from the sexed body with which it was associated. This can be differentiated from examples of temporary absence, as the temporarily absent male has a two-fold impact. On the one hand the device operates in the same manner with regard to discreetly hinting at the separation of sex and gender. But events or words that call to mind the masculinity of a temporarily absent man serve another function that is not repeated in the case of absolute absence. The thrill of witnessing the descriptive processes that recount an absent man's identity is heightened by the potential for him to return. In the same way that adopting a female viewpoint early in the play creates an atmosphere of expectancy, reflections on an absent man's masculine identity inspire a readiness to judge him on his return. Finally there are instances of presumed absence. The first point to note with regard to presumed absence is that

it allows the man in question to join the audience and other characters in perceiving an honest and frank representation of his masculinity. More significantly, perhaps, is the impact this process has with regard to the splitting of identity. It suggests that identity is a mask that can be shed or adopted and also hints at the splitting of gender identity. If a man must resort to adopting another guise to discover truths about his own masculinity then gender identity is demonstrated to be uncertain, elusive, but above all plural.

Absence is a complex device, however, as it is a highly effective but incomplete mechanism. By incomplete I mean to suggest that absence alone has no illustrative effect insofar as it is not the man's absence that causes the audience's attention to be projected towards his masculine identity. In fact it is precisely because absence typically suggests not knowing, or putting to the back of the mind, that its paradoxical use with regard to masculinity, both making it known and calling it to mind, is so remarkable. So absence is merely a theatrical state or condition which persists for a period of time, but which requires an interjection by another medium before the highlighting effect I have referred to can be observed. It is, then, the interaction of male absence and a referential interruption which casts attention on masculine identity.

These referential interruptions have been shown to take many forms and each shows the masculinity of the absent man in a different light. The most obvious is perhaps the physical object that enters the stage space and acts as a metonym for the man from whom it came. A pearl necklace and a bag of coins have been cited as examples of these penetrative reminders and their symbolic value is clear. As well as material provision and wealth, however, these tangible connections with absent men have also been shown to illustrate the strength and eroticism of the absent male form. When I staged a student production of *Bodas de sangre* (23 February 2002, Durham), I made use of the depth of meaning attached to the knives, which signify violence and self-destructive aggression as well as intense sexuality and even homo-erotic penetration. I placed just these two knives on a table onstage as the audience took their seats, which once again projected attention forward to the masculine identities for which they stood. The use of these physical reminders is, however, problematic to a certain extent, as they appear to represent not just masculine identity, but also the male body. This runs counter to my suggestion that the absence technique serves ultimately to

reconnect the audience with questions of masculine identity, without the confusion of the associations and connotations of the male body. The same can, to an extent, be said of what I have referred to as visual and audible connections. The examples of women peering at men clearly cannot be said to epitomise the scrutiny of masculinity as gender without the burden of maleness as sex because it is precisely their bodies that are being observed. But, nonetheless, this does represent one step further towards the total alienation of the male body by depicting women's experience of masculinity whilst the men are absent. The audible reminders of absent men do, also, serve as links to the body as the origin of the sound. But I have suggested that it is a degree apart from the more direct visual connection with the body that is established through looking. This is particularly true of the extradiegetic violin music that represents the passions and emotional conflicts of Leonardo and the Novio in *Bodas de sangre*. Even the occasions when the vehicle for rendering masculinity the focus of attention is describing an absent man do not totally sever the link to the male body. During these descriptive discussions the women frequently allude to male physical beauty, strength or fertility. Despite the fact that the various media used to divert attention towards absent men rarely succeed in completely separating masculinity from the sexed bodies of the male characters, there is to be observed, at the very least, a profound distancing of the male body from the perceived female experience of masculinity. More significant, however, is the overall effect of these media, which is to highlight individual characters and once more centre attention on their masculine identity.

