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## A study of image, symbol, and theme in *La casa de Bernarda Alba*

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A STUDY OF IMAGE, SYMBOL, AND THEME IN

LA CASA DE BERNARDA ALBA

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of English

University of the Pacific

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Iris Scribner Bird

June, 1971

This thesis, written and submitted by

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## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM

The tragedy, La casa de Bernarda Alba, by Federico García Lorca is generally recognized as one of the finest poetic tragedies of the Twentieth Century, yet it has not drawn the critical attention afforded the plays of Lorca's contemporaries, such as Tennessee Williams, for example. Ironically, Williams' early plays evince a definite Lorquian influence.<sup>1</sup> Close attention has been paid to the poetic texture of Williams' plays, providing an important contribution to understanding the art of his poetic tragedy. The same has not been true of Lorca. This may be due partly to the fact that Lorca's tragedies have not played very well in the United States and partly due to political considerations in his native Spain.

It is the purpose of this essay to make a detailed analysis of the poetic structure of La casa de Bernarda Alba to show Lorca's brilliant welding of the basic elements of the drama into one underlying statement of theme. This will be accomplished through a close reading of the play as originally written in the Spanish language

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<sup>1</sup>Sam Bluefarb, "Life and Death in García Lorca's House of Bernarda Alba," Drama Survey, Vol. IV, No. 2 (Summer, 1965), 120, n. 1.

with especial attention paid to its setting, dominant image patterns, characters, and action. These, then, will be examined and elucidated in relationship to thematics, thus demonstrating Lorca's dramatic technique of fusing these fundamental parts through use of language and symbol into one unified whole.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PLAY

#### I. HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

La casa de Bernarda Alba, the last play in Lorca's trilogy of tragedies, composed of Bodas de sangre, Yerma, and La casa de Bernarda Alba, was completed by the playwright on June 19, 1936, exactly two months to the day prior to his death before a firing squad in the opening days of the Spanish Civil War. Its premier performance did not take place, however, until March 6, 1945, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, with Lorca's longtime friend, actress Margarita Xirgu, in the title role.<sup>1</sup> The same year a French version appeared in Paris, an English version in London, and a Czech version in Prague. Honig refers to it as "Lorca's suppressed drama," which appears an apt description since the Spanish text was not printed until 1946, followed by an American translation in 1947.<sup>2</sup> The Spanish premier finally took place in 1950.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Lima, The Theatre of García Lorca (New York: Las Americas Publishing Company, 1963), p. 263.

<sup>2</sup>Edwin Honig, García Lorca (Norfolk, Conn.: James Laughlin, 1963), p. 219.

<sup>3</sup>Carl W. Cobb, Federico García Lorca (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1967), p. 138.

This play, like Bodas de sangre, has its basis in fact. The factual details, as with the earlier play, provided only a point of departure for the dramatist. Carlos Morla Lynch, in his intimate diary covering the period of close personal friendship with Lorca, recounts a conversation with the playwright in which Lorca disclosed the play's background. Lynch remarked to Lorca that the women of the play resembled women from Castille rather than from Andalusia. Lorca replied, explaining the events that formed the basis for the play had actually taken place not far from Granada:

Hay, no muy distante de Granada, una aldehuela en la que mis padres eran dueños de una propiedad pequeña: Valderrubio. En la casa vecina y colindante a la nuestra vivía "Doña Bernarda", una viuda de muchos años que ejercía una inexorable y tiránica vigilancia sobre sus hijas solteras. Prisioneras privadas de todo albedrío, jamás hablé con ellas; pero las veía pasar como sombras, siempre silenciosas y siempre de negro vestidas. Ahora bien--prosigue--: había en el confín del patio un pozo medianero, sin agua, y a él descendía para espiar a esa familia extraña cuyas actitudes enigmáticas me intrigaban. Y pude observarla. Era un infierno mudo y frío en ese sol africano, sepultura de gente viva bajo la férula inflexible de cancerbero oscuro. Y así nació--termina diciendo-- La casa de Bernarda Alba, en que las secuestradas son andaluzas, pero que, como tú dices, tienen quizá un colorido de tierras ocre más de acuerdo con las mujeres de Castilla.

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<sup>4</sup>Carlos Morla Lynch, En España con Federico García Lorca (Madrid: Aguilar, 1958), pp. 488-489. All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

(There is, not far from Granada, a little village in which my parents owned a small property: Valderrubio. In a neighboring house adjacent to ours lived "doña Bernarda", a very old widow who exercised an inexorable and tyrannical vigilance over her single daughters. Prisoners deprived of all free will, I never spoke with them; but I saw them pass like shadows, always silent and always dressed in black. Now then, he proceeds, there was in the middle of the patio a well without water, and I climbed down into it in order to spy on that strange family whose puzzling activities intrigued me. And I was able to observe it. It was a silent and cold hell in that African sun, a sepulchre of living people under the inflexible rule of a dark, severe, and incorruptible guard. And thus was born--he ends saying--La casa de Bernarda Alba, in which the isolated ones are Andalusians, but that, as you say, they have perhaps a coloration of ochre lands more in agreement with the women of Castille.)

Claude Couffon, whose source was Lorca's cousin María, adds that the character of Pepe el Romano was drawn directly from Pepe de la Romilla, the real-life lover of one of the unfortunate daughters.<sup>5</sup>

## II. BRIEF SYNOPSIS

Lorca's drama opens in the midst of the funeral observance for Bernarda Alba's second husband. As soon as the mourners leave the house, Bernarda announces to her five daughters<sup>6</sup> that the traditional mourning period of

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<sup>5</sup>Lima, op. cit., p. 265, citing Claude Couffon, "Como murió García Lorca," Nuevo Democracia, Vol. XXXIII, No. 3 (July, 1953), pp. 64-81.

<sup>6</sup>The five daughters are Angustias, thirty-nine years old; Magdalena, thirty; Amelia, twenty-seven; Martirio, twenty-four; and Adela, twenty.

eight years will be strictly enforced by her. The house is to be sealed off and the daughters sealed in just as it was done in her father's time. Angustias, the eldest daughter by Bernarda's first husband, receives the bulk of the estate, so only she has a sufficient dowry to marry a man of her class. Ironically, she is the least marriageable daughter from the practical standpoint of age and physical condition. The situation becomes even more ludicrous with the revelation that her prospective bridegroom is Pepe el Romano, a handsome young man only twenty-five years old. The sisters resign themselves to lives without men with the exception of the youngest, Adela. She openly declares she will not be closed up in a prison and watch her youth fade away. The acquiescence of the other daughters to their mother's tyrannical orders masks their inner despair and frustration. The act ends with the appearance of María Josefa, Bernarda's eighty-year-old mother, who has momentarily escaped her imprisonment and begs Bernarda to let her go to the seashore so she can marry a handsome young man and be happy.

The pace quickens in the second act with the disclosure that Pepe is playing a double game of courtship, visiting Angustias and someone else, too. Midway through the act Angustias bursts in to ask who has taken her picture of Pepe. Bernarda orders Poncia, her main servant, to search

the girls' rooms to find it. She returns with the picture, having found it between the sheets of Martirio's bed. Martirio convinces her mother, but not her sisters or Poncia, that it was just a joke. Soon afterward a heated conversation between Martirio and Adela reveals Adela as the object of Pepe's early morning visits and Martirio's bitter jealousy and hatred of her sister because of him. Martirio's futile passion for Pepe has warped her mind so intensely she threatens to tear Adela from Pepe's arms or kill her if necessary to stop her.

