FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA
AND THE THEATER OF THE ABSURD

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines in detail some points of correlation between the theater of Federico García Lorca, Spanish dramatist of the third and fourth decades of the twentieth century and the contemporary movement in drama known as the Theater of the Absurd. Each work treated is done so against a background of modern drama; certain aspects of drama now associated with the Theater of the Absurd are discussed. An examination of Así que pasen cinco años (1931) reveals that the disillusionment of the protagonist occurs within a surrealist framework and that the play abounds in techniques that are used by the playwrights of the Absurd. Bodas de sangre (1933) demonstrates a movement away from realism and the main characters find their ultimate destruction at the hands of unreal personages in a surrealistic setting. Similar characteristics of the Theater of the Absurd are found to exist in El maleficio de la mariposa (1920), La zapatera prodigiosa and El amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín (1931), Yerma (1934), and La casa de Bernarda Alba (1936). Each analysis takes into account the Theater of the Absurd in forms of expression and a view of life within these forms. The thesis does not attempt to classify
Lorca as a playwright of the Absurd, but as a possible precursor to this movement.
CHAPTER I
THE THEATER OF THE ABSURD

By now it is no longer necessary to defend the Theater of the Absurd: it exists, it has made cogent statements about the human condition in the twentieth century, and it is undeniably accepted either whole-heartedly or partially by almost every major playwright today. It is a legitimate form of the theater which seems occasionally to break completely with all previously known or recognized forms and conventions of dramatic expression.

The title of this thesis may give cause for wonder: what are the points of correlation between the works of a playwright from the third and fourth decades of the twentieth century and the disillusioned, apparently chaotic stage fantasies of a startlingly large number of playwrights of post-war England, the Continent, and the United States? There is a similarity between Federico García Lorca's works for the stage and those of the dramatists of the Theater of the Absurd, both in certain aspects of the forms of expression,

and in the view of life revealed within these forms. My pur-
pose is not to reinterpret Lorca in order to classify him
with Eugene Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, or Jean Genet, nor to
reduce him to a purveyor of what seems only to be a collec-
tion of wildly incoherent and irrational theater gimmicks
which add up to a totally negative condemnation of the world
of man or a simple-minded, pessimistic, repetitious stage
discourse on the meaninglessness of man's existence. What
is important is that one of Lorca's contributions to a con-
tinuing tradition in the theater is his characteristic use
of various techniques that later become associated with the
Theater of the Absurd.

The plays of the Theater of the Absurd draw upon
many conventions of the stage and variously reflect some
points of view about life that are present in the plays of
Lorca. The Theater of the Absurd is totally alienated from
and in rebellion against the realistic traditions of the
twentieth century, but it is immersed in much older stage
traditions. Like all important theatrical movements, the
Theater of the Absurd shows a concern for the truth and
for the meaning of man's existence. The comparison of
some of the works of Lorca and the Theater of the Absurd
will, I hope, help to shed new light on these plays and on
his theater in general.

The remaining portion of this chapter will be
devoted to a rather specific view of what constitutes the Theater of the Absurd. The Theater of the Absurd operates almost exclusively on the nightmarish level of fantasy. In Eugene Ionesco's *The Chairs*, we see an elderly couple living alone in an insular circular tower, greeting guests as they arrive in increasing numbers to hear a lecture on the meaning of life. The guests are invisible; they are represented by chairs which crowd the stage and force the hosts onto window ledges where they exchange frenzied pleasantries. With great fanfare the lecturer arrives and is introduced to the guests; the hosts depart through their separate windows and are crushed on the rocks below. The lecturer's discourse is nothing but a series of meaningless, ghastly, guttural sounds, illustrated by indecipherable squiggles on the blackboard. The curtain falls as the lecturer mouths sounds to a sea of chairs.

In Edward Albee's *The Sandbox*, a bright, determinately cheerful middle-aged couple carry the wife's mother to a beach somewhere in southern California and deposit her in a sandbox; she obligingly buries herself while a clarinetist tootles incongruously and a dim-witted lifeguard narcissistically exercises.

In Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape*, a 69-year-old man with a compulsion for bananas sits in a squalid room reviewing tapes recording his impressions of his life from
thirty years before. Unable to comprehend those things which
moved him in the past, he finds dubious pleasure only in the
taste of bananas, the sound of the word "spool", and occa-
sional sex with an old hag. His last tape states that he has
nothing to say, not a squeak, and the curtain falls as he
stares vacantly ahead of him, the reel silently unwinding.

In Jean Genet's The Balcony, the setting is a brothel
where the clients indulge in sexual fantasies which distort
reality and flatter their self-images; a gasman wears the
magnificent robes of a bishop, discourses on theological
problems, and absolves a young sinner who is in reality an
employee of the brothel.

We are, in each of these dramas of the Absurd, in
situations apparently so remote from that which we accept
or comprehend of our own external, commonplace, day-to-day
existence that we may, justifiably or not, find ourselves
confused or revolted. Nonetheless, the intention of the
playwright is not to confuse us needlessly, to undermine
maliciously and ruthlessly our entente cordiale with life;
instead the playwright of the Absurd uses abstracted dra-
matic forms, theatrical tricks and conventions, to impart
as directly as he is able a view of the world in which
nothing is static, reducible to formula, comprehensible, or
communicable. The human condition embraces the aged, the
idealist, the cynic, the thief, the prostitute, the bishop,
the honest man, the dictator, the gasman, the speaker, and the listener. It also encompasses the anticipation of experience, the experience past, and the misinterpretation or distortion of experience through memory, hope, despair, or imagination. Nowhere, and in no thing, can the playwright find that central unity which will reconcile the disparities of existence and prevent it from being absurd.

In common English usage, "absurd" means "ridiculous" or "foolish"; this is not the sense in which the dramatists of the Absurd employ the word. In the four plays very cursorily summarized, the dramatis personae and the audience find themselves in a universe out of order, mirroring their own confused world. But the universe is out of order not because stars have fallen from the sky, nor because the heavenly spheres of the Ptolemaic system have ceased their celestial music; no galactic cataclysm is wreaking its baleful astrological influence on sinful man. The universe is completely and obtusely impervious to man, to his interpretations of the universe; these, as explanations of man's conduct with man, seem neither adequate nor rational. It is not the universe which has changed to create the Absurd situation; for all practical purposes, even in the Space Age, the universe has remained consistently independent of man's desire to change it, control it, or formulate his position and meaning in it. Instead, man becomes aware that none of his
interpretations of the universe fit.

A world that can be explained by reason, however faulty, is a familiar world. But in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irre­mediable exile... he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land to come. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and the setting, truly constitutes the feeling of Absurdity.

The theme that man is, to use Ionesco's phrase, cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots is not unique to the Theater of the Absurd: Girardoux, Anouilh, Duerrenmatt, Osborne, Miller, Williams, and García Lorca, all to a certain extent playwrights in the "realistic" convention, deal with this theme. The dramatist of the Absurd differs essentially in technique; his conventional colleague works out dramatic structures deriving from the tradition of the well-made play; there is an insistence that what transpires on the stage is real, that a fourth wall has been ripped from a real room, that the people in that room are unaware of the absence of the wall, and that the audience is a collective Peeping Tom believing that what they see is actually taking place. The form the dramatists of the Absurd elect is an expression, in the metaphor of both language and stage picture, of the fundamentally illogical, incongruous, and unharmonious facts of life, a form which

frequently reminds the audience either directly or indirectly that the action is on a stage, that the actors are both personae and actors. The stage picture and the dialogue are as far from the imitation of surface realities as possible, although they echo those surface realities.

We find in the dramas of the Absurd a species of poetry peculiar to the theater. Among the characteristics of these plays is brevity and compactness of writing and performing. Conciseness is arrived at essentially by the development of a single stage metaphor which either parallels the meaning of the play or stands in direct contrast to it as a paradox. In *Krapp's Last Tape*, for example, the subject is time, experience, and the progressive meaninglessness of experience as the time between the experience and its contemplation increases, allowing other experiences to intervene, obscure, and repeat the same progression. The metaphor, a stage metaphor, is embodied first in the tape recorder and the tapes which represent both the experiences of the single character in the play and his interpretation of those experiences at the time or shortly after the time they occurred, and second in Krapp himself, who, at 69 can no longer understand, interpret, or respond to those experiences which once so deeply moved him and which now bore or puzzle him. We are forced to the conclusion here that man is not the total of his experiences and is neither shaped
nor motivated by his previous aims or hopes. Instead he is the incomprehensible result of a shifting and fluid relationship between inexorable time and the evanescence of experience and emotion which man strives absurdly to retain, but which tragically offer him no clues as to his meaning or place or identity.

In the case of Albee's *The Sand Box* the stage metaphor, the setting against which the action occurs, is paradoxically at odds with the nature and meaning of the action. The beaches of southern California are associated with sunny, certainly honest, although not necessarily innocuous nor decorous, pleasure; the beach becomes a metaphor for funeral parlors, those cheery, comfortable institutions which usher us with a minimum of grief and truth and a maximum of false sentimentality and false illusion from one vale of tears into that other life which is seen as a perpetuation of this. It is the symbol also for the eternal pursuit of pleasure and another false illusion. The clarinetist and the lifeguard who is also the angel of death (and a bad actor who can't remember his lines as the angel of death until prompted by the dying mother), characterize American mores for Albee. In Albee's *Zoo Story*, east side New York's Central Park suddenly, on a sunny, placid, apparently Wordsworthian Sunday, becomes the setting of a long, sinister, intermittently sardonic, and terminally tragic duologue on the pretenses by
which men live, pretend to culture, and ultimately die.

The setting of Jean Genet's *The Balcony*, as it changes from one illusionistic place to another, and yet remains ultimately the same brothel which is Genet's symbol for the world, develops metaphorically the idea of the confusion between surface reality and surface illusion in life, and also the confusion between the illusion of the stage and the illusion of life. The world is reflected in mirrors which show the ugly truth beneath the camouflage.

The opening stage direction reads:

On the ceiling, a chandelier, which will remain the same in each scene. The set represents a sacristy, formed by three blood red, cloth folding screens. The one at the rear has a built-in door. Above, a huge Spanish crucifix. On the right wall, a mirror, with a carved gilt frame, reflects an unmade bed which, if the room were arranged logically, would be in the first rows of the orchestra. A table with a large jug. A yellow armchair. On the chair, a pair of black trousers, a shirt, and a jacket. THE BISHOP, in miter and gilded cope, is sitting in the chair. He is obviously larger than life. The role is played by an actor wearing tragedian's cothurni about twenty inches high. His shoulders, on which the cope lies, are inordinately broadened so that when the curtain rises he looks huge. He wears garish make-up. At the side, a WOMAN, rather young, highly made up and wearing a lace dressing-gown, is drying her hands on a towel. Standing by is another woman, IRMA. She is about forty, dark, severe-looking, and is wearing a black tailored suit.

The stage metaphor achieved through settings, costumes, and make-up, is not original with the playwrights of the Absurd, although for some time now it has not been
much in use by dramatists of other schools. It derives from the dream plays and expressionistic plays of the turn of the century and the first few decades of the present century. It harks back even further to the Greek theater and also to techniques used on the Elizabethan stage where the effect was not achieved so often with props as with the arrangement of actors on the stage; then, as now, the playwright was not so much concerned with surface realities as with truths that went beyond a realistic or even moralistic presentation.

A brief account of modern drama only will reveal a continuing tradition that includes Federico García Lorca and also leads to what is known as the Theater of the Absurd. This account records the fact that during the greater part of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the Western World, with few exceptions, literary imagination of high order tended to express itself in lyrics and novels rather than in actable plays. The period was one of great actors, however, from Garrick to Bernhardt; of smaller, more numerous theaters and growing audiences; and of the introduction of footlights, box sets, and historical accuracy in costume and setting. But original, serious play-making was largely limited to closet plays in verse (among them Goethe's Faust, Byron's Manfred), Gothic melodrama of rant and spectacle.

According to Otto Reinert, Ibsen's European success
with naturalistic plays about 1880 is usually taken to mark the beginning of modern drama. Reinert states that naturalism commonly connotes philosophical determinism and, as a literary term, a program based on determinism, depicting human life, as conditioned by heredity and environment, with as much scientific objectivity and accuracy as possible.

"Ibsen is the father of modern drama in the sense he was the first to bring dramatic genius to bear upon realistic material and form." The triumph of naturalism and the subsequent and modifications of it, departures from it, and reactions against it, are in essence the story of drama during the past eighty years. And only in this view does an apparently chaotic development assume a semblance of order. Any possible division involves a degree of arbitrariness. If naturalism is defined as the faithful representation in action, dialogue, and setting of the social, psychological, and moral conditions of ordinary life, then there were naturalistic plays before 1880: Büchner's Wozzeck (1836), Turgenev's A Month in the Country, as well as non-naturalistic plays not very long after:


Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1897), Yeat's *Kathleen ni Houlihan* (1902), and Maeterlinck's *Pelléas and Mélisande* (1903).

Reinert states that the only safe generalization about modern drama is an assertion of its heterogeneity. Wars, depressions, revolutions, social change, technological advance, new concepts in science, and philosophy—in this confusion of phenomena, drama, traditionally of all the arts the most sensitive to the cultural matrix, has naturally been varied.

The success of stage realism about 1880, that is, approximation, usually within but sometimes deliberately outside artistic form, to photographic and stenographic replicas of actuality, was only a belated manifestation of a revolution which had already taken place in poetry and fiction. It came as the result of a series of industrial, political, and scientific revolutions that altered Western man's material life, institutions, and ideas from 1750 on. One hundred years later the new society was, however imperfectly and disastrously industrialized, urbanized, democratized, and probably secularized. The representation of this new bourgeois culture on the stage was an obvious task for naturalistic drama.

Non-naturalism in modern drama tends to assume four major forms. There are plays that defy such rigorous
classification, just as there are some that straddle the whole fissure between naturalism and non-naturalism. The distinctions do not represent a temporal sequence. Two of the forms are literary: Neo-romanticism and verse drama. One is both literary and theatrical: expressionism, with the dream play a precursor of the Theater of the Absurd. One is theatrical: the new stagecraft. In the case of expressionism and the new stagecraft, another influence has been the whole complex of supra-rational, relativistic concepts of reality that have influenced all the arts and have manifested themselves in forms of surrealism, abstraction, and non-representationalism in general.

The emphasis on subjective, inner reality, in some characteristic forms of both expressionism and the new stagecraft reflect a philosophical nihilism and the despair that appear to be modern man's birthright. If man is nothing but a dislocated sequence of states of consciousness, a record of his reality ought to reflect that fact and be kaleidoscopic, illusory, and abstract. And if this language is inadequate for communication, words are of no consequence.

The first major form, neo-romanticism, culminated around the turn of the century in Rostand's Cyrano de Bergerac, in the dreamily symbolic medievalism of Maeterlinck, and in the poeticized Irish legends of the early Yeats. Today it survives mainly outside of serious drama altogether, as sweetmeats for Broadway sophisticates.

5. Reinert, p. xxiii.
in the form of spectacular musicals of fantasy, pathos and sentimentality—Peter Pans, Brigadoons and Camelots.

Verse drama, the second form, being literary, has, on the other hand, enjoyed a kind of intermittent renaissance so far in this century. In Yeats, the two movements fuse. Other important figures are John Millington Synge, and Sean O'Casey, realists of Irish peasant life (Synge's Riders to the Sea and Playboy of the Western World) and urban slum life O'Casey's (Juno and the Paycock and The Plough and the Star), but both gifted with a lusty lyricism which transmutes the sordid and the drab into loveliness and which in Synge's case finds expression also in plays in verse.

After verse drama, non-naturalism is found in the literary and theatrical trend called expressionism. The category is large and miscellaneous; from Strindberg's chamber plays (The Dream Play and The Ghost Sonata), to O'Neill's Emperor Jones, to Pirandello's somber and ironic probings of reality, Beckett's Waiting for Godot and Ionesco's images of surrealistic futility. These expressionist plays are not all similar but they are all part of a many-faceted revolt against the naturalistic proposition that representationalism is the means to the end of discovering truth about man. Expressionism signifies that drama which does not purport to be a record of objective
actuality and which departs from the conventions of illusionistic staging and coherent action. It follows also that expressionism, though often based on psychoanalysis and often radical in its moral or political fervor, is not the exclusive property of any one school of thought. Any play in which action or the mind's interior is represented by means of dream-like sequences, stylization of language, movement, by various forms of scenic abstractionism and montage, or by several or all of such devices, is to that extent expressionistic.

The fourth major trend, the new stagecraft, is theatrical and provides the free and flexible staging called for by many expressionistic plays. Despite their differences, the various theories and practices of the new stagecraft all share an ambition to free the theatrical medium from the written word, particularly from the convention that actors are real people engaged in real conversations in real rooms. The new stagecraft is essentially the use of non-verbal means to the end of a more adaptable, comprehensive, and expressive medium of the theater. The ideal entails the obvious dethroning of the word for mere spectacle and mechanical ingenuity.

This continuing development of the theater as briefly shown has not only included Lorca, but has also embraced trends that have led specifically to the Theater of the
Absurd. We see, for example, in this present-day Absurd movement that the plays also uniformly insist in a variety of ways that they are pieces for the stage and create thereby a complex relationship between illusion and reality and between actor and audience. The central characters of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* are cast in the mold of burlesque comedians; they make the same types of jokes as those traditional stage figures of low humor, yet achieve different effects. In *The Sandbox*, a noise heard by the husband, on stage, is described by another character, also on stage, as "an off-stage sound," thus effectively breaking the illusion that the stage is real life; the lifeguard is a bit player working on a role as the angel of death; the effects are paradoxical, serving to point out the artificiality of certain functions in "real" life and the truth of the stage presentation as the author sees it.

Another characteristic is the use of language: that is, the use of formal, conventional modes of expression not as a means of communication, but rather as a means of disguising or obscuring the truth, which as the action bears out, is the opposite of what is said. Such a technique can result in strong satire or in high tragedy. In Ionesco's *Bald Soprano*, a husband and wife visiting friends, presumably having arrived together, go through a series of formal, polite exchanges to determine, since they live at the same
address, share the same name, sleep in the same bed, that they must after all be husband and wife.

To conclude, Martin Esslin finds in the Theater of the Absurd other elements which derive from the oldest theater traditions. These are: Pure theater: i.e., abstract scenic effects as they are familiar in the circus or revue, in the work of jugglers, acrobats, bullfighters or mimes; clowning, fooling, and mad-scenes; verbal nonsense; and the literature of dream and fantasy, which often has a strong allegorical component.6

Some or all of the characteristics brought forth in this chapter, representing various trends and reactions in modern drama and leading to what is now known as the Theater of the Absurd, can also be found in certain works of Lorca, namely Así que pasen cinco años, Bodas de sangre, and El maleficio de la mariposa. In the following chapters, the principal points of correlation will be outlined.

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CHAPTER II
ASI QUE PASEN CINCO AÑOS

In the ensuing discussion of Así que pasen cinco años, we shall see those formal elements and the view of life that have caused Robert Lima to say that the work is possibly Lorca's most important. Lima makes this statement because the work is powerful theatrical drama completely within a surrealistic framework and the product of intense feelings on the absurd and the mysterious in human existence; he feels that the modern theater may soon adopt it as the earliest example of the Spanish prototype of the Theater of the Absurd, placing it alongside the already accepted works of Beckett, Ionesco, and Genet. ¹

Martin Esslin agrees that this and some of the other plays of Lorca clearly show the influence of the French surrealists.² Less well-known and earlier than Lorca's great realistic tragedies, these include three short sketches usually referred to as the "brief theater"—Teatro Breve: El paseo de Buster Keaton, Quimera, and La doncella, el marinero y el estudiante. These pieces, written in 1928 are the cornerstone

² Esslin, p. 187.
upon which the unfinished El público (1933) and Así que pasen cinco años (1933), the latter a legend of time in a dream idiom, are built. They establish the tradition in Lorca’s theater of examining man’s foibles in his attempts to conquer Fate, be it implemented by natural laws or by the artificial code which mankind has imposed upon itself.

Lima states in his discussion of Así que pasen cinco años, that the technique is Brechtian in quality and is effective in alienating emotional response and involvement. By permitting a minimum of emotional involvement in the play, Brecht hoped to make his audiences more intellectually aware of it. In such a state they would be more responsive to the play’s ideas. Even though Lorca uses these methods, he does

3. Ibid.

4. Lima, p. 175. The works of Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) are expressionistic. Brecht was a political and believed in the didactic purposes of the theater. His plays used the epic style—not exactly realistic. Epic drama aims at rousing the audience’s detached thought; it teaches, keeping the spectators alert by preventing any emotional involvement. The epic drama (probably so-called because it resembles the epic in its abundance of loosely connected scenes and its tendency to deal with a society rather than merely a few individuals) achieves this estrangement or alienation effect (Verfremdungseffekt) by any means: the epic play commonly consists of a series of loosely connected scenes rather than a tightly organized plot with a climax; the settings are not realistic but merely suggest the locale; the actor may address the audience directly, sometimes in song, and he aims not at becoming the character but at presenting him, or to put it differently, at making a comment on him. (See Sylvan Barnet, Morton Berman, and William Burto, Aspects of Drama [Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1962], p. 215.)
not necessarily employ them in the same manner as Brecht. However it does belong to the same class of theatrical techniques.

According to Lima, Lorca's purpose was to unite the play through a communion of emotion and intellect. The alienation effect used by Brecht as it appears in some of Lorca's plays does keep the audience from identifying with the situation. The forest scene in Bodas de sangre expresses in surrealistic atmosphere the horror that the lovers feel as they near their end. Así que pasen cinco años reminds the audience of the destructive forces of society that keep the lovers apart, prevent their natural union, and keep them from creating life which is the traditional purpose of marriage.

Así que pasen cinco años was published with the subtitle which has been translated as "A legend of the Times in Three Acts and Five Scenes." As in most expressionistic drama the characters have no proper names; they are merely El Joven (The Young Man), El Viejo (The Old Man), La Mecanógrafa (The Stenographer), Los Amigos (The Friends), El Niño (The Child), La Novia (The Betrothed), El Jugador de Rugby (The Football Player), and so on. Lorca presents symbols or symbolic characters which are universal because of their lack of immediate identity and consequently the message becomes even more obvious. The Young Man is
committed to waiting five years for the return of his Be-
trothed, and is wholly lost in memories which seem more real
to him than the actuality of love. The Old Man agrees with
him in this, but adds significantly that the important thing
is "to remember beforehand . . . toward tomorrow." As they
continue discussing The Young Man's Betrothed, the tragedy
of his life is revealed. He wants to know how to keep memory
alive.

In the second act the five years of waiting have
elapsed. Dressed in a beautiful robe of laces and enormous
red bows, the Betrothed has just jumped out of bed at the
sound of an automobile horn outside. Opening her balcony
window, she invites The Football Player to climb in. He
wears knee-pads and a helmet, and his pockets are stuffed
with Havana cigars, which he is constantly lighting and
extinguishing. When her fiance is announced by the Maid,
she tells The Football Player to await her outside so that
they may elope later in his automobile. Putting on her
plainest dress, she meets The Young Man negligently, indi-
cating that she does not see him as a Young man but as a
wasted end old man. Upon greeting him, she remarks to her
maid:

Una mano fría. Una mano de cera
cortada.

Criada—¡Le va a oír!
Novia— Y una mirada antigua. Una mirada que se parte como el ala de una mariposa seca.5

This reference to the butterfly expresses a commonplace of attitudes of poets all over the world. One such poet is T. S. Eliot who expresses what Lorca expresses in The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, written in 1915.

And I have known the eyes already, known them all--
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
And when I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should I begin
To spit out the butt-ends, of my days and ways?
And how should I presume?6

As the butterfly is labeled and tacked, so is man.

Man has become pinned against the wall; he has become part of a collection.

Eliot had a profound effect on poetry and is placed among those artists that are extremely alienated from the rest of the world. He represents the artist of the 20's; he felt that mass man and society were crass and materialistic, and he held a pessimistic view, something felt by artists in general, including Lorca. The fact that he addressed himself to a coterie audience made him different from Lorca, even though the image of the butterfly which is implied in The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock and expressed in Así que pasen

cinco años and El maleficio de la mariposa suggests certain correlations in ideas.

Further indications of this attitude can be found in Lorca's play in Act I:

El Joven (Alegre y tratando de convencerse)--Sí, sí, claro. Tiene usted razón. Es preciso luchar con toda idea de ruina; con esos terribles desconchados de las paredes. Muchas veces yo me he levantado a medianoche para arrancar las hierbas del jardín. No quiero hierbas en mi casa ni muebles rotos. (p. 954)

Later The Old Man says:

Quince años ha vivido ella, que son ella misma. ¿Pero por qué no decir que tiene quince nieves, quince aires, quince crepúsculos? ¿No se atreve usted a huir?, ¿a volar?, ¿a ensanchar su amor por todo el cielo? (p. 957)

And again The Young Man says:

Entonces . . . Es muy difícil vivir.

And The Old Man answers:

Por eso hay que volar de una cosa a otra hasta perderse. Si ella tiene quince años, puede tener quince crepúsculos o quince cielos. Están las cosas más vivas dentro que ahí fuera, expuestas al aire o la muerte. Por eso vamos a . . . a no ir . . . o a esperar. Porque lo otro es morirse ahora mismo, y es más hermoso pensar que todavía mañana veremos los cien cuernos de oro con que levanta a las nubes el sol. (p. 961)

And there is the song that The Second Friend sings, in Act I:

Yo vuelvo por mis alas, dejadme volver.
Quiero morirme siendo amanecer,
quiero morirme siendo
ayer.
Yo vuelvo por mis alas,
dejadme volver.
Quiero morirme siendo manantiel.
Quiero morirme fuera de la mar ... (p. 982)

What is important here is the attitude which Lorca expresses in this surrealistic setting. If man is formulated, typed, given a number, he becomes part of a collection that is symbolic of the materialistic, earthbound society; he is the victim of this society and in it, loses his identity. This society surrounds him with impossible situations and he is unable to begin life. Lorca’s comment is clearly defined in the plight of The Young Man and the impossible situation that the circumstances of the work represent.

The entire outlook of the play is subjective; that is, it is centered on the “experiences” of The Young Man. The symbolism cannot be marshalled into a logical pattern; the situations are always disguised by a web of intrigue. The elusiveness of the play is never allowed to wander into a level where it may be grasped.

Lima shows that Así que pasen cinco años is a monologue. What makes it less recognizable as such is Lorca’s technique, surrealistic and symbolic, which disguises effectively the origin of the characters who appear on the stage. The “reality” of the action takes place in the amorphous mind.
of The Young Man so that he is the only real person in the
play. The other personages are no more than physical repre-
sentations of his varied thought, his personalities, his de-
sires. The work then developed is a monologue in which the
speaker is The Young Man as himself or as a mental projec-
tion of his inner self. The images of The Young Man exist
physically because of the demands of the stage as well as
the credo which influenced the conception of the play,
namely, surrealism. Because of these imperatives, the
characters are visible; in their physical aspects they re-
quire treatment equal to that given real characters.

At one moment there is apparent reality, at the next
there is surrealism, then poetic symbolism, and finally an
irrevocable entwining of these elements. Examples of this
technique occur throughout the play. The first appears in
the first act when the sound of a thunderstorm approaches
and the three who have been in the library, El Joven,
El Viejo, and El Amigo, hide behind a screen. The stage
direction reads as follows:

Se oye otro trueno. La luz desciende y una
luminosidad azulada de tormenta invade la escena.
Los tres personajes se ocultan detrás de un
biombo negro bordado con estrellas. Por la
puerta de la izquierda aparece el Niño muerto
con el Gato. El Niño viene vestido de blanco,
de primera comunión, con una corona de rosas
blancas en la cabeza. Sobre su rostro pintado
de cera resaltan sus ojos y sus labios de lirio
seco. Trae un cirio rizado en la mano y el
gran lazo con flores de oro. El Gato es azul con
dos enormes manchas rojas de sangre en el pechito
Another example occurs in the second act when The Mannequin appears to The Young Man.

La luz de la escena se oscurece. Las bombillas de los ángeles toman una luz azul. Por los balcones vuelve a entrar una luz que va en aumento hasta el final. Se oye un gemido.

**Joven (Mirando a la puerta)--**

¿Quién?

Entra en escena el Maniquí con vestido de novia. Este personaje tiene la cara gris y las cejas y los labios dorados como un maniquí de escaparate de lujo. (p. 1007)

And again in Act III, the stage direction reads:

Se oyen las trompas. Sale la Mecanógrafa. Viste un traje de tenis, con boina de color intenso. Encima del vestido, una capa larga. Viene con la Máscaras primera. Esta viste un traje 1900 con larga cola amarillo rabioso, pelo de seda, amarillo, cayendo como un manto, y máscara blanca de yeso; guantes hasta el codo, del mismo color. Lleva sombrero amarillo y todo el pecho sembrado con lentejuelas de oro. El efecto de este personaje debe ser el de una llamarada sobre el fondo de azules lunares y troncos nocturnos. Habla con un leve acento italiano. (p. 1023)

To this seeming confusion of incoherent theater gimmicks, this stage fantasy, Lorca adds an outward conservativeness of form, the play being cast in the mold of more traditional fare: three acts divided into five scenes.

Developed dramatically as an investigation of psychological behavior, **Así que pasen cinco años** lacks a plot of any dimension and depends for its action on the inter-
intricacies of The Young Man's behavior pattern. Therefore the play is not a record of objective actuality and lacks coherent action. Plot presupposes a passage of time within which incidents may be related to each other. By this relationship of incidents in time a plot is compounded. But there is no such passage of time in this play. Everything that occurs is not in the realm of time, but somewhere beyond it in an expanse reached only through the deviations of the human mind. So, the time at the beginning and at the end of the play is the same, and the action, which did not even occupy one second of time, took many years to develop in another area of existence where measurements are unimpaired by mere physical standards. And within that secret chamber lie the experiences, dreams, fears, and other unrealized ideals which have shaped that being whose mental agony is displayed, The Young Man. He has lost the reality of time in the surrealistic world of the mind. To him, in his attempt to flee the reality which surrounds him, the past, the present, and the future are as one.

We have seen that one of the reactions to naturalism was the new stagecraft which intended to free the theatrical medium from the written word, and used non-verbal means to the end of a more expressive medium of the theater. Lorca's work shows that his theater is in great measure a spectacular theater and words lose a great part of their
meaning when read outside a total atmosphere that was posited at the very moment the work was written. Lorca was a great master in the rendering of dramatic elements in terms of visual details, rhythm, and lyrical symbols. "Theater for Lorca, whether traditional or ultramodern, was something to be played with all the stops pulled out, to be rendered with uninhibited theatricality, to be allowed to burst into song and dance and to flare out into color." In this work, the decor assumes great importance, for, at one moment it represents external reality and at the next, the inner reality of The Young Man.

This tendency toward spectacular theater, though part of a continuing tradition, also becomes a practice of the playwrights of the Theater of the Absurd. Specifically, Esslin has pointed out pure theater or abstract scenic effects as they are familiar in the circus or revue, in the work of jugglers, acrobats, bullfighters or mimes. In a similar vein Lima says of *Así que pasen cinco años* that "in its abstraction through reality, the play recalls the paintings of Salvador Dali, wherein everyday objects and landscapes are brought together in an atmosphere of insinuation, subtlety and mystery." One sees just such an atmos-

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8. Lima, p. 159
phere created in the opening direction of Act II:

Alcoba estilo 1900. Muebles extraños. Grandes cortinajes llenos de pliegues y borlas. En las paredes, nubes y ángeles pintados. En el centro, una cama llena de colgaduras y plumajes. A la izquierda, un todador sostenido por ángeles con ramos de luces eléctricas en las manos. Los balcones están abiertos y por ellos entra la luna. Se oye un claxon de automóvil que toca con furia. La Novia salta de la cama con espléndida baga llena de encajes y enormes lazos color de rosa. Lleva una larga cola y todo el cabello lleno de bucles. (p. 986)

Another stage direction which demonstrates these exaggerated visual images, creating an atmosphere of subtlety and mystery, is that which opens Act III, scene i:

Bosque. Grandes troncos. En el centro, un teatro rodeado de cortinas barrocas con el telón echado. Una escalerilla une el tablado con el escenario. Al levantarse el telón cruzan entre los troncos dos figuras vestidas de negro, con las caras blancas de yeso y las manos también blancas. Suena una música lejana. Sale el Arlequín. Viste de negro y verde. Lleva dos caretas, una en cada mano y ocultas tras la espalda. Acciona de modo plástico, como un bailarín. (p. 1016)

Through these abstract and exaggerated effects and the scenes that follow, Lorca combines satire, surrealism, reality, and fantasy, and achieves an interweaving of all these elements.

Dali's influence is evident in Lorca, in that, like the surrealist painter, Lorca uses apparently unrelated settings, personages, and symbols to create that dream world in which The Young Man is suspended. He takes the well-known theme of the frustration of love and places it in an abstract setting with characters designated without proper names; for
example La Mecanógrafa as the product of a mechanized society. Lorca belonged to a newer generation of poets and artists in general who, particularly in the 30's felt that the function of artists was to improve life to a certain extent, educate the masses and express their problems and to serve society. Lorca found his principal sources of inspiration in the scene around him. He responded to the demands of the Generation of '98 that Spain should enter in the activity of European culture. At the time that Lorca was writing Spain was not abreast of European culture. Lorca came into contact with the avant-garde painting and music as well as experimental poetry and the influence of his Spanish contemporaries. The symbolism of color and the development of expressionism and impressionism in French painting had influence on Lorca. Lorca was influenced by the arts around him, and used these expressions in his own symbolic theater.

The colors set the mood symbolically in Lorca's works. Picasso went through a blue period in which he painted circus performers and other people in cool tones of blue and white shades to emphasize the mood of loneliness and isolation of the artist and also in general of all men. The playwrights of the Absurd comment on this same isolation through similar means.

Throughout Así que pasen cinco años, in the most abstract, surrealistic settings, Lorca has designated the
color of blue in varying degrees of intensity, to point up
the scene symbolically. In the stage directions which pre-
cede those surrealist scenes, we see examples of this.

Se oye otro trueno. La luz desciende y una
luminosidad azulada de tormenta invade la
escena.

El Gato es azul con dos enormes manchas
rojas de sangre en el pechito blanco gris y
en la cabeza. (p. 969)

And at the end of the scene the direction reads:

Una mano asoma y entra al Niño, que se
desmaya. La luz, al desaparecer el Niño,
vuelve a su tono primero. Por detrás del
biombo vuelven a salir rápidamente los
tres personajes. Dan muestras de calor y
de agitación viva. El Joven lleva un
abánico azul, el Viejo uno abánico negro . . .
(p. 977)

Later in the act when The Second Friend appears:

. . . El traje ha de ser de un corte
exageradísimo; llevará enormes botones
azules y el chaleco y la corbata serán
de rizados encajes. (p. 980)

Again, in the second act, before The Mannequin appears:

La luz de la escena se oscurece. Las
bombillas de los ángeles toman una luz
azul. Por los balcones vuelve a entrar
una luz de luna que va en aumento hasta
el final. Se oye un gemido. (p. 1007)

And at the end of the scene:

La luz es de un azul intenso. Entra la
Criada por la izquierda con un candelabro
y la escena toma suavemente su luz normal,
sin descuidar la luz azul de los balcones
abiertos de par en par que hay en el fondo.
En el momento en que entra La Criada, el Maniquí
queda rígido con una postura de escaparate.
(p. 1013)
At the beginning of the play, the opening stage direction reads:

Biblioteca. El Joven está sentado. Viste un pijama azul. El Viejo, de chaqueta gris, con barba blanca y enormes lentes de oro, también sentado. (p. 954)

The play also contains examples of one word suggesting another because of sound, regardless of meaning and we become aware of the absurd physical presence of the word rather than the reality which it represents. In some cases words are repeated so frequently that they become only a sound, totally emptied of meaning, as when one repeats one's own name so long that it simply becomes an object in itself. The example which follows shows a kind of disregard of the word and appears in the first act when The Old Man returns. What he says is repeated and changed to the past tense.

Viejo (Entrando gravemente)--Con permiso... (Los jóvenes quedan de pie.) Perdonen... (Énergicamente, Y mirando al Joven.) Se me olvidará el sombrero.

Amigo--¿Cómo?

Viejo (Furioso)--Sí, señor. Se me olvidará el sombrero... (Entre dientes), es decir, se me ha olvidado el sombrero. (p. 967)

A further association with the Theater of the Absurd can be found with certain types of characters. Robert Lima says that Lorca's play contains antecedents to characters in other works. Thus La Novia is related to Belisa in El amor
de Don Perlimplín and to La Zapatera in La zapatera prodigiosa; her lineage extends directly to the tempestuous Novia of Bodas de sangre and to the youngest of Bernarda Alba’s daughters. La Novia in Así que pasen cinco años is so far from her dramatic prototype (Belisa) that she ceases to be a stock character. In many plays of the Theater of the Absurd, one finds not only certain forms of expression that stem from types that are traditional in the development of the drama, but also certain characters that, within this new framework, take on an entirely different significance from that which they originally possessed. Here Lorca invests La Novia with greater significance and modern values. She is responsible for life in the second act through her passionate behavior—first romantic, then cruel, and finally indifferent.

At the end of the play The Young Man is alone. His last desperate words are answered only by a strong echo which repeats every syllable distinctly. A second echo joins in as The Young Man dies. Juan crosses the room with a candelabrum as the clock chimes six times. The echo repeats the six strokes. The time is the same as at the start of the play and nothing has changed except one life which has become death.

The self at one moment in time is confronted with its earlier incarnation only to find it utterly strange. The
problem being one with an interval of five years surely is only a difference in degree if the interval is reduced to one month, one hour. The central device seems to be the use of the accumulation of nameless characters to represent a society that is more physical than it is spiritual, more dead than alive, and is an obstacle to man's happiness and understanding. This physical presence is at the same time an absence; for the mass of characters and symbols only stresses more poignantly the absence of any human presence on the stage, the inevitable solitude of The Young Man.

The Young Man borders on disillusionment and is suspended in a kind of middle ground. The action is dependent on his behavior pattern. He is in a sense a tragic hero. Here the quality of hope is an affirmative element and is necessary to him in his striving for an understanding of life. Without hope there would be no disillusionment. With his loss of hope, his downfall has meaning. The Old Man is there to remind him of his problem. The Friend is there to convince him that he should not wait for The Betrothed, thus sacrificing himself, but should instead live in the present and be aware of the past. But he does not measure up to the romantic ideal of The Betrothed. As the intensity of the tragic situation increases, so does the impossibility of that situation; that is, the situation in which the characters find themselves. The downfall of the human becomes inescapable.
Así que pasen cinco años is one of the summits of Lorca's theater for it uses effectively some of the devices typical of his art (such as song forms), but at the same time it strikes deeper than the earlier plays. Lorca has set the action in a surrealistic medium and utilizes modes of expression not easily understood, illustrating the Brechtian principle of alienation. We have seen in this play the mind's interior represented by means of dream-like sequences, visual symbols, and various forms of scenic abstraction, making the play expressionistic and placing it within the framework of the Absurd. We have found a clear view of life expressed within this surrealistic form. We have not been able to identify completely with the characters because of their exaggeration, but their actions have clearly imparted to us a message. The play shows Lorca's integration with the artistic movements of the period and his use of these influences to create his own "pure theater." It is important that what his theater presents here is not separated from that of the Absurd and one is able to conclude that the play is the product of intense feelings on the absurd and mysterious in human existence. We see the withdrawal into the subconscious, the negation of the values of reality, and subsequent death. Thus man's world is absurd because he has become absurd.
CHAPTER III

BODAS DE SANGRE

_Bodas de sangre_ is the first play in the trilogy of folk tragedies written in Lorca's last years. Because of the separation in time between this and its companion pieces, there has been a tendency among critics to separate these tragic dramas from the rest of his production. Thus the plays prior to _Bodas de sangre_, the greater part of Lorca's theater, are usually considered of lesser importance than those in the final segment of his career. But what is more important here is again the fact that Lorca was reflecting and utilizing current European techniques and was continually experimenting with form throughout the scope of his production, and that "all of Lorca's plays from the first fantasy to the last tragedy are intricately related through plot, characterization, and outlook."¹ Moreover, because of this interrelation, some of the characteristics of the Theater of the Absurd that Esslin points out are found in some of all of Lorca's plays, even in _El maleficio de la mariposa_, as we shall see in the forthcoming chapter.

¹ Lima, p. 188
Lima states that what can be evidenced in *Bodas de sangre* is a heightened power of expression, more powerfully dramatic than in any of Lorca's previous works. *Así que pasen cinco años* and the unfinished *El público* give light to one aspect of his new maturity; *Bodas de sangre* and the plays which follow are instances of his renewed interest in Spanish life as it exists. Lorca's growth as a dramatist is most obvious in the trilogy, but as a climax to his career as a dramatist, these tragedies are indebted to the plays which went before. "*Bodas de sangre* reveals Lorca's most characteristic attitudes and techniques. His rare gifts of fantasy and lyricism find full expression in a drama of violent passion."² It is for this reason that the play may be included in our discussion.

We have seen in *Así que pasen cinco años* a work regarded by some as surrealistic, and as one that could be classified within the tradition of the Theater of the Absurd. Characteristic of this work are various formal elements such as dream-like sequences, mixture of fantasy and reality, nameless characters, the degradation of the spoken word, and a view of life and mankind implicit within these elements.

In *Bodas de sangre*, most often referred to as a realistic tragedy in which Lorca's expression had become more

crystallized, we also see a clear movement away from realism. We also find elements that may be associated with the Theater of the Absurd. To a lesser degree, we find nameless characters, and a mixture of realism and surrealism or the supernatural, noticeably in the final act when the action reaches spectacle proportions. We find the action based on conflicts that reflect an absurd world and almost meaningless traditions, and the use of essentially traditional forms in new contexts.

It seems that at this point, Lorca strives to universalize his art and to give his discipline full expression.

Those who criticized Bodas de sangre as typical of the lyric poet's deviations on the stage, were actually blind to the significance of the dramatist's intention. Far from being an amateur playwright, Lorca was exploring the primitive dramatic structure, the Catholic mass, the tribal ritual, and attempting thereby to create a tragic form which might fit the modern condition without relinquishing the spontaneity of the ancient.

Lorca shows in this work that he is desperately concerned with the twentieth-century problem of man's inability to communicate with man. The following discussion will show how he employs various techniques to arrive at a statement of this problem.

The story of Bodas de sangre is a simple and direct one. The principal characters of this drama, La Madre,

(The Mother), La Novia (The Bride), La Suegra (The Mother-in-law), La Mujer de Leonardo (Leonardo's Wife), La Criada (The Servant Woman), Leonardo, El Novio (The Bridegroom), and El Padre de La Novia (The Bride's Father), live within the confines of an ancient moral and social code based on the unshaking tenets of honor and death. The Mother is a strong-willed woman, and is possessed by a despairing fear that her son, The Groom, will die as did her husband and another son. Her love for The Groom is cast in this mold of violence. Her hatreds are as powerful as her love; it is the name of Felix that evokes both hatred and fear, for the two dead men had been crushed in the traditional feud between the families. These passions are again aroused as The Groom prepares to marry the woman who had been Leonardo Felix's fiancee. The Mother still suspects their passion and fears that her son will suffer from it.

Francisco García Lorca, brother of the poet, in his introduction to the first edition of the tragedies, insists that any interpretation of Lorca's theater should be from a poetic point of view in order to make the necessary conclusions about the work. He further states that his

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poetry may not be separated from his drama and both are sustained by a certain breath which is part of the epic. This is to say that Francisco García Lorca perceives epic elements in Lorca's theater. In later works, Lorca employed metaphors of nature, varied rhythms of language and musical sound, contrasting colors, and many songs and dances, to transform the experiences of Andalusian life into the poetry of the theater.

In this framework of poetic drama, we see again in _Bodas de sangre_ Lorca's surrealist tendencies in his purposeful use of color, and abstract scenic effects to point up the scene symbolically. It is necessary to bear in mind the similar characteristics of the Absurd movement.

The stage directions of Act II, scene ii read:


At the opening of Act III, scene i, the directions read:


Later in the act before The Beggar Woman appears, the description reads:

Desaparece entre los troncos, y vuelve la escena a su luz oscura. Sale una ANCIANA totalmente cubierta por tenues paños verdeoscurto. Lleva los pies descalzos. Apenas si se le verá el

5. _Obras completas_, p. 1133.
rostro entre los pliegues. Este personaje no figura en el reparto. (p. 1158)

The description of the final scene reads:

Habitación blanca con arcos y gruesos muros. A la derecha y a la izquierda, escaleras blancas. Gran arco al fondo y pared del mismo color. 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. Dos muchachas vestidas de azul oscuro están devanando una madeja roja. (p. 1169)

According to the poet's brother, the theme of Bodas de sangre came from a newspaper article, but in the work there is the intention to remove this theme far from something as commonplace as a newspaper report. This is to say that Lorca takes the actual fact and removes it from the reality of an ordinary means of communication and places it in a different setting, one through which he will be able to make direct comments. The surrealistic approach, and this theme does eventually fall into a surrealistic medium, is personal and relies on personal and idiosyncratic symbols. The society that goes to the theater is not apt to identify itself with the symbols that Lorca uses. The society is to that extent alienated.

Lorca puts his characters on an unreal plane, a world in which the appearances of mysterious and fantastic personages are possible, such as the personification of Moon and Death in the last act. Lorca creates an absurd world in this
work in which flesh and blood persons are on a less real plane. There is a fusion with nature and in this fusion the characters have lost their personalities and their names. "They have moved away from the newspaper account but they have gained in human and poetic significance." They have been converted into anonymous beings who possess a country's generic character, who are opposed by a tragic personage, their fate, and who are led by this fate among songs and omens toward death.

The countryside dominates the later works of Lorca; that is Bodas de sangre (1933), Yerma (1934), and La casa de Bernarda Alba (1936). These works reveal Lorca's preoccupation with the psychological and social forces in Spain in his own day. In the work under discussion this same countryside becomes, in a sense, the basis of conflict between the two families. It is omnipresent and seems to be a mysterious person; it reflects the action of the work throughout, most clearly, though surrealistically in the last act. It seems to be a dynamic force within which there are states of transition, that is, it appears as a source of life but also as a force which takes life away. This can be illustrated by the fact that the knife, which in this case, is traditionally an implement used to work with plants and thereby nourish life, has now, at least in the world of the play, found a use which

6. Francisco García Lorca, p. 21
is completely the opposite. For this reason the Mother comments in the first act on this lack of order in the world, her world, and reveals her lack of understanding of the forces around her. The Groom asks for the knife to cut the grapes and The Mother says to him:

(Entre dientes y buscandola.)
La navaja, la navaja . . .
Malditas sean todas y el bribón que las inventó.

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

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

. . . y ese hombre no vuelve.
O si vuelve es para ponerle una
palma encima o un plato de sal
gorda para que no se hinche.
No sé cómo te astreves a llevar
una navaja en tu cuerpo, ni cómo
yo dejo a la serpiente dentro
del arcón. (pp. 1080-81)

The Mother finds that her interpretation of the universe does not fit and that there is a divorce between her and the world around her. In his preoccupation with the Spanish countryside, Lorca creates in this setting a mysterious force which throughout the play, remains impervious to man.

In a sense, the setting of Bodas de sangre represents the sum of all the possibilities on one plane of existence
and as in the Theater of the Absurd, all is possible in the world of this work. This fact becomes increasingly evident as the work progresses until "the third act turns on the symbolism of song and the strategy of the spectacle."  

The first scene in this final act is a dim forest where two violins are heard playing in the background. It is filled with a supernatural air. Three Woodsmen are singing in verse, like an improvised chorus of fates. They argue the efficacy of the lover's escape. Suddenly the moon itself enters, dressed as a young woodsman, its white face diffusing a blue light, and the stage directions read: "La escena adquiere un vivo resplandor azul." (p.1157) As Lorca used the color blue to a great extent in Así que pasen cinco años, to add to the fantastic nature of the dream-like sequences, he also uses it symbolically here in this surrealistic scene.

As the scene progresses, an old Beggar Woman appears—the personification of Death. She describes the pursuit into the forest and commands the Moon to aid her:

Ilumina el chaleco y aparta los botones, que después las navajas ya saben el camino. (p. 1159)

The Groom enters and she agrees to lead him to Leonardo. The Woodsmen pass again, and foretell the impending tragedy. For a moment the scene focuses upon the escaped lovers. 

Accepting the inevitability of their situation and the tragedy to follow, they blame not themselves but blind lusts which the earth has created in them.

¡Qué vidrios se me clavan en la lengua! Porque yo quise olvidar y puse un muro de piedra entre tu casa y la mía. Es verdad. ¿No lo recuerdas? Y cuando te vi de lejos me eché en los ojos arena. Pero montaba a caballo y el caballo iba a tu puerta. Con alfileres de plata mi sangre se puso negra, y el sueño me fue llenando las carnes de mala hierba. Que yo no tengo la culpa, que la culpa es de la tierra y de ese olor que te sale de los pechos y las trenzas.

(pp. 1165-66)

They go deeper into the wood to hide. But suddenly there are two loud cries, and the double murder has been accomplished. The Moon advancing from the background stops short; the music of the violins ceases as the Beggar Woman appears. She opens her cloak in the center of the stage like a bird with huge wings. Then the blue light of the Moon is shut off. As it concerns the three main actors, the violence of the scene is human. With the others—the Woodsmen, who are the fates, the Moon, who is the messenger of Death, and the Beggar Woman, who is death itself—the scene rises to the supernatural plane. Thus we have seen take place an intentional dehumanization of character within a framework that is symbolic "pure theater" as Martin Esslin describes it.
In this scene, it seems that Lorca has sought to reproduce the disconnected but apparently logical form of a dream. Anything can happen and it does; everything is possible and probable. Time and space do not exist. On a slight groundwork of reality, imagination weaves new patterns made up of memories, experiences, unfettered fancies, absurdities, and improvisations. The characters split, double, and multiply; they evaporate, crystallize, scatter, and converge. But a single consciousness holds sway over them all. The scene shows a world of grim hopelessness and despair. In the scene, Lorca's art is more real than reality, expressing essences rather than appearances. Lorca has found a way to penetrate the surface of reality and so shock his audience. His theater is not a means to make the bourgeois comfortable but serves to frighten him. Here the unreal becomes fact. Here what seems to be the most banal can be unreal and precisely in this there lies the greatest truth. The stage must not only work with "real" life, it becomes "surreal" when it is aware of what lies behind that reality.

Here one sees some of the age-old traditions that the Theater of the Absurd displays in new and individually varied combinations— as an expression of wholly contemporary problems and preoccupations, particularly that which Martin Esslin has pointed out: the literature of dream and fantasy, which often has a strong allegorical component.
As Lorca's plays reveal a deep involvement with the people, they demonstrate a kind of love-hate relationship with traditions and conventions of his society which resulted in such works as *Bodas de sangre* where he shows a traditional matriarchal society, a backward society which brings tragic results. We find the arranged marriage here, which, in the words of *The Mother*, had its foretelling of tragedy before consummation--because of the conflict behind the name of Leonardo Felix and the tragic end in itself.

The tragedy is foretold in several distinct ways. We can see the already mentioned extension of the character of *La Novia* through the *Novia* in *Así que pasen cinco años* from the stock character of Belisa. In *Bodas de sangre*, she is tempestuous. Although in *Yerma*, Lorca becomes more subtle and more realistic, in *Bodas de sangre*, he has retained his surrealistic approach, and the bridal scene appears as a denunciation of the traditional:

*Criada*--¡Como un toro, la boda levantándose está!

Aparece la *Novia*. Lleva un traje negro mil novecientos, con caderas y larga cola rodeada de gasas plisadas y encajes duros. Sobre el peinado de visera lleva la corona de azahar. Suenan las guitarras. Las MUCHACHAS besan a la NOVIA. (p. 1128)

This element of absurdity which represents a deviation from the traditional points to the tragic end; it clearly says that adherence to old traditions tends to destroy any...
chance at productive or fruitful lives and prevents the realization of individual abilities.

Lorca uses the traditional Epithalamium in Bodas de sangre in a unique manner. The Epithalamium is a song form which dates at least from the Renaissance (Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet and the poetry of Spencer and Donne), a song which greets the bride on the morning of her wedding day as her suitor approaches. Traditionally it is full of joy, the promise of wedded bliss and the fruitfulness of life. It appears in the second act, first scene:

(Pausa. Voces cantando muy lejos.)

¡Despierte la novia
la mañana de la boda!

Leonardo—Despierte la novia
la mañana de la boda. (p. 1120)

Criada (A Leonardo.)—¡Y se casa!

Voces (Cantando más cerca)—
Despierte la novia
la mañana de la boda. (p. 1123)

Criada—Cinco leguas por el arroyo, que por el camino hay el doble. (La Novia se levanta y la CRIADA se entusiasma al verla.) Despierte la novia
la mañana de la boda.
¡Que los ríos del mundo lleven tu corona!

Que despierte
con el ramo verde
del laurel florido.
¡Que despierte
por el tronco y la rama
de los laureles! (p. 1117-18)


**Muchacha** 1ª (Entrando)—

Despierte la novia
la mañana de la boda;
ruede la ronda,
y en cada balcón una corona.

**Voces**—¡Despierte la novia!

**Criada** (Moviendo algazara.)—

Que despierte
con el ramo verde
del amor florido.

¡Que despierte
por el tronco y la rama
de los laureles!

**Muchacha** 2ª (Entrando)—

Que despierte
con el largo pelo,
camisa de nieve,
botas de charol y plata
y jazmines en la frente. (p. 1124)

Throughout the scene, the arriving guests chant this song form. They continue until The Bride appears on the scene in the manner already described. Therefore in this context, the song form is ironic and absurd because of what must occur later on. What is important is that this is a traditional form, but as Lorca uses it here, it no longer has its traditional significance. Lorca uses traditional forms in new contexts with the result that these forms seem to have no valid connection with the work and therefore are apparently words without meaning. Language no longer expresses truth.

We have seen why Bodas de sangre can be included in a discussion of the Theater of the Absurd. One of the prevailing characteristics of this tragedy is that it unfolds in a setting not entirely realistic. We have seen where the
mediums of expression are not always a mode of communication, but a way to disguise the truth. The tragedy of the play lies even deeper in the surrealistic ending and there one finds the greatest truth.

We find glimmerings of characteristics of the Absurd in the poetic significance that the theme of the play derives from Lorca's treatment, in the essential separation between man and his world, that world which can no longer be understood by reason, and in Lorca's use of forms of expression and characters in an entirely new context. The arsenal of images, icon, characters and symbols becomes the accepted, if not the only possible means of conveying the facts.

The play testifies that the problems written about are not merely intellectual considerations but part of the human condition, and that Lorca's concern with the treatment of these problems is not a youthful pose but an honest preoccupation, characteristic of the twentieth century. He makes a comment upon the human situation and accomplishes this in a manner similar to that of the playwrights of the Absurd.
CHAPTER IV
OTHER PLAYS

The following discussion will give further emphasis to Lima's statement that all of Lorca's works, from the first fantasy to the last tragedy, are related through plot, characterization and outlook. We will see how elements of the Theater of the Absurd embodied in Así que pasen cinco años and in Bodas de sangre can also be detected in certain other of Lorca's works, though to a more limited degree. Keeping in mind forms of expression used by the author and the view of life within these forms, we can begin with the first fantasy, El maleficio de la mariposa, and touch briefly upon La zapatera prodigiosa, El amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa, Yerma, and La casa de Bernarda Alba.

When El maleficio de la mariposa, a two-act fantasy, written entirely in poetry, was given its only presentation in Madrid's Teatro Eslava on the night of March 22, 1920, it was greeted with a reaction of hissing, yelling, laughing, and stomping, "because the public could not be expected to take pleasure or even passive interest in a new poetic theater whose first offering was a play about cockroaches."¹

¹ Lima, p. 55.
The Madrid audience was out for its customary "slice of life", and was outraged by the febrile imaginings of a boy poet.

Honig states in his discussion of the work that it does indicate that Lorca's initial approach to drama was through the poetic imagination, which was gradually to invade his whole theater. The subject he had chosen had perhaps already been developed in his verse. One of his earlist poems, "Los encuentros de un caracol aventurero", had hinted at the theme of El maleficio de la mariposa. Lima states that the unpleasant reception served to convert Lorca to a principle that the public must be served, not by forcing new ideas upon it, but by the slow process of subtle education in the experiments of the theater. We have seen just this principle of his late works.

According to Francisco García Lorca, some of the characteristics of Lorca's plays first appear timidly in El maleficio de la mariposa. Lorca takes this poem and sets it to action in a fantastic setting, a world of insects. It concerns the thwarted idealism of a humble cockroach who has been given a sudden insight into another world by accidental

2. Honig, p. 113

contact with a wounded butterfly. Although the play was ini-
tially misunderstood, this alienated and alienating form of
type of expression contains a message that we have been able to point
out in some of Lorca's later plays.

The plot is as follows: On a fine summer day a bril-
liantly colored butterfly suddenly falls into the tall grass
of an Andalusian field among a startled colony of cockroach-
es. Life for these lowly insects is momentarily interrupted.
Gossip runs high among them as they have never seen a butter-
fly before. There is speculation, especially among the older
cockroaches about the meaning of this visitation, questioning
whether this dazzling creature whose wing has been wounded is
a good angel or a malevolent enchantress. Although the
butterfly is hospitably received by all, cautious parents
warn their offspring to stay away from the mysterious intruder.
But there is one cockroach who will not heed these warnings.
Hypnotized by her beauty, he curiously emerges from the dark
earth to approach her. Fearful at first of the light and the
color that she sheds over all, he gradually grows bold enough
to engage her in conversation. He asks about her world of
sunlight and flowers and blue sky. What she tells him agi-
tates him with so much longing that he secretly tests his own
short, black wings for flight. But he cannot rise above the
grass. Finally the day comes when the butterfly, regaining
the use of her wings, flies away before the anguished eyes of
the cockroach. She disappears from sight, while he muses over the open-air paradise she has described to him—the world he will never know.

It is made clear in the opening description of Act I, scene iii, that:

Curianito el Nene es un gentil y atildado muchachito, cuya originalidad consiste en pintarse las puntas de las antenas y la pata derecha con polen de azucena. Es poeta y visionario, que, afeccionado por la Curiana Nigromántica, de la que es discípulo, espera un gran misterio que ha de decidir su vida... Trae en una de sus patas—manos—una cortecita de árbol donde estaba escribiendo un poema.4

The immediate conflict of the action is revealed after this. Dona Curiana wishes that her son marry Curianita Silvia and walks beside him extolling Silvia's income. Earlier she reveals her main interest in this alliance in a conversation with Curianita Silvia, showing her new fixed ideas and a materialistic existence.

Dona Curiana—¡Es un mozo de la aldea! Lo tenías bien oculto. ¿Y él os ama?

Curianita Silvia—Me detesta.

Dona Curiana—¡Cosa rara, vos sois rica! En mi tiempo...

Curianita Silvia—La princesa que él aguarda no vendrá.

Dona Curiana—¿Qué tal es?

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.

Doña Curiana—¡Aparta! Es mi hijo.

Curianita Silvia—¡Yo lo amo con locura!

Doña Curiana (Como soñando.)—Ella es rica. ¡Qué torpeza la de esta criatura rara! Yo haré que la ame por fuerza! (Compungida y fingiendo lo que no siente.) ¡Ay cuánto debe sufrir! (Aparte.) ¡Tiene magníficas rentas! ¡Pobrecita de mis carnes! ¡Sangrecita de mis venas, te casaré con mi hijo! (pp. 590-91)

Later on we see the conflict arise between Curianito el Nene and Doña Curiana:

Curianito (Aparte.)—¡Que no me case, madre! Ya os he dicho mil veces que no quiero casarme.

Doña Curiana (Llorando.)—Tu lo que tienes ganas es de matirizarme.

Curianito—Yo no la quiero, madre.

Doña Curiana—Pero si eso es igual . . .

Curianito—Sin amor no me caso. (p. 592)

Doña Curiana shows herself to be not a sympathetic person and pays no respect to individual values. Curianito el Nene seems surrounded by indifference and greed. This unfeeling society finds expression in the opening of Act II when Curianita Santa says of Curianito:
Es muy bueno y muy dulce. ¡Un gran poeta!

**Curianita** la—¡Un vago! Sobre un hilo de araña nadie vive.

**Curianita Santa**—¡Comadre, no critiquéis a nadie, dijo el Gran Cucaracho. (La otra Curiana inclina sus antenas.) "Meditad con la hierba que nace vuestras vidas y sufrid en vosotras los defectos extraños. Valen más en mi reino los que cantan y juegan que aquellos que se pasan la vida trabajando...; que habéis de ser la tierra y habéis de ser el agua, pétalos en los rosales y corteza en el árbol."

**Curianita la**—¿Es que el Gran Cucaracho no comía, comadre? (Con sorna) Pues decidle a un hambriento esas frases.

**Curianita Santa**—¡Callaos! El hambre es un demonio con antenas de fuego a quien hay que alejar... (pp. 610-11)

And later in the scene Doña Curiana speaks:

(Llorando)—Toda, toda la culpa la tiene mi marido. No hay desgracia mayor que la de ser poeta. ¡Y los quemaba a todos!

**Curiana Nigromántica**—Los quemará el olvido. (p. 616)

It is just this oblivion from which Curianito wishes to escape and that with which Lorca is desperately concerned.

The conversation between Curianito and Curianita Silvia in Act I, scene iv, gives further expression to this:

**Curianita Silvia**—Creo que no. ¿Cuándo te casas?

**Curianito**—Mi ilusión está prendida en la estrella que parece una flor.

**Curianita Silvia**—¿No es fácil que se seque con un rayo de sol?
Curianito—Yo tengo el agua clara
para calmar su ardor.

Curianita Silvia—¿Y dónde está tu
estrella?

Curianito—En mi imaginación. (p. 595)

Curianito is not only waiting for a revelation to de-
cide his life's course but he wishes to know his own destiny,
he wishes to be another being, and there is no possibility of
another world if there is no imagination or ambition.

This community of cockroaches may represent a world
in which human experience finds and reflects a disordered
existence. Curianito stands out in this unthinking, unfeel-
ing world as a being who lives in a world of illusions and
hope. The Butterfly, in this sense, represents that light,
or life, that he is able to obtain away from this destruc-
tive existence. One indication of this existence is found
in Act I, scene i, during the conversation between Curianita
Silvia and Curianito.

Curianita Silvia—Me duele el corazón.
¡Ay de mí!, no me quiere.)

Curianito (Se acerca a consolarla.)--
¡No llores más, por Dios!

Estando muy juntitos, pasan por la calle dos Curianitas,
niñas y revoltosas. Una de ellas lleva una mosca atada
con una brizna de yerba seca. (p. 596)

Another indication is found in the character of Alacranito
el Corta-Mimbres, an old woodchopper who lives in the forest
and comes to the village regularly to get drunk. He is an
insatiable glutton and a very bad person. He speaks with a brandy-roughened voice.

Curianito (Aparte.)—Un canalla.

Curianita Silvia—Un glotón.

Alacranito—¿Quién sus defectos no pregoná? Me gusta mucho comer, pero soy buena persona.

Curianito—Calla y vete a tu bosque.

Curianita Silvia—Déjanos ya, hermano.

Alacranito (Impertérrito y relamiéndose de gusto)—Ahora mismo me acabo de comer un gusano que estaba delicioso, blando y dulce, ¡qué rico! A su lado tenía la cria, un nene chico, (Silvia y Curianito se horrorizan.) que no quise comer, me daba repugnancia. (p. 600)

And finally Lorca clarifies the situation in the interaction that follows.

Curianita Silvia—No me quiere, repito. Me dijo que él amaba a una flor.

Doña Curiana—¡El idiota! ... Mas yo haré que te quiera.

Alacranito (Cada vez más borracho, a Curianito)—Tenía una pata rota y yo me la comi. Era una hermosa araña. (Riendo a carcajadas.) ¡Estaba tan sabrosa ... !

Curianito, que no le llega el caparazón al cuerpo, habla con voz temblorosa a causa del miedo horrible que siente a ser devorado por aquella pantera en forma de alacran.

Curianito—¿Cómo te diste mañana para cogerla?
In the world of the play we see, in Alacranito, an element which devours man, cuts him off from life. And during the scene just cited, the Curianita Niña who went by earlier with the fly on the leash has reappeared. Alacranito catches sight of her, grabs up her fly and swallows it.

But Curianito has a vision which triumphs, represented in the Butterfly. We see from the beginning the same attitude contained in the image of the butterfly—as symbolic of a desire to fly, to live, not to be held down, imprisoned, part of a collection. The Butterfly says upon being brought to the house injured:

(Quedamente y entre sueños.)—¡Quiero volar, quiero volar, el hilo es largo!

... El hilo va a la estrella donde está mi tesoro; mis alas son de plata, mi corazón es de oro; el hilo está soñando con su vibrar sonoro... (p. 607)

Curianito, who has illusions, hopes, and desires, sees in the butterfly the chance for fulfillment and the realization of his dreams. But Curiana Nigromántica tells him:

Curianito, tu suerte depende de las alas de esa gran mariposa. No las mires con ansias, porque puedes perderte. Te lo dice tu amiga, ya vieja y achacosa. (Haciendo un
And it is this same hope which brings about the destruction of Curianito el Nene.

Curianito está abrazando a la Mariposa. Esta se le entrega inconsciente.

Tienes el cuerpo frío. Ven conmigo, que es mi cueva templada y desde allí verás el prado verde perderse en la distancia.

The Butterfly se aparta bruscamente y danza.

¿No tienes corazón? No te ha quemado la luz de mis palabras? Entonces a quién cuento mis pesares? ¡Oh Amapola encantada! ¡La madre del rocío de mi padre! ¿Por qué si tiene el agua fresca sombra en estío y la tiniebla de la noche se aclara con los ojos sin fin de las estrellas no tiene amor mi alma? ¿Quién me puso estos ojos que no quiero y estas manos que tratan de prender un amor que no comprendo? ¡Y con mi vida acaba! ¿Quién me pierde entre sombra? ¿Quién me manda sufrir sin tener alas?

Curiana Guardiana—¡Ah! Por qué gritas tanto, Curianito? ¡Está loco! (pp. 628-29)

He is not able to fly like the butterfly who eventually leaves him. He is not able to begin life. Now he is completely disoriented. He can no longer breathe in the dark earth while her bright vision is reflected in his eyes. His
life will be tormented by "the witchery of the butterfly" or by the absurdity of his world. He is without a base; there is a divorce between the mind that desires and the world that disappoints. He finds his disillusionment in that very being which gives him hope, and his life then cannot be explained by reason. In the eyes of his fellowmen he appears absurd just as his love for the butterfly was absurd. But Lorca made him a loving, feeling being who is ultimately deprived of illusions and a life to come.

The themes which Lorca treats in this play were not necessarily unusual topics for the theater. Only the manner in which they were presented was at odds with the traditions of Spanish drama; the play constitutes, in a sense a rebellion against established forms. The insect world, in Lorca's hands, became a world of fantasy wherein the inhabitants spoke and felt as humans, possessing even the most sensitive feelings and desires of which mankind is capable.

In this world of fantasy, the degree of abstraction is limited because the author designates insects as his characters. At the time, they appeared as distortions and in the mind of the playwright they represented distortions of natural forms that reflected a moral dislocation. We have seen where the Theater of the Absurd abounds in similar, perhaps more complete distortions, which represent the same disorder

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5. Honig, p. 112.
in the world. This presentation, which so outraged its audi-
ence also, like the Theater of the Absurd, represented a
world that was completely different and not recognizable from
that previously known to man, or to the alienated theater-
goer.

After the apparent failure of his first venture, El
maleficio de la mariposa, Lorca presented an historical play,
Mariana Pineda, the scene of which was laid in his native
Granada. After that he produced two farces, La zapatera
prodigiosa and El amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa, which
were performed for the first time in Madrid in 1930 and 1933
respectively, but written before those dates. The underly-
ing theme is the same in both plays—the marriage of an old
man with a young woman. But here the stock comedy situation
receives quite a different treatment. Lorca merely recog-
nizes the frustration inherent in the plot, the impossi-
bility of the situation. What is important is what Lorca
sees in it and what he does with it.

In La zapatera prodigiosa, which presents in a
humorous way the clash between fantasy and reality, he follows
closely the folk theater, weaving a simple plot through which
moves the characterized figure of a woman. He deals with the
relation between fantasy and reality and with the essential
reality of fantasy. He mocks the devices of the conventional
drama, insisting instead on the place of fantasy and imagination in the theater. In Act I, when The Shoemaker has left his home and his wife, we find a scene between The Shoemaker's Wife and The Boy, which serves to point up this idea of the essential reality of fantasy and Lorca's definitive experimentation with form. It is through this scene, in which Lorca moves away from realism and employs almost surrealistic devices, that The Shoemaker's Wife realizes that her husband has left her. We see here the clear use of the symbolic butterfly to express what we have seen expressed in other works. This time the butterfly escapes. The realistic conversation of The Boy and The Wife becomes apparent reality as the two begin chasing the butterfly, and The Boy chants the poem which contains the ultimate message. Shortly afterward, when she is fully aware of the situation, the scene breaks into color and frolic.

Zapatera—¿Por qué eres tan precioso?
(Sienta al Niño en sus rodillas.)

Niño—Yo venía a decirte una cosa que nadie quiere decirte. Ve tú, ve tú, ve tú, y nadie quería, y entonces:
"Que vaya el niño", dijeron... porque era un notición que nadie quiere dar.

Zapatera—Pero dímelo pronto, ¿qué ha pasado?

Niño—No te asustes, que de muertos no es.

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6. Honig, p. 130.
Zapatera— ¡Anda!

Niño—Mira, zapaterita . . . (por la ventana entra una mariposa, y el Niño, bajándose de las rodillas de la Zapatera, echa a correr.) Una mariposa, una mariposa . . . ¿No tienes un sombrero? . . . Es amarilla, con pintas azules y rojas . . . y, que sé yo! . . .

Zapatera—Pero, hijo mío . . ., ¿quieres . . . ?

Niño (Energico.)—Cállate y habla en voz baja, ¿no ves que se espanta si no? ¡Ay! ¡Dame tu pañuelo!

Zapatera (Intrigada ya en la caza)—Tomalo.

Niño—¡Chist! . . . No pises fuerte.

Zapatera—Lograrás que se escape.

Niño (En voz baja y como encantando a la mariposa, canta.)—

Mariposa del aire,
que hermosa eres,
mariposa del aire dorada y verde.
Luz del candil,
mariposa de aire ¡quedate ahí, ahí, ahí, . . .
No te quieres parar,
pararte no quieres.
Mariposa del aire dorada y verde.
Luz de candil,
mariposa del aire ¡quedate ahí, ahí, ahí! . . . ¡quedate ahí!
Mariposa, ¿estás ahí?

Zapatera (En broma)—Síííí.

Niño—No, eso no vale. (La mariposa vuela.)

Zapatera—¡Ahora! ¡Ahora!
Niño (Corriendo alegremente con el pañuelo.)— ¿No te quieres parar? ¿No quieres dejar de volar?

Zapatera (Corriendo también por otro lado.)— ¡Que se escapa, que se escapa!

El Niño sale corriendo por la puerta persiguiendo a la mariposa.

Zapatera (Enérgica)— ¿Dónde vas?

Niño (Suspendo)— ¡Es verdad! ¡Es verdad! (Rápido.) ¡Pero yo no tengo la culpa!

Zapatera— ¡Vamos! ¡Vamos! ¿Quieres decírmelo que pasa? ¡Pronto!

Niño— ¡Ay! Pues mira . . . , tu marido, el zapatero, se ha ido para no volver más. (pp. 843-45)

Por la puerta empiezan a entrar VECINAS vestidas con colores violentos y que llevan grandes vasos de refrescos. Giran, corren, entran y salen alrededor de la ZAPATERA, que está sentado gritando, con la prontitud y ritmo de baile. Las grandes faldas se abren a las vueltas que dan. Todos adoptan una actitud cómica de pena.

Vecina Amarilla— Un refresco.

Vecina Roja— Un refresquito.

Vecina Verde— Para la sangre.

Vecina Negra— De limón.

Vecina Morada— De zarsaparrilla.

Vecina Roja— La menta es mejor.

Vecina Morada— Vecina.

Vecina Verde— Vecinita.

Vecina Negra— Zapatera.

Vecina Verde— Zapaterita.
Las Vecinas arman gran algazara. La Zapatera llora a gritos. (p. 847)

Even though the play contains only one scene that approaches surrealist proportions, the fact that such a technique exists in this early farce is significant. It is within the framework of this short scene that the greatest truth is revealed not only to The Shoemaker's Wife but also to the audience.

In _La zapatera prodigiosa_ and _El amor de Don Perlimplín_, Lorca uses stock characters and stock plots in an interesting way. The plots of both can be said to be fore-shadowings of the tragic situations that are to come later. In fact, in his farces Lorca seems to be experimenting with certain devices and one can see the seeds of later themes and modes of expression. One example occurs in the first scene of _El amor de Don Perlimplín._

Sala de Don Perlimplín. En el centro hay una gran cama de dosel y penachos de plumas. En las paredes hay seis puertas. La primera de la derecha sirve de entrada y salida a Don Perlimplín. Es la primera noche de casados. Marcolfa, con un candelabro en la mano, en la primera de la izquierda. (p. 896)

This description, in a sense, links up with a similar one that occurs in _Así que pasen cinco años_, as the opening direction of Act II.

Alcoba estilo 1900. Muebles extraños. Grandes cortinajes llenos de pliegues y borlas. En las paredes, nubes y ángeles pintados. En el centro, una cama llena de colgaduras y plumajes. A la izquierda, un tocador sostenido por ángeles con ramos de luces eléctricas en las manos. Los balcones están abiertos y por ellos
entra la luna. (p. 986)

The importance of this comparison lies in Lorca's experimentation with form to arrive at a full theatrical expression, and the use of scenic effects to make comments. Whereas the former shows a developing tendency, in the latter, a similar plot situation is revealed more forcefully through abstract and surrealistic description.

Later in the first scene of *El amor de Don Perlimplín*, as the curtain is opened and we find Don Perlimplín, the scene suggests satire and has surrealistic overtones.

Aparece Don Perlimplín en la cama, con unos grandes cuernos dorados. Belisa a su lado. Los cinco balcones del foro están abiertos de par en par; por ellos entra la luz blanca de la madrugada. (p. 905)

We find again an element of irreality in the opening of scene ii.

Comedor de Perlimplín. Las perspectivas están equivocadas deliciosamente. La mesa con todos los objetos pintados, como un una cena primitiva. (p. 909)

These brief descriptions show that Lorca was working within a framework, at times, of apparent reality, as we found it to exist in *Así que pasen cinco años*. We find, as they are characteristic of the Theater of the Absurd, abstract scenic effects as they are familiar in a circus revue, and a certain element of clowning and mad-scenes—all embellishing the basic plot situation.

Lorca's final works, *Yerma* and *La casa de Bernarda*
Alba, clearly say that adherence to old traditions is destructive. This adherence, either used as a justification for selfish behavior, as in the case of Bernarda, or in keeping people imprisoned by social rank or class, tends to destroy any chance they have of productive lives and prevents the realization of individual abilities. Similarly, deviations from the social conventions brings about destruction. The impossibility of the situation in Bernarda Alba reveals a destruction brought about by the limitations of the house, and a further destruction (as with Adela) in breaking away from these limitations. In addition to these views of life, some of the aforementioned formal characteristics of the Theater of the Absurd are found in these realistic contexts.

The laundresses in Yerma comprise a chorus very much like the choruses of the Greek tragedies. As we found in Chapter II, the Theater of the Absurd uses traditional forms in a manner not traditional to make comment or to point to something symbolically. In Yerma, the chorus may not present itself as characteristic of complete Absurd theater, but it does appear as a tendency.

In La casa de Bernarda Alba the role of a chorus is fulfilled by Poncia, and her comments on situations. One such example is found in Act II:

Con la cabeza y las manos llenas de ojos cuando se trata de lo que se trata. Por mucho que pienso
no sé lo que te propones. ¿Por qué te pusiste casi desnuda con la luz encendida y la ventana abierta al pasar Pepe el segundo día que vino a hablar con tu hermana? (p. 1388)

In Act III, scene ii, of *Yerma*, we find an effect which contains elements somewhat absurd and primitivist in that the scene is a ceremony which ultimately makes a comment on Yerma's barren state:

Salen MUCHACHAS corriendo, con largas cintas en las manos, por la izquierda. Por la derecha, otras tres mirando hacia atrás. Hay en la escena como un crescendo de voces y de ruidos de cascabeles y colleras de campanilleros. En un piano superior aparecen las siete MUCHACHAS que agitan las cintas hacia la izquierda. Crece el ruido y entran dos Máscaras populares. Una como macho y otra como hembra. Llevan grandes caretas. El macho empuña un cuerno de toro en la mano. No son grotescas de ningún modo, sino de gran belleza y con un collar de grandes cascabeles. El fondo se llena de gente que grita y comenta la danza. Está muy anochecido. (p. 1248)

In conclusion, we see, however briefly, even in these two last tragedies, Lorca's characteristic use of certain forms of expression found in the Theater of the Absurd. In addition to scenic effects with surrealistc overtones, we have also seen the adaptation of traditional theatrical techniques to suit Lorca's contemporary themes. In whatever manner these techniques present themselves, they are made to fit the modern condition and contain elements of truth about man.
CONCLUSION

We have seen that, in recent years, the theater of paradox, anti-theater, or Theater of the Absurd, has been one of the most challenging developments in the theater. The Theater of the Absurd is the most recent link in a course of development that started with naturalism. The term **Theater of the Absurd** is most accurate because it takes into account the post-war human condition as Albert Camus describes it. This movement in the theater, exemplified by Beckett, Ionesco, and others, has been systematically described by Martin Esslin. Many writers for the theater from the beginnings of expressionism, impressionism and realism point the way to the techniques that these post-war dramatists use.

Each play under consideration has been shown to present Lorca's own continual experimentation with certain techniques and his tendency, though irregular, in this direction. The intent of the seven plays discussed is similar in that each reveals Lorca's preoccupation with the meaning of man's existence. Emphasis in each case has been given to the expression of this preoccupation where it has been similar to that of the playwright of the Absurd.
The Theater of the Absurd serves to communicate one poet's most personal intuition of the human situation, his own sense of being, his individual vision of the world. This is the subject matter of the Theater of the Absurd which also determines its form, of necessity representing a convention of the stage basically different from the "realistic" theater of modern times.7

We have seen in the foregoing discussions Lorca's concern with the presentation of the individual's basic situation, and while he uses the stage as a multidimensional medium, utilizing simultaneously visual elements, movement, and language, he also uses language based on patterns of concrete images rather than argument or discursive speech. We have also seen, particularly in Así que pasen cinco años, El maleficio de la mariposa, and to a degree in Bodas de sangre, that as in the Theater of the Absurd, these plays project the author's personal world, and lack objectively valid characters. In these three works, the action is not intended to tell a story but to communicate a pattern of poetic images, and there results a dispensing with logic, discursive thought and language.

The means by which the dramatists of the Absurd express their critique of our disintegrating society are based

7. Esslin, p. 293.
on suddenly confronting their audiences with a grotesquely heightened, distorted picture of a world that has gone made as Lorca does throughout *Así que pasen cinco años* and in part in *Bodas de sangre*. We have seen in these works a world that produces persons that are not necessarily differentiated by names but by what they are; they always exist in an allegorical and symbolic state that seems to be at odds with them. It is just this state that, at times, the reader and the audience are not able to comprehend. Its essence is also out of reach of the personage within the work, in whatever form he presents himself.

We have seen in the works discussed that the central figures are progressively stripped of all illusions concerning natural order. Theirs is not a familiar world that can be explained by reason. It is significant that Curianito, El Joven, El Novio, all the characters that we have seen base their hopes in beings and forms that ultimately have no form, no life. While the Butterfly offers life, she also destroys. The Novias in *Así que pasen cinco años* and *Bodas de sangre* remain apathetic and impervious and in this sense, represent the destructive forces of the world.

The trends in modern drama are many; the styles are varied; and all literature is going through a period of experimentation. The experimentation is partially the result of a rapidly developing technology which permits writers,
directors, and technicians to achieve effects impossible before. The experimentation is also due to greater and greater advances in science, and the concomitant awareness that man fits into nature in a relative way, that change and relativity is not only man's lot, but also the lot of the solar system, the galaxy, or indeed the entire universe. With this awareness, is another, seen in psychology, in the Korean War, and in Germany during and after the Nazi regime, that man is psychologically malleable, that his personality and moral consciousness can be changed by drugs, tensions, pressures, operations on the brain, hypnosis, etc. The realization is more increasingly forced upon writers, and upon the public through writers, that truth, if it exists at all, may not exist in surface realities (truth is traditionally external in the Judeo-Christian world), not in social ceremonies and hierarchies—which change—but perhaps in the process of change itself. For this reason there is a general trend in both "realistic" or "naturalistic" plays and plays of the Absurd to use a scene structure which abounds in contrasts—some ludicrous—and a play structure which is episodic rather than one which builds like a "well-made play" to a central, specific theme or moral in order to analyze a problem.
In a sense, Lorca may be considered a precursor of this "new" trend. The fact that Lorca's theater does contain some of those characteristics now associated with the Theater of the Absurd testifies to a deeply pessimistic view of life held by Lorca at this time. Like the playwrights of the Theater of the Absurd, he peered deeply into the nature of man, in a universe shattered by conflicting beliefs, and found that nature deeply and tragically absurd.
LIST OF REFERENCES