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REPRESENTATION: SUBSTANCE

The bulk of my argument has centred on the processes of representation at work in Lorca's plays. These processes have been seen as remarkably successful tools, used to invert the stereotypical dynamic by which women are inevitably the focus of attention and men blur into the background, avoiding becoming the subject of either an internal or external discourse. It is these practices that I have found to be most interesting during my research, but I have

made very little explicit reference to substantive questions about masculinity. In other words I have discussed how masculinity is represented, but not what masculinity is shown to be. From my research about methods of representing masculinity, I intend to draw some conclusions with regard to Lorca's portrayal of masculinity itself. In so doing the first question to be asked, which is a fundamental one, is whether Lorca's plays reveal inner masculinity to be a fiction, or an ascertainable reality.

In *The Body Hispanic* Paul Smith comments on what he considers to be the irony of men's clothing being advertised in the programme for the first ever stage performance of *El público* (1989: 3/4). He observes that advertising is constructed around the suggestion that meaning or worth can be added by the possession of the article on sale. As a result it is ironic that an advert suggesting that masculinity can be asserted or defined by sporting the correct attire should unwittingly associate itself with a play that, in Smith's opinion, seeks to challenge the notion that masculinity is anything other than an artificial mask to be put on and worn. He criticises Gwynne Edwards and others for an overly simplistic interpretation of the play that places a great deal of value on the removal of costume and other rapid identity changes as a process of unmasking the hidden, genuine identity of the character. The Director passing behind the screen is the classic example, interpreted by Edwards as follows: "The transformation of the Director into the figure of *a young boy dressed in white satin* reveals to us immediately, with no need for words, his homosexuality" (1980: 87). On a more general note he suggests that "stripped of all our pretensions those forces that work in men, at the very centre of our being, are those forces that operate in Nature too" (1980: 69). Contrary to this understanding of the play's meaning, Smith has adopted a very different interpretation that owes more to Foucauldian notions of emergence and descent than to the idea of absolute identity. The frequent removal of layers and masks does not reveal the inner truth, he suggests, but instead highlights "a focus or locus of discursive warfare" (1989: 127), pointing to human desperation in conducting and completing the search for inner identity. According to Smith, then, *El público* does not reveal any hidden identity and Lorca's drama contains nothing more than continual digging through artificial layer after artificial layer, which will ultimately and necessarily end in disappointment. In short, "the

shimmering epidermis of his language conceals no hidden identity” (1989: 113). Wright reads *Amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín* to be an equally pessimistic portrait of life, revealing “that life can be seen as a series of flimsy red herrings to disguise the constant presence of death” (2000: 61). To borrow an analogy from *El público*, if Edwards views a lake as a volume to be discovered by diving beneath the surface, then Smith and Wright are convinced that the lake is nothing more than a thousand surfaces.

Because of the mixture and complexity of imagery and symbolism at work in Lorca’s theatre I have difficulty in accepting Smith’s interpretation. Whilst it seems certain that arriving at a meaningful understanding of authentic identity is presented as a turbulent process in the plays and whilst I concede that there is a suggestion that the search might not always be successful, I find reason to adopt a note of optimism in approaching Lorca’s drama. The use of the screen and of X-rays as windows in *El público* are, in my mind, clear in their meaning and to attempt to confuse their meaning seems unduly argumentative. The X-ray is unavoidably symbolic, not only of a process of stripping away exterior layers, but also of revealing a core structural framework beneath. In fact, the motif is stronger than simply reminding the viewer that an inner core is discoverable, it goes further to emphasise the importance of this process in identifying hidden wounds with a view to beginning a process of healing. However, the principal ground on which I reject Smith’s negative approach to the representation of authentic inner identity is the very technique of separating masculinity from the male body that I have just been outlining. Connell (1995) and others have noted the tendency to associate ‘successful’ or desirable masculinity with the male body. Physical strength, resilience and the ability to perform well are all criteria by which masculinity has been assessed. To separate masculinity from the male body, then, is a suggestion that masculinity is a wider concept that can have meaning of its own without being rooted in a biological entity. I observed at the start of this discussion that the occasions on which Lorca fundamentally reverses gender identities are disappointingly rare and cannot give rise to an interpretation of his theatre as fundamentally diverging from the idea of gender identity being fixed in the appropriate biological sex. What I have demonstrated, however, is that Lorca has been willing to remove the body from the stage to allow references to masculinity to acquire a new degree of independence and to initiate

a process of reflection on the meaning and value of masculinity, quite apart from individual male characters. Whether or not essential identity is taken to exist, the search is undeniably real, and most critics seem to agree that the process of searching is presented as tiring and complex. It seems to me that the difficulties of interpretation that flow from those plays in which an inner masculine identity is sought are so great as to obscure such allusions to authentic masculine identity as might otherwise be easily perceptible. For example, the splintering of masculinity into multiple personas in plays such *Así que pasen cinco años* and *El público* as well as in those plays where the wealth vs. passion opposition is constructed, creates a confusing spectrum that makes the location of one genuine and unified sense of male identity very difficult. When masculinity is depicted as an ideal without the interpretive burden of having to reconcile that ideal with any physical specimen masculinity is liberated of confusion and can, it seems to me, be located with comparative ease. In this respect, it is Lorca's puppet theatre that is, perhaps, most successful. The stylization, exaggeration and excessive theatricality of plays such as *Amor de Don Perlimplín* and *La zapatera prodigiosa* encourage their performance in a manner that is reminiscent of other puppet plays. But puppet theatre enacts human experience in a way that is severed from the human form because "el cuerpo de la marioneta (...) se postula como mera plasticidad" (Fernández Cifuentes, 1986: 71). The credibility of their human form is called into question, doubting the authenticity of the mask they inhabit, but the lived experience they relate is not undermined and so it is the link between the body perceived and the identity portrayed that is weakened, not the identity itself. There is, then, some justification in interpreting Lorca's plays as lamenting the difficulty of deconstructing the mask that hides human identity, but there are also suggestions that there is an inner human essence capable of discovery.

It is problematic to pin down concise accounts of inherent masculine identity in the plays, precisely because of the strong message they convey relating to the difficulties involved in locating essential identity and, according to Smith and Wright, relating to the non existence of true inner identity. What seems certain is that the myth of masculinity being tough and aggressively dominant is thoroughly debunked. The absurd account of the masculine gender that is typified by Cristóbal in *Tragicomedia de Don Cristóbal y la seña Rosita*

and centred on his truncheon is revealed to have no substance at all as the character is only a robot. Similarly Wright has suggested that the archetypal view of masculinity embodied by the athletic Rugby player in *Así que pasen cinco años* is also ultimately an empty ideal. She argues that his helmet and other sports-related padding, which add to his bulk and refine his appearance, can be construed as declaring the artificiality of the ideal his character claims to epitomise, and that the play demonstrates “the hollowness of the traditional image of masculinity” (2000: 67). On the other hand Lorca’s plays do appear to support two particular views of masculinity, which often occur simultaneously in the context of a woman being required to choose between them. *Bodas de sangre* is the most prominent example of these plays that present men as either passionate and romantic or as bringers of material wealth and comfort. That play is also illustrative insofar as it demonstrates that this opposition is unresolved and perhaps irresolvable. Lorca chose not to let the Novia disappear into the sunset with her passionate lover or return repentant to the safety of her husband’s arms. Instead neither account of masculinity takes precedence as both men are killed. The implications of their death for questions of the meaning of the human search for essential identity have already been discussed, but they also carry further meaning. As the audience is reminded of the men’s mortality and of the determination of their spirits that drove them to their deaths, these two versions of masculinity are actually reinforced. Unlike the examples of exaggerated masculinity mentioned earlier, when the accounts were ultimately revealed to be empty, the opposition between these two particular visions of the masculine gender are strengthened by being so closely intertwined with the men’s life and death. Furthermore, a number of Lorca’s plays offer characters that are unafraid to show their passions and emotions, not least Curianito in *El maleficio de la mariposa*. Perhaps these versions of a ‘softer’ masculinity are constructed to stand in contrast to the violence and dominance of the over-inflated ‘macho’ masculinity referred to earlier. Whereas the traditional ‘hard’ masculinity is deflated in the plays, there is little reason to interpret the gentler accounts of the masculine gender as being undermined.

It seems, therefore, that a question mark remains over the comment that Lorca’s theatre makes about the reality of inner human identity. If Smith and Wright are to be believed, the plays portray the bleak void that lies beneath the

strata of exterior human identity and the fatal consequences of delving too deep. If an essential masculine identity is to be located in the texts it is clear that the process of searching, rather than the identity itself, is the real star of the plays. The search is arduous and painful and, even if it is meaningful to talk of true identity, it is not always achievable to locate it. Lastly, when accounts of masculinity are offered, the plays do not reveal a single unified meaning, but a diversity of meanings. Plurality of masculinity recurs whenever authentic masculine identity is hinted at in the plays, whether it be *Bodas de sangre* or *Los sueños de mi prima Aurelia*. Whilst Wright might not consider essential identity to be presented as real in *Así que pasen cinco años*, for example, she acknowledges the plurality of (what she might consider to be hollow) accounts of masculinity and observes that this diversity “challenges the traditional perception of masculinity as a monolithic, stable entity” (2000: 67/68).

* * * *

CONCLUSION

The theatre of Federico García Lorca has been seen to be diverse in its subject matter and I stated at the beginning of my thesis that I did not want to fall into the trap of the author function and allow my reading of the texts to be dictated by a historically constructed set of ideals and expectations. I claimed not to want to smooth over difference in his work, but to celebrate it. Indeed I have found in these plays a wonderful variety not just in terms of content, but also in terms of style, technique and methodology. Without wanting to constrain this variety, there are a number of loose trends that I read as connecting the majority of the plays, and a summary of these trends will bring this thesis neatly to a conclusion.

I have interpreted Lorca’s plays as rejecting an artificially constructed gender regime that identifies masculinity with the broadest possible concept of the human condition, but distances femininity as different or defective. He achieves this to some extent by broad processes such as the construction of an enquiring space around the stage so that spectators confront and challenge preconceived notions, and the refusal to permit anonymous groups of men to

appear. But more specifically Lorca prevents masculinity from remaining invisible by drawing attention onto his male characters. The link between gender and sex is not fundamentally severed in his work and so by focusing minds on individual men, he also focuses minds on individual representations of masculinity. He has achieved this by encouraging the audience to adopt a female viewpoint which distances and sexualises the men onto whom their gaze eventually falls. This method is accentuated by projecting the audience's gaze onto masculine identity, even when the man himself is absent, by using sounds, conversations and objects as reminders of the men. This methodology ensures that the masculinity of the male characters of his plays is constantly in the contemplation of the spectator, and rarely able to escape to anonymity or invisibility.

Process and methodology has undoubtedly been the focus of my discussion. I have discussed the plays as contorting the audience's gaze to fall always on an individual account of masculinity. Interpreting the substance behind each of those individual accounts of masculinity has been seen as problematic, as the search for essential human identity is perceived to be traumatic, horrendously difficult and, according to some readings of the plays, ultimately pointless. If the concept of true gender identity can survive the critical work of Smith and Wright then it is revealed to be splintered and diverse and to challenge typical notions of coherent, unified masculinity centred on characteristics of strength and dominance. It seems that the concept of plurality of masculinities is supported without opposition, even if some consider each version to be a mere façade that hides emptiness and nothingness.

I return, finally, to the question of representation, not as substance, but as process. The theatre, after all, is a process that seeks to draw together endless creative strands into one coherent performance that gives its message or makes its case. Lorca is the master in this respect, making use of everything from his choice of title, to casting and stage direction, and to the sights and sounds that originate from beyond the limits of the stage space. His mastery of all these artistic devices and contrivances have allowed Lorca to achieve what De Beauvoir could only dream of: he makes masculinity distinctly and uniquely visible.

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