During Act III Adela sneaks out to meet Pepe in the barn but not undetected; Martirio follows her, but the appearance of María Josefa interrupts her pursuit. The old lady carries a lamb lovingly in her arms, crooning a lullaby to it as if it were her baby. Martirio locks her grandmother in her room and resumes her search for Adela. She calls her sister softly at first, then loudly. Adela reappears, her hair disheveled. Another tense, passionate conversation takes place between the two sisters in which Adela discloses Pepe's love for her and her love for him and the lengths to which she is willing to go to have to have him--she will debase herself and incur the denunciation of the village by becoming his mistress after he marries Angustias. Martirio blurts out that she loves him, too, and Adela will not have him as long as there is a drop of

blood in her body. When Pepe whistles, Adela runs to the door. Martirio blocks her exit, yelling for her mother to come. Bernarda enters to be met by Martirio, who points out Adela's disgrace, indicating the straw in her petticoats as proof. Adela steps in front of her mother, informs her that her imprisonment has just ended, breaks her mother's cane in two, and announces that the only one she will take orders from is Pepe. Bernarda calls for her gun; she rushes out, accompanied by Martirio. A shot rings out. When the two women return, they intimate that Pepe is dead. Adela runs from the room before she can hear Martirio explain to Poncia that actually Pepe has escaped on his horse. A moment later a dull thud emanating from Adela's room draws the women there. Bernarda demands Adela open the door. When she fails to do so, Poncia pushes the door open to find Adela's body hanging. Bernarda takes charge immediately, declaring her daughter has died a virgin, orders silence and another period of mourning.

### III. THEME

Lorca in this last tragedy continues to explore the problem created by the conflict between individual passion and social custom. The adherence to a strict code of honor represses man's natural instincts, negates his life force, denies his essential humanity, and deters his fulfillment

as a human being. This artificial restraint imposed on man by social custom oppresses him and perverts his basic drives. By so doing, it also throws the wheel of destiny out of gear. Instead of being a benign force by which man achieves happiness and good fortune, it becomes rather a dark force bringing to man pain and despair, tragedy and death. With the passage of time this dislocation leads to frustration and hopelessness which, in turn, gives rise to extreme emotional stress, characterized by hatred and passion; the only logical conclusion to such a negative course is death.

The peculiarly Spanish concept of honor has provided the catalyst for drama since the Golden Age of Lope de Vega and Calderón. In this earlier drama honor possessed a two-fold meaning; it concerned both public reputation and the sense of personal integrity and moral worth.<sup>7</sup> Since that time, however, the concept of honor has lost much of its lustre and chivalric content. It has become compressed and twisted into merely an obsessive concern with the preservation of one's public reputation, in other words, with "lo que dirán," what people will say. Brennan remarks that honor depends less upon a man's own actions than upon

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<sup>7</sup>R. D. F. Pring-Mill, in the Introduction to Five Plays by Lope de Vega, trans. Jill Booty (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961), p. viii.

the public report of them.<sup>8</sup> Warren Carrier, in an article in Drama Survey discussing La casa de Bernarda Alba, is even more explicit when he states, "The appearance of honor is even more important than honor itself. . . ."<sup>9</sup>

Specifically, in La casa de Bernarda Alba, the theme emerges as an indictment of this code of honor and its application by Bernarda. Bernarda's obsessive, single-minded desire to preserve her family's honor at all costs transforms her into a cruel, unfeeling, domineering tyrant over all those under her control, including her daughters, her servants, and her aged mother. The force of tradition or custom forms an integral part of Bernarda's code; it underlies the criteria by which she judges what must be done. The eight years of mourning she imposes on her daughters serves a dual purpose; it satisfies Spanish tradition and family integrity as she explains to her daughters:

En ocho años que dure el luto no ha de entrar en esta casa el viento de la calle. Hacemos cuenta que hemos tapiado con ladrillos puertas y ventanas.<sup>10</sup> Así pasó en casa de mi padre y en casa de mi abuelo.

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<sup>8</sup>Gerald Brenan, The Literature of the Spanish People (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1961), p. 280.

<sup>9</sup>Warren Carrier, "Poetry in the Drama of Lorca," Drama Survey, Vol. I-II (Winter, 1963), 303.

<sup>10</sup>Federico García Lorca, Bodas de sangre, La casa de Bernarda Alba (New York: Las Americas Publishing Co., 1964), p. 123. All quotations cited from La casa de Bernarda Alba will be from this text.

(In the eight years that the mourning lasts, the air from the street is not going to enter this house. We will act as if we have sealed up the doors and windows with bricks. That was the way it was done in my father's house and in my grandfather's house.)

Bernarda's imposition of the period of mourning provides the repressive measure that sets in motion the tragic forces of destiny. It not only affects the daughters as a group but also fatefully pits the daughters against each other. Adela, the youngest, is the only one who openly expresses rebellion against her mother's decree:

No me acostumbraré. Yo no puedo estar encerrada. No quiero que se me pongan las carnes como a vosotros; no quiero perder mi blancura en estas habitaciones; mañana me pondré mi vestido verde y me echaré a pasear por la calle. ¡Yo quiero salir! (p. 138)

(I will not become accustomed to it. I cannot be locked up. I do not want my skin to look like yours; I do not want to lose my skin's whiteness in these rooms; tomorrow I will put on my green dress and go out walking in the street. I want to leave!)

Amelia answers her, "Lo que sea de una será de todas" (p. 139).

(What is to be for one will be for all.)

Martirio and Adela present the strongest conflict among the daughters. Martirio's hopeless passion for Pepe el Romano crystallizes into a venomous hatred for Adela who has succeeded in obtaining his love. Martirio tells Adela their blood is no longer the same and that she sees Adela not as a sister but just as another woman (p. 199).

Traditionally, too, the woman is bound more closely by the code of honor than the man. Lima cites this reason

for the prominence of female characters in Lorca's drama:

Lorca sees woman as the more tragic figure because of her role as bearer of children, prisoner of tradition, and servant of man. As he views her, Lorca observes the great sorrows which Fate has bestowed upon her existence. Man, however, appears as a passionate creature whose selfishness oppresses woman. He is free to act beyond the rules, ironically, the same precepts which strictly govern her life.<sup>11</sup>

Lima's evaluation of Lorca's intent is borne out by the subtitle he affixes to the play, "Drama de mujeres en los pueblos de España," (Drama of the Women in the Villages of Spain), suggesting that the play is not just about one particular family but actually symbolizes the fate of women in the villages of Spain.

Further complicating the situation for the daughters and additional proof of Bernarda's inflexibility pertains to the necessity of providing dowries for marriageable daughters. Only Angustias, the eldest, has a sufficient dowry to marry according to Bernarda's standards. Thus, the period of mourning compounded by lack of dowry not only breeds frustration but hopelessness as well. Bernarda's arbitrary imposition of her iron will in steadfastly refusing to allow her daughters to marry beneath them, another aspect of honor, closes the door on any prospects they might have had for marriage to anyone.

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<sup>11</sup>Lima, op. cit., p. 295.

Martirio had had a chance for marriage to a man of lower class, but Bernarda secretly interfered. The deterioration of Martirio's character and her deep feeling of worthlessness dates from her mistaken belief that she had been spurned by him.

Poncia, with the clear perception and native intuition universally given to servants in drama, appeals to Bernarda's humanity and common sense, for she alone sees the violence just below the surface in the household. Bernarda, of course, rejects her warnings as nonsense. Bernarda's obstinance again is a matter of preservation of honor--she cannot admit to a servant that there is anything amiss in her household. Her continual denials blind even herself to the events happening under her own roof. Poncia warns Bernarda about tampering with fate by altering the course of human emotions:

Pero les cuesta mucho trabajo desviarse de la verdadera inclinación. A mí me parece mal que Pepe esté con Angustias, y a las gentes, y hasta al aire. / Quién sabe si saldrán con la suya! (p. 172)

(But it is hard work to turn them from their destined course. It seems wrong to me and to the people and even to the air that Pepe is with Angustias. Who knows if they will get what they want!)

#### IV. SETTING

La casa de Bernarda Alba contains three acts with no subordinate scenes. The general setting, as the title implies, remains the same, the house of Bernarda Alba, the controlling

symbol of the play. Each act provides a different perspective, but all take place within the thick white walls of the house which effectively cut off the inhabitants from the outside world in a combination prison-nunnery atmosphere.

In Act I (p. 111), the furnishings of the glaring white room do nothing to relieve the starkness of the setting, but rather enhance it. The rough texture of the jute curtains decorated with ruffles and tassels in the arched doorways and the wicker chair add to the impression of austerity, barrenness, and harshness. The coarse curtain material and lack of embroidery, lace, or other decoration removes any indication of softness, domesticity, or warmth. Even the ruffles and tassels seem more utilitarian than decorative.

Fanciful pictures of landscapes featuring nymphs and legendary kings adorn the walls. These rather whimsical pictures seem strangely incompatible with the severity of the rest of the setting. However, a closer examination of them as symbols reveals how appropriate they are for Bernarda's house. The word "nymph" comes from the Greek word meaning bride or doll.<sup>12</sup> In Greek and Roman mythology, nymphs were any group of minor nature goddesses represented

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<sup>12</sup>J. E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1952), p. 227.

as beautiful maidens living in rivers, mountains, or trees.<sup>13</sup> Most often they are associated with water--running water, fountains, springs, torrents, and waterfalls. Their association with water makes them an ambivalent symbol as they may equally preside over birth and fertility or over dissolution and death.<sup>14</sup> Jung relates the concept of the nymph to the notions of temptation, multiplicity, and dissolution.<sup>15</sup>

Aside from the symbolism connected with the nymphs, the derivation of the word and its dictionary meaning demonstrate Lorca's irony in using them as part of the setting. None of Bernarda's daughters is destined to be a bride, and, with the exception of Adela, they are far from being beautiful. The water symbol, too, suggests running water rather than the contained water of wells. However, the dual significance of water does correspond to Lorca's own personal symbolism--running water as a symbol of life, fertility, and male sexuality, and contained or

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<sup>13</sup>Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, College Edition (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1960), p. 1010.

<sup>14</sup>Cirlot, loc. cit., citing Mircea Eliade, Tratado de historia de las religiones (Madrid: 1954).

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., citing C. G. Jung, Psychology and Alchemy (Collected Works, 12) (London: 1953).

still water as a symbol for sterility, repression, and death. The Jungian idea of the nymph foreshadows Adela's actions in the play--the tempting of Pepe, her multiplicity in attempting to take him away from Angustias, and the dissolution of her moral character and eventual death as a result. Adela, it may be noted, of all the sisters most nearly fits the description of a nymph.

The pictures of the kings of legends and romances convey the tenets of the chivalric tradition as interpreted in literature and art, of which the code of honor was a basic principle. Their inclusion in the setting reveals a portion of Lorca's purpose, to show that Bernarda's strict adherence to such a code, based as it is on a fictionalized, antiquated version, lacks validity and proves both unworkable and unrealistic when applied to the particular problems presented in the drama.

What is missing from the walls is almost as interesting as what is there; no cross, religious icon, or picture appears, usually standard items of decoration in a typical Spanish household. Bernarda's ritualistic observance of all the obligations connected with tradition and honor is her religion. She goes through with the necessary funeral rites for her dead husband only to satisfy the requirements of her public reputation rather than because of any deep

abiding religious faith. Bernarda's world symbolized by her homecenters on the harsh realities of life in the present and a strong regard for the past with no thought given to spiritual matters, "la vida más allá," (life after death), ordinarily an extremely important consideration for the average Spaniard.

The time of the drama, summer, employs a popular dramatic technique of using seasons to mirror the emotions of the characters. The hot African sun beating down on the landscape reflects the smoldering passions that erupt in the play.

A heavy brooding silence hangs ominously over an empty stage, accentuating the brilliance of the glaring white walls and the bare appearance of the room, creating a sense of foreboding and doom. Into this stifling atmosphere comes the sound of death; the church bells ring an end to the funeral service for Bernarda's husband as the play begins.

Act II set in an inner white room of Bernarda's house opens with Bernarda's daughters except for Adela seated on low chairs sewing; Magdalena embroiders. Doors on the left lead to the bedrooms (p. 143). The pleasant domestic scene belies its hidden corruption. The normally creative occupation of sewing has been perverted by Bernarