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Source: *Hispanófila*, No. 90 (MAYO 1987), pp. 21-37
Published by: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for its Department of Romance Studies
Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/43808176
Accessed: 09-12-2019 11:10 UTC

GARCÍA LORCA'S *BODAS DE SANGRE:* THE LOGIC AND NECESSITY[1] OF ACT THREE

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THERE have always been those commentators, readers and spectators who maintain that the relation – or lack of it – between the third act and the first two of *Bodas de sangre* (1933) is a flaw which more or less seriously damages the play's aesthetic and dramatic structure, impact and appeal. There is indeed no doubt that a major shift of tone, mood and style occurs between the interruption and breakdown of the marriage celebrations and the appearance of the three woodcutters. In this present study I want to try to suggest some ways in which Act III is connected to the previous two, some reasons why the shift occurs, and hence some motives for considering it as a positive rather than negative feature of the play.

Those who have given thought to how they might direct or perform Act III, and those who have seen productions of the work, will be aware of the particular difficulty of "bringing off" Act III, Scene i on stage. There is the considerable problem of creating the right atmosphere and striking the right note, especially with the "symbolic" characters. The Leñadores must be balanced between the "real" and imaginative worlds, achieving the right mix between understanding and sympathy for the fleeing protagonists and the bearing of ill-omen;[2] similarly, Luna and Mendiga must be truly menacing and in no way tending to the ridiculous. In all this Lorca posed for himself and his future producers a patently hard task.[3] However, there *are* a number of hints and suggestions in Acts I and II which both prepare us for Act III and allow us to connect it – dramatically, aesthetically and interpretatively – with what comes before.

In Act I the three important households are visited in turn – those of the Madre and Novio, Mujer, Suegra and Leonardo, and Padre and Novia – and each is differentiated both by internal decoration, chiefly

colour, and the surrounding physical environment. In Act II the action remains static, located logically at the Novia's house where the marriage preparations and subsequently the celebrations take place. During Acts I and II the geography of the area is evoked economically, by means of a number of remarks whose primary function is to comment on the weather or climate or to suggest, make or comment on practical arrangements for travel connected with the wedding.[4] Thus we are actually prepared for the setting of Act III, Scene i before we get there, the river having been mentioned on a number of occasions, while the dense wood contrasts significantly with the bare dry plains of the previous landscape. Likewise Scene ii returns us to what must be the Madre's house, where the play opened. However, instead of a "habitación pintada de amarillo" (p. 3), we are now presented with a "habitación blanca con arcos y gruesos muros... El suelo será también de un blanco reluciente. Esta habitación simple tendrá un sentido monumental de iglesia. No habrá ni un gris, ni una sombra, ni siquiera lo preciso para la perspectiva" (p. 64).[5] This modification and distortion – a simple technique of stylization – is consonant with other poetically "heightening" features of Act III, and I shall return to consider its full significance below.

In a similar fashion, the high incidence of verse to be found in Act III is not suddenly thrust upon the reader/spectator; rather elements of verse have played an increasingly important organic role from near the beginning of the work. The *nana* in Act I, Scene ii, the *alborada* and *epitalamio* in Act II, Scene i, and the *canción* of the Criada in Act II, Scene ii all have specific, significant functions in the play as a whole.[6] In broad and simplistic terms, the *nana* reinforces other notes of ill-omen to be found in Acts I and II, the *alborada/epitalamio* asserts the tone of rejoicing that *should* be prevailing, while the Criada's *canción* treats events ambiguously in its imagery, allowing of both joyful and sinister readings.[7] Thus the monologues of moon and beggarwoman, the dialogue of Leonardo and the Novia, the spinning song of Muchachas and Niña, and the final verse section of Mujer, Madre and Novia are, stylistically, prepared for. Furthermore, within the play *as a whole,* the subject matter and genres of the songs and verse sections lead us logically from cradle song, to dawn and wedding song, to a song about marriage, to meditations on death, to violent, erotic sensuality, back to death and finally to a mournful dirge.[8] Man's life, from cradle to grave and beyond, is coherently and suggestively evoked in such a schematic sequence. Finally, we should note that in Acts I and II song is used solely naturalistically, that is to say, only on those occasions and in those circumstances where one could legitimately "expect" characters to sing. The higher incidence and the extended use of verse in Act III therefore obviously relates to and to some extent creates

the different atmosphere which prevails therein. We shall need to return to this in the specific consideration of the last act.

A further organic thread unites Acts I, II and III, namely that of the dense and complex imagery and symbolism which runs right through the work. We do not need to conceive of nor approach the drama as an extended poem in order to grasp the importance of the role played throughout by connecting images and larger symbols and the way in which much of the sense and further significance is generated by them. Many critics, including myself, have dwelt at length on the connotations and interrelations of the imagery and symbolism in *Bodas de sangre,* and hence I do not propose to repeat such considerations here, but merely to emphasize their ubiquitous, meaningful and thus unifying presence.[9]

When we come to consider Act III *per se,* we discover that Lorca himself not only recognized but stressed and indeed was proud of the shift from the previous two acts:

> –¿Qué momento le satisface más en *Bodas de sangre,* Federico?
>
> –Aquel en que intervienen la Luna y la Muerte, como elementos y símbolos de fatalidad. El realismo que preside hasta ese instante la tragedia se quiebra y desaparece para dar paso a la fantasía poética, donde es natural que yo me encuentro como el pez en el agua.[10]

The key terms used here are three, providing us with Act III's essential characteristics. It is designed following the principles of symbolism and "poetic fantasy," and it is marked by a heavy air of fatality. Of course, these features are not new to us; they simply move up to assume a more explicit and dominant role. Thus the imagery and symbolism running through the whole play generate the symbolic personification; the "poetic fantasy" contained in microcosm in the songs and verses of Acts I and II spills over to determine much of the mood and action of Act III; and the various and numerous hints of ill-omen and brooding fate – from the Madre's fears about the "navaja," suspicions about the Novia and mistrust and hatred of the Félix family to the suggestions in both lullaby and Criada's song – lead through consistently to the eruption of fatality here.

Furthermore, Lorca's use of the term "realismo" to describe the quasi-naturalistic Acts I and II must be seen as relative rather than absolute. Indeed, there are several elements of stylization present from the start: the generic character names, the settings and particularly the characterization of the dwellings, the highly orchestrated interplay between background and foreground in Act II, Scene ii, and so on. Thus the difference between Act III and the previous two is fundamentally quantita-

tive rather than qualitative; it is, as it were, a change of gear rather than of complete vehicle. The heightening of stylization in Act III is achieved precisely through the use of a more mysterious and evocative setting (the wood) and then an explicitly distorted one (the pure white interior of the house without any perspective), through the much increased use of verse monologue and dialogue ("Venga en buena hora la poesía en aquellos instantes que la disposición y el frenesí del tema lo exijan" [*OC* II, p. 958]), and through the move from "natural" imagery and symbolism, stemming largely from actual rural Andalusian idiom and the *campesinos'* everyday experience of the real world, to anthropomorphic symbolism, stemming this time, I would argue, from the *campesinos'* imagination.

The connection and comparison of Lorca's procedure with J. Ortega y Gasset's *La deshumanización del arte* (1925) may serve to illustrate my point.[11] Ortega categorizes the "exclusivo realismo" which governed the nineteenth-century sensibility as "una monstruosidad sin ejemplo en la evolución artística"; contemporary literature, on the other hand, is back in touch with "el camino real del arte," namely "voluntad de estilo." He concludes pithily: "estilizar es deformar lo real, desrealizar. Estilización implica deshumanización" (all p. 38). Now, as we know, "deshumanización" involves in basic terms not the banishing of human emotions from the work of art but rather the elimination of both their parading and the concomitant invitation to identify with them vicariously and thus respond to the work of art via this "easy," non-artistic channel. He later continues: "si es la metáfora el más radical instrumento de deshumanización, no puede decirse que sea el único. Hay innumerables de alcance diverso. Uno, el más simple, consiste en un simple cambio de la perspectiva habitual" (p. 48). For, "lograr construir algo que no sea copia de lo 'natural' y que, sin embargo, posea alguna substantividad, implica el don más sublime" (p. 36).

It seems to me that this is just what Lorca has succeeded in doing here. He has abandoned the often lacrymose, "realistic," bourgeois, moral drama and has sought to portray human life from a different angle, one which better brings out the "essentials."[12] The distortion – the stylization – should in fact *help* the reader/spectator to penetrate the "realistic" superficialities of life and reach its basic truths, which are indeed substantial. The whole play is stylized, but Act III, inasmuch as the action it contains works out the most extreme – and fundamental – cases and situations one might imagine, is consequently the most extremely stylized. Furthermore, in this "shift of gear" Lorca underlines most powerfully the universality of application and interpretation which the action, firmly rooted in a rural Andalusian "reality," is meant to possess.

I have already suggested elsewhere that Leonardo and the Novia, throughout the play but most obviously in Act III, are meant to be taken

in some measure as archetypal figures with specifically biblical resonances.[13] The temptation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the Fall, the Expulsion into the harshness and sorrows of the World, and the entry of Death into the World, all these are conjured up by one or other aspect of the play, and again most acutely in the conjunction of eroticism, violence and death in the dialogue between Leonardo and the Novia in Act III, Scene i. Then again, these two, and in a different "pairing" Leonardo and the Novio, are not only extreme but in a sense exceptional characters: the great majority of men do not hurtle through the ambiguous delights of sensuality and sexuality to a rapid death, but rather live a much less tempestuous life, witnessing others' deaths and with a consciouness of their own coming demise. Thus Leonardo and the Novia can also be seen as a fantasized alternative, as living out what in one way all the *campesinos* and hence all men, throwing off their repressions and self-restraint, might like to do, but also with the in-built reminder of what would inevitably result: the more intense the living and loving, the faster they "burn out."[14] As Morris comments: "By making them talk in poetry, Lorca lifts Leonardo and the Novia off the level of commonplace humanity and raises them to the status of tragic lovers in the mould of Romeo and Juliet."[15]

The fatality, mentioned earlier, which hangs over the play, is therefore not some woolly, ill-focussed, peasant superstition, nor a facile, Romantic pose, but rather a stylization itself, a transposition of the parameters of the human condition and predicament and most acutely of human mortality. The intuitive and "earthy" Andalusian *campesinos* conceive of it as "fatalidad," just as the symbolic personified characters in the third act are articulations of its aspects and processes. Thus the three Leñadores, the Luna/Leñador and Mendiga/Muerte are best thought of as anthropomorphic embodiments or actualizations of precisely those dark and sinister forces which country folk would *imagine* to be at work and which they might represent in their tales, legends, myths or collective unconscious. These personifications, therefore, do not rupture the conception of the play; rather they build and develop coherently on both the basic setting and situation and on the previous imagery and symbolism.

The aftermath of and response to this "fatalidad," focussed in the two actual "fatalities," are shown in Act III, Scene ii. Here the setting is, as we have noted, perhaps the most "distorted" of all: rather like a modern painting, Lorca wants the stage set to be shadowless and hence without perspective, and he also wants the nominal location in the Madre's house to acquire resonances of, if not be invested with, a "sentido monumental de iglesia" (p. 64).[16] The scene opens with the spinning song of Muchachas 1ª and 2ª and the Niña: the symmetrical connection with the three Leñadores of Act III, Scene i is self-evident. As has been pointed out, the

girls are reminiscent of the Three Fates with their thread of life;[17] three in number and with their gloomy predictions, the woodcutters also have clear overtones of the Fates, though they are better envisaged as a version of the classical Chorus. The Mendiga arrives and, timidly questioned, gives her gloating verse description of the two dead men, the reaction of the Novia, and their imminent arrival at the house. Morris has indicated how the Mendiga's intrusion here is paralleled and in a sense foreshadowed by the Vecina in Act I, Scene i, with her bad news about the mutilated Rafael and the Novia's former suitor, Leonardo.[18] Similarly, the imagery used picks up on that appearing previously in the play, in particular the characterizing of the Novio by the Muchachas in the *epitalamio* as "la flor del oro." Then they all depart, leaving the stage empty for a moment until the Madre, accompanied by a Vecina, enters.

If Leonardo and the Novia were the central characters in Act III, Scene i, then the Madre undoubtedly dominates the last scene in the play. Indeed, there have been those who, arguing back from her importance at the very end, claim that she is actually the central character of the work as a whole.[19] Whilst I would dispute this – *Bodas de sangre* does not have a single protagonist –, there is no doubt that she too now becomes archetypal in a number of ways. In fact, if the fate of Leonardo, the Novio and the Novia illustrated the extreme and hence, in a sense, the untypical, the Madre's situation is broadly representative of the great majority, representative inasmuch as she typifies the experience of tragedy.

Bodas de sangre is subtitled "Tragedia en tres actos y siete cuadros," and at this juncture we need to ask in what ways and to what extent we can usefully apply this term to the play. Clearly the Madre suffers a terrible personal tragedy, for over the years she has lost her husband, her elder and now her younger and only remaining son. She has no other offspring: she will have no family company as she lives out her years, and there will be no continuance of her line; her grief and lamentation will be soul-felt.[20] Similarly, of course, one can point out that the Novia has lost a husband and a lover, and is now condemned to a virgin widowhood,[21] whilst the Mujer is also left husbandless with a family to look after and support.[22] The focus, however, is primarily on the Madre, though not to the exclusion of the other women.

It is also a tragedy in the sense that that which was foreseen and atmospherically evoked has been fulfilled: the violence, blood-letting and death prefigured in the premonitions and imagery have come to pass. The Madre has, furthermore, achieved that certain state of tranquility which follows in tragedy's wake; she is now "tranquila. Ya todos están muertos. A medianoche dormiré, dormiré sin que ya me aterren la escopeta o el cuchillo. Otras madres se asomarán a las ventanas, azotadas por la lluvia, para ver el rostro de sus hijos. Yo no." (p. 69). Heated and even violent

exchanges ensue between the Madre and the Novia, the latter having returned to try to explain (in largely figurative terms) what happened to her and to face up to whatever now awaits her.[23] However, the Madre finally perceives that outrage at honour lost and the Novia's insistence on intact honour are quite beside the point. In a movement paralleling that outlined above, the Madre becomes calm as she concludes: "Pero ¿qué me importa a mí tu honradez? ¿Qué me importa tu muerte? ¿Qué me importa a mí nada de nada?" (p. 71). In these ways, *Bodas de sangre* is somewhat reminiscent of the sentiments expressed in Jean Anouilh's *Antigone* (1944):

> LE CHOEUR: Dans le drame... cela devient épouvantable de mourir, comme un accident... Dans la tragédie on est tranquille. D'abord, on est entre soi. On est tous innocents en somme!... Et puis, surtout, c'est reposant, la tragédie, parce qu'on sait qu'il n'y a plus d'espoir, le sale espoir... (pp. 57-58)
>
> ANTIGONE: Papa n'est devenu beau qu'après, quand il a été bien sûr, enfin, qu'il avait tué son père, que c'était bien avec sa mère qu'il avait couché, et que rien, plus rien, ne pouvait le sauver. Alors, il s'est calmé tout d'un coup, il a eu comme un sourire, et il est devenu beau. C'était fini. (pp. 102-03)[24]

Indeed, as Timm has observed, Lorca "depends very little upon shock or surprise," for "the interest and expectation... are achieved rather by the manipulation of known qualities."[25] This is surely as it should be: if one imagines an Act III continuing on the same "level" and in the same "manner" as Acts I and II, then Scene i would have run the severe risk of becoming a representation of a melodramatic, sensational *fait divers,* whilst Scene ii might have become bathetic or at least lost much of its universalizing thrust. Act III is needed, therefore, apart from anything else, to stress the total inexorability of the events.

Another approach to tragedy proceeds by connecting *Bodas de sangre* with the literature of antiquity, but despite the various classical overtones which the play undoubtedly possesses, I do not think that there is really much to be derived from a more or less strict reading of it along Aristotelian lines.[26] Elements and features of Lorca's play can be made to fit a number of categories derived from the *Poetics* as, I imagine, could those of a great many plays about misadventure and death, but the essence of *Bodas de sangre* is, I think, rather different. As we have seen, its conception is hardly intended to be verisimilitudinous, and I do not believe, as I shall demonstrate, that it is designed to arouse specifically the two emotions of fear and pity. Similarly, its object is not primarily cathartic, in the sense in which this is most commonly understood, though

in a more sophisticated consideration of *catharsis* it cannot be denied that as a sort of by-product it "gives us an imaginative apprehension of a degree of suffering normally beyond our ken."[27] On a very high level of generality, it *is* possible to assimilate *Bodas de sangre* to Aristotle's view of complex tragedy as the "full realization of the essential nature of poetry" and "the form that makes us realize most truth fastest."[28] However, the nature of that truth or truths, to be treated below, seems to me to distance the play substantially from classical and classic traditions. Finally, the crucial test is surely that of whether the application of the Aristotelian model actually significantly enhances our understanding or appreciation of the play; to my mind it does not, and so I conclude that this approach is, if not a complete wrong turning, then certainly a critical backwater.

I now want to return to how *Bodas de sangre* may be properly focussed. Above and beyond its depiction of an interconnected set of human tragedies in the commonplace sense of the phrase: very sad things – death and loss – have occurred, and others – unhappiness and grief – are reconfirmed, I would contend that it is a tragedy from what might be called the existential point of view. That is to say, it is a working-out of the belief that all human existence is by definition marked by tragedy, that not only do "tragedies" occur in life but that life is essentially tragic.[29] The fundamental tragedy is none other than human mortality, which creates and defines the "tragic" human condition or predicament.[30] Mortality, or fatality as it is *rendered* on the literal level of the play, is the very texture of life, no *deus ex machina,* even though Fate and Death are personified in the drama. It is as much part and parcel of the daily round of existence, ever ready to strike, as the sinister "máquina" (presumably used in the reaping of the wheat harvest, a process which is itself highly symbolically charged) which has severed Rafael's arms (p. 8).[31] But *Bodas de sangre* is not only a demonstration of and meditation upon this ineluctible fact (most forcefully portrayed and conveyed in Act III, Scene i); the play also contains implicit hints and suggestions as to how best to respond to and perhaps cope with it, and these are centred on the second half of Act III, Scene ii.

As I said above, the Madre (primordially) together with the other women incarnates the "majority experience." I have also quoted Lorca before, in his lecture on "El cante jondo. Primitivo canto andaluz," to the effect that "la Pena se hace carne, toma forma humana" and it is "la mujer [quien] se llama Pena."[32] This "pena" – the *campesinos'* intuitive response to the human predicament – is expressed both in the Madre's speeches and in the verses and dirge in which the Mujer, Madre and Novia join their voices.[33] The church-like appearance of the room is an appropriate setting for the funeral chant,[34] whilst the key terms "cruz," "cuchi-

llo" and "grito" are all to the fore.[35] The play's structure is now perceived to be manifestly cyclical: Act I, Scene i and Act III, Scene ii take place in the Madre's house, the play opens with the Madre cursing all knives and ends with the meditation on the "cuchillito," Act I, Scene i ends with the Madre slowly crossing herself, and Act III, Scene ii closes with the invocation to the cross.[36] This circular and hence cyclic movement is highlighted in a number of motifs in the play: the "rounds" of the wedding-guests ("ruede la ronda"), the waterwheel ("rueda") of the Criada's song, the circular dance ("vamos a bailar la rueda") and the "cerco" of the pursuers.[37] This "enclosed" sensation suggests the claustrophobic existential view of "trapped" mankind, whilst the cyclical pattern relates to the process of Nature and the sense of life in death and death in life – "that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die" – which underpin the play's most profound explorations.[38]

It is here that the interpretation of the Madre's and other women's attitudes and of the cross is crucial. Whilst there can be little doubt that "the violent deaths of [the Novio] and Leonardo challenge the Christian doctrines of love and forgiveness represented by the cross,"[39] there exists a host of other *possible* symbolic readings, including amongst others resurrection and the afterlife, redemption, providence, grace, as well as sacrifice, passion, calvary and the *via crucis.* The stress on the physicality of death and inhumation throughout the play (e.g. "Pero no; camposanto no, camposanto no: lecho de tierra" [p. 69]), combined with our reading of fatality, suggest strongly that, like love and forgiveness, the other "positive" interpretations are denied, challenged, or at least ought not to be called to mind. Rather I think that the mention of the "clavos" and the brusque shift in the verse from "cruz" to "cuchillo" allow us to "read" the cross as a symbol of Christ's suffering and passion in *this* world, Christ's life and death thus being paradigmatic of mankind's.[40]

Extending the Christian and biblical resonances further, Morris has commented that "the final spectacle of the weeping 'vecinas, arrodilladas en el suelo' is reminiscent of a favourite theme of religious painting, the 'Pietà.'"[41] More precisely, one is certainly reminded of the "Lamentation," a term "used to described the scene immediately following the Descent from the Cross in which the body of Christ... is surrounded by mourners" ("in contrast to the 'Pietà'... usually of the sorrowing Virgin alone with the body").[42] However, although the Madre is not alone, I would suggest that there are overtones here also of the "Mater Dolorosa," lamenting her dead son, of the Virgin of the Seven Sorrows, the seven swords piercing her breast being reduced to the single "cuchillito" (Lorca did a coloured crayon drawing of the traditional subject),[43] and finally of the Virgin of Pity, the details of which are worth quoting:

> The solitary figure of the mourning Virgin, without swords, is found from the 16th cent. onwards. Here she personifies the Church, left alone to bear the sorrows of the world after the disciples have fled, and is called the Virgin of Pity. She may be contemplating the instruments of the Passion [the cross and nails transposed in the play into the "navaja"/"cuchillito"]. The theme was especially attractive to Spanish painters of the Counter-Reformation where it is called *La Soledad,* the Virgin of Solitude.[44]

The Virgin and the Madre are both, therefore, to be connected imaginatively with *Soledad* Montoya, protagonist of the "Romance de la *pena* negra" *(Romancero gitano).* Lorca wrote in his *conferencia-recital* of this collection that this character was a:

> concreción de la Pena sin remedio, de la pena negra de la cual no se puede salir más que abriendo con un cuchillo un ojal bien hondo en el costado siniestro.
>
> La Pena de Soledad Montoya es la raíz del pueblo andaluz... es un ansia sin objeto, es un amor agudo a nada, con una seguridad de que la muerte (preocupación perenne de Andalucía) está respirando detrás de la puerta.[45]

In precisely the same way, Leonardo and the Novio may be linked with el Amargo of the "Romance del emplazado." Just as he is told on "el veinticinco de junio" that "dentro de dos meses / yacerás amortajado," and indeed "el veinticinco de agosto / se tendió para cerrarlos [ojos]," so says the Madre that "en un día señalado, entre las dos y las tres, / se mataron los dos hombres del amor" (p. 72). In the same "*Romancero gitano.* Conferencia-recital," Lorca makes the connection quite explicit: el Amargo is identified as an "ángel de la muerte y la desesperanza que guarda las puertas de Andalucía" who first appeared in the "Diálogo del Amargo" *(Poema del cante jondo),* "después, en el *Romancero* y, últimamente, en el final de mi tragedia *Bodas de sangre* se llora también, no sé por qué, a esta figura enigmática..."[46]

However, I do not agree at all with Morris that in her lament "the Madre does what is expected of her; she observes a ritual," nor that "the mourning women show themselves to be prisoners of tradition, conditioned by upbringing to intone responses as mechanical as that of the Madre."[47] Rather the Madre sets an example of looking death in the face ("Quítate las manos de la cara. Hemos de pasar días terribles" [p. 69], and compare section 3, "Cuerpo presente," of the *Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías*), conceiving of it as nothing more or less than part of the cycle of Nature ("La tierra y yo" [p. 69], "Benditos sean los trigos, porque mis

hijos están debajo de ellos; bendita sea la lluvia, porque moja la cara de los muertos" [p. 71]), while at the same time justifying an intense, soul-felt grief in response to death ("[mis lágrimas] vendrán cuando yo esté sola, de las plantas de mis pies, de mis raíces, y serán más ardientes que la sangre" [pp. 68-69], "Mi llanto y yo" [p. 69], and compare again the *Llanto,* section 3). She comes to some sort of terms with the fact of death, terms which are at once lucid, do not seek to obscure or mitigate and do not deny sorrow and suffering.[48] It is intimated that her ability to do this is rooted in the fact that as a true *campesina andaluza* she is more truly in touch with the earth and with her feelings, intuitions and soul than a more "sophisticated," "civilized" city-dweller.[49] All this is suggested not only in the nature imagery connecting and informing the dialogue,[50] but also in the quiet, restrained and dignified tone of the concluding verse section of the play. The "grito" which is the start of the "siguiriya gitana," "un grito terrible," "el grito de las generaciones muertas, la aguda elegía de los siglos desaparecidos,"[51] is the same as the "dos largos gritos desgarrados" (p. 64) uttered by the two men at the moment of their death, and also as that whose "oscura raíz... tiembla enmarañada [donde]... se para... un cuchillito... que penetra fino por las carnes asombradas" (p. 72).[52] Those who have died have let out once and for all the cry of frustration, pain and anguish which lives on, unuttered, in the hearts of the living, the temporary, helpless survivors.[53]

It is thus that the Madre may perhaps achieve some stoic but determinedly lucid reconciliation, though certainly little or no consolation. This is surely the import of a brief but significant exchange between the Vecina and the Madre comparing the fate of their offspring with that of the mutilated Rafael:

> VECINA: Sí. Ya allí lo tienes. Muchas veces pienso que tu hijo y el mío están mejor donde están, dormidos, descansando, que no expuestos a quedarse inútiles.
> MADRE: Calla. Todo eso son invenciones, pero no consuelos. (p. 8)

It may be useful to set alongside this conclusion certain comments made by M. García-Posada in his consideration of "Luna y panorama de los insectos (Poema de amor)" and "Panorama ciego de Nueva York," two of Lorca's "New York poems." Having identified death here also as Lorca's central concern, he goes on to isolate a "voluntad terrestre" in this poetry which should guard against the alienation which might be consequent upon the contemplation of human suffering and mortality. Furthermore, he points out how Lorca warns against false consolations (religion, science, etc.) which offer only an illusory hope. Rather, García-Posada concludes, in a key gloss and exposition of Lorca's less-than-explicit attitude:

> la única salvación posible vendrá de la *solidaridad* con todos los demás seres vivos. Lúcida solidaridad: sólo sintiendo el dolor ajeno, siendo absolutamente conscientes de su existencia, no existen el engaño, el error, la trampa, todas esas formas de la muerte...[54]

It seems to me that this analysis is highly pertinent to the closing scene of *Bodas de sangre,* and that the "solidaridad" alluded to occurs or should occur in two interrelated ways. Not only do the Madre, Novia and Mujer come face to face with death and their "tragic" situation, but also the other women of the village (some, like the Vecina of Act I, Scene i, who have their own tragedies, and others, like the Niña who is present, too young yet to have that experience) come together with them to share, to partake of and to be lucidly cognizant of their grief.[55] In a parallel fashion, we as readers or spectators are presented with a powerful demonstration of death and suffering, and although no doubt emotions of fear (being partly distanced) and pity (partly empathizing) are present, we are invited primarily to become both fully intuitively conscious of the former, death (presented in the non-ratiocinative guise which is aesthetic representation and experience) and fully emotionally aware of the latter, suffering (in this same kind of process of solidarity, paralleling the relationship between the Vecinas and the surviving protagonists).[56]

In the light of all that we have seen, Act III appears not only as a logical, necessary and aesthetically successful complement to Acts I and II, but also as a positively crucial and indispensable component and completion of the play, on a whole number of counts – often interwoven with one another – which I hope to have demonstrated and teased out in the course of this study. *Bodas de sangre* is not an easy play to stage and act, nor is it a work which is readily and obviously interpreted.[57] But I would maintain that it can be a richly rewarding play to see performed or to read, particularly if we realize and thereafter bear in mind that "meaning" can be generated and understanding and appreciation achieved in a surprising number of different ways, and that many of these have more to do with intuition, feeling and subconscious response than with reason. Such, surely, on a much larger scale, was one of Lorca's own central apprehensions about the experience of life itself.[58]

NOTES

[1] By "necessity" I understand precisely the kind of "dramatic necessity" to which A. Buero Vallejo refers in the following comment concerning *Bodas de sangre* and *La casa de Bernarda Alba:* "el tópico que afirma la creciente perfección del teatro de Lorca a medida que abrevia sus fragmentos líricos debe someterse a revisión; ... es torpe suponer que sus momentos versificados carecieron de necesidad dramática": *Tres maestros ante el público* (Madrid, 1973), p. 146. A complementary use of the term is to be found in J. A. Valente's criticism of *Yerma:* "El lineal argumento [de *Yerma*] carece en ella de verdadero desarrollo dramático, de modo tal que la muerte a que la obra encuentra o recibe su final carece en términos absolutos de la absoluta 'necesidad' con que la tragedia, para llegar a existir, habría de imponerla": "Pez luna," *Trece de Nieve,* second epoch, nos. 1-2 (Dec. 1976), 198.

[2] R. Gaskell, *Drama and Reality* (London, 1972), p. 115.

[3] Cf. J. T. H. Timm, "Some Critical Observations on García Lorca's *Bodas de sangre,*" *REH,* 7 (1973), 270. Of early productions of the play E. Blanco Amor commented: "Quedaba atrás, 1930 [sic], *Bodas de sangre,* que no logra plenitud interpretativa hasta su reestreno, más *caliente* por Lola Membrives, en Buenos Aires, y como tránsito a la interpretación genial de Margarita Xirgu que se abre paso por entre los ringorrangos y cascabeleos folklóricos, en el mejor sentido de la palabra, hasta llegar a su trágica enjundia. El último acto, que resultaba caedizo en las versiones anteriores, alcanzaba en Margarita uno de los momentos cumbres del arte de la representación en español": "Federico, otra vez; la misma vez," *El País. Arte y pensamiento,* 1 Oct. 1978, p. vi.

[4] As demonstrated at greater length in my recorded talk, "García Lorca: *Bodas de sangre:* the Realistic and Symbolic Coordinates of the Tragedy," *Exeter Tapes* (Exeter University, England), no. S 838 (January 1981), side 1.

[5] All references, with page numbers in parentheses, are to the edition by H. Ramsden (Manchester, 1980).

[6] Treated in detail in R. Doménech, "Sobre la 'Nana del caballo' en *Bodas de sangre,*" *Trece de Nieve,* second epoch, nos. 1-2 (Dec. 1976), 202-09, and in Ramsden's edition's "Endnotes," pp. 76-81.

[7] Timm, pp. 260-61.

[8] C. B. Morris, *García Lorca: "Bodas de sangre"* (London, 1980), p. 76.

[9] Cf. my article, "¿De qué trata *Bodas de sangre*?," in *Hommage à Federico García Lorca* (Toulouse: University of Toulouse-Le Mirail, 1982), pp. 53-64; Morris; Ramsden's "Introduction" and "Endnotes", etc.

[10] F. García Lorca, *Obras completas,* ed. A. del Hoyo, 20th ed., 2 vols. (Madrid, 1978), II, p. 959. All further references will take the form *OC* I or *OC* II.

[11] Quotations from the 10th ed. (Madrid, 1970), with page numbers in parentheses.

[12] Cf. G. G. Brown, *A Literary History of Spain. The Twentieth Century* (London, 1972), pp. 110-11.

[13] In my article, "¿De qué trata *Bodas de sangre*?," especially pp. 54-56.

[14] C. Feal believes that it is the Novia's apprehensive perception of just this outcome that leads her to vacillate for so long before finally "taking the plunge": "La Novia indica que, si no se casó con Leonardo, fue por temor a éste, temor a que la estruje. Es el amor – el amor apasionado – lo que resulta temible. El amado, en el dominio ejercido sobre el amante, es un posible destructor de este último": "El sacrificio de la hombría en *Bodas de sangre,*" *MLN,* 99 (1984), 274. A little later Feal continues, apropos of the Leñadores' conversation in Act III, Scene i: "Se afirma aquí una idea característicamente lorquiana: la muerte es el fin que encuentra la pasión amorosa. El dilema es insoluble. Uno se consume, se destruye interiormente, si no da rienda suelta a sus deseos o instintos...; pero si se atreve a manifestarlos el resultado es igualmente destructor. Posteriormente la Novia habla de matar a Leonardo, como medio único de contrarrestar la fuerte pasión que él le inspira" (pp. 278-79).

[15] Morris, p. 75.

[16] Comparable stylizations are to be found in *Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín:* e.g. in Scene ii: "Comedor de Perlimplín. Las perspectivas están equivocadas deliciosamente." (*OC* II, 344).

[17] Ramsden's edition's "Endnotes," p. 83.

[18] Morris, p. 65.

[19] E.g. A. Barea, *Lorca. The Poet and his People* (London, 1944), p. 31; E. K. Touster, "Thematic Patterns in Lorca's *Blood Wedding,*" *Modern Drama,* 7 (1964), 18.

[20] S. M. Greenfield writes: "for the central figures in the tragedy [the sterility] is total. Through the death of the son-bridegroom the life cycle is definitively curtailed. She who was once both wife and mother is now a solitary woman left alone to face death and oblivion": "Lorca's Theatre: a Synthetic Reexamination," *JSS: 20C,* 5 (1977), 37.

[21] Greenfield: "The bride too is reduced to unfulfilled woman, and therein lies what is perhaps the consummate irony of this work. By submitting to the passions she shares with Leonardo and joining him in flight, the bride consciously leaves her marriage unconsummated. However, the rebellion itself has its limits and is no less abortive sexually than the marriage.... She vacillates in the tragic entrapment and despite her passion for Leonardo does not submit to him, so that this union too remains unconsummated" (p. 37).

[22] Greenfield: "But for Leonardo's infant son, whose existence fades inconsequentially into the background, nothing remains after the death of the bridegroom and the raptor but four incomplete women whose legitimate rights have been violated. They are not only doomed to barrenness but also deprived of their identity and place in the social order. The wife of Leonardo is no longer wife, the mother-in-law no longer mother-in-law. Their identity will subsequently depend on the child, not on the male of the family" (p. 37).

[23] Greenfield: "Only with her integrity as a woman inviolate can [the bride] return to share in the anguished resignation of the mother of her dead husband, whose ultimate barrenness she is also destined to share" (pp. 37-38).

[24] Quotations from the Paris ed. (1947), with page numbers in parentheses.

[25] Timm, p. 263.

[26] As attempted by C. L. Halliburton, "García Lorca, the Tragedian: an Aristotelian Analysis of *Bodas de sangre,*" *REH,* 2 (1968), 35-40, and by L. González del Valle, *La tragedia en el teatro de Unamuno, Valle-Inclán y García Lorca* (New York, 1975), pp. 101-35. Timm contents himself with broader similarities, pp. 286-88. As to genre in general, Greenfield asserts baldly: "the three tragedies – and we unequivocally take them to be just that, tragedies –" (p. 36). Later he finds in *Yerma* "this context of inexorable tragedy which, like *Bodas de sangre,* ends with a definitive catharsis: the death of the male and the anguished certainty of sterility and oblivion" (p. 39). V. Higginbotham strikes an opposing note in asserting that "the term *tragedy* does not accurately define these ambiguous and unsettling dramas. While they are not tragedies in the classical sense, they are too unique and powerful to be understood as tragedies that have failed": *The Comic Spirit of Federico García Lorca* (Austin, 1976), p. 89. Of *Bodas de sangre* in particular she writes: "although drawn along the lines of tragedy, [it] does not correspond to the experience of traditional tragedy" (p. 90).

[27] *Ancient Literary Criticism,* ed. D. A. Russell and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1972), p. 88.

[28] *Ancient Literary Criticism,* p. 87.

[29] Cf. M. de Unamuno, *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida* (1913). Cf. also A. Buero Vallejo, "Lo sepa o no, todo hombre es trágico. Federico lo sabía bien y por eso escribió tragedias" (p. 144).

[30] Cf. my article, "¿De qué trata *Bodas de sangre*?," especially pp. 55-56, which develops and expands on the consideration of Lorca's attitude to and treatment of death as mapped in such pieces as M. González-Gerth, "El simbolismo trágico de Federico García Lorca," *La Torre,* 19 (1971), 265-76, P. Salinas, "Lorca and the Poetry of Death," *The Hopkins Review,* 5 (1951), 5-12, and Francisco García Lorca, "Córdoba. Lejana y sola," *Cuadernos Americanos,* 7 (1947), 233-44.

[31] Cf. C. Feal, "La muerte, por otra parte, no representa en la obra un hecho aislado, sino el último eslabón en una cadena de muertes... [La muerte] es un fondo, una presencia constante, no simplemente un final" (p. 285).

[32] *OC* II, 1017. There are a number of striking comparisons to be made between the action of *Bodas de sangre* and anthropological observations of reactions to death in contemporary rural Greece. In particular, I shall quote a number of passages from M. Alexiou's review – "The Members of the Funeral" – of L. M. Danforth's book *The Death Rituals of Rural Greece* (Guildford, 1983), the review appearing in the *Times Literary Supplement,* 6 May 1983, p. 450. Of immediate relevance here, Alexiou writes: "But the labour and grief *(poni)* in caring for the dead rest exclusively with the women."

[33] Alexiou: "Suddenly Irini's cries for her daughter... are taken up by one, then another, of the women in a crescendo of antiphonal lamentation."

[34] Morris sees the setting slightly differently, as "a room whose similarity to a mortuary or a mausoleum reminds us that death awaits those who try to elude their tragic destiny" (p. 63).

[35] Cf. my article, "¿De qué trata *Bodas de sangre*?," especially pp. 59-61.

[36] Morris, p. 40.

[37] Morris, p. 64.

[38] Cf. my article, "¿De qué trata *Bodas de sangre*?," especially p. 63. Compare D. López's reading in "Predestination in Federico García Lorca's *Bodas de sangre*," *García Lorca Review,* 5 (1977), 98, R. J. Dickson's in "Archetypal Symbolism in Lorca's *Bodas de sangre*," *Literature and Psychology,* 10 (1960), 76-79, and A. Buero Vallejo, who touches on the vegetal cycle, classical tragedy, closed circles, a sense of entrapment, etc. (pp. 138-39). Alexiou writes: "birth, marriage and death are all departures in a cyclical process, metaphorically expressed through images drawn from the world of nature (...) and the world of culture (...)."

[39] Morris, p. 89.

[40] Cf. my article, "¿De qué trata *Bodas de sangre*?," pp. 61, 63. In *El público,* the there explicit and again paradigmatic "crucifixion" scene between the Desnudo and Enfermero is preceded by dramatic demonstrations of the essential facts that eroticism is inextricably connected with (potentially) murderous violence (cf. Leonardo and the Novia in the wood) and, in its attenuated form, with sado-masochism (cf. the Luna), and that mutual meeting through sex is impossible, all facts that are equally relevant to a reading of *Bodas de sangre.*

[41] Morris, p. 66.

[42] J. Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art,* revised ed. (London, 1979), p. 246.

[43] *OC* I, 1331.

[44] J. Hall, p. 325. The patron saint of Granada is, interestingly enough, Nuestra Señora de las Angustias. An extraordinary "Pietà" statue is to be found in the church dedicated to her (Carrera de la Virgen, Granada).

[45] *OC* I, 1117-18. Cf. also E. C. Riley's comments in "Considerations on the Poetry of García Lorca," *The Dublin Magazine,* 2 (1952), 22.

[46] *OC* I, 1119.

[47] Morris, p. 89

[48] Alexiou: "Death in rural Greece is never a private affair, and some of the traditional ways of coping with it will strike the outsider as harsh."

[49] When asked why so many of his protagonists were women, "García Lorca mira, como sorprendido de tal pregunta. '–Pues yo no me lo he propuesto.' Luego, como volviendo de un sueño, agrega: 'Es que las mujeres son más pasión, intelectualizan menos, son más humanas, más vegetales,'" in E. Pino, "Federico García Lorca: gitano auténtico y poeta de verdad," *La Mañana* (Montevideo), 6 Feb. 1934, p. 1. The Madre is not only a woman but also a *campesina,* a country dweller, and as Alexiou writes: "Rites, laments and everyday conversation are all interpreted as parts of an integrated symbolic system, through which ordinary folk struggle to come to terms with the finality of death.... Greek laments today should be explained in terms of a long-established tradition, refined and adapted by generations of oral singers."

[50] Alexiou writes that the images for the laments are "drawn from the world of nature (birds, plants, trees) and the world of culture (cultivation, food, drink). These mediate the opposition between life and death, nature and culture, as their properties shift (tears are vital sustenance for the 'thirsty dead,' but poison for the mourner; while the decomposed dead are in turn food for all-consuming 'Black Earth,' on whom nature and nurture depend)."

[51] *OC* II, 1006.

[52] Cf. the lines from "Asesinato" *(Poeta en Nueva York):* "Un alfiler que busca / hasta encontrar las raicillas del grito" (*OC* I, 477).

[53] Cf. my article, "¿De qué trata *Bodas de sangre*?," especially p. 60. Compare also Lorca again on the *cante jondo:* "En el fondo de todos los poemas late la pregunta, pero la terrible pregunta que no tiene contestación. Nuestro pueblo pone los brazos en cruz mirando a las estrellas y esperará inútilmente la seña salvadora. Es un gesto patético, pero verdadero. El poema o plantea un hondo problema emocional, sin realidad posible, o lo resuelve con la Muerte, que es la pregunta de las preguntas" (*OC* I, 1013-14).

[54] *Lorca: interpretación de "Poeta en Nueva York"* (Madrid, 1981), pp. 245-48.

[55] Alexiou: "Women of different generations are 'bonded' by the frequent graveyard scenes, where older women advise the less experienced in a constant tension between the 'common-sense' and 'emotional' reactions to bereavement."

[56] The hints of and parallels with Malraux's work should perhaps not be pursued or pushed beyond the broadest terms of what is identified as an existential outlook. Feal's interpretation of this last scene, based on Nietzsche's theories of tragedy, is rather different but not totally irrelevant (p. 286).

[57] As is patently proved in the proliferation of critical views. See Ramsden's and Morris' bibliographies for full details.

[58] I should specially like to thank my colleague Mr E. A. Southworth for his helpful advice and illuminating suggestions given in the course of the preparation of this article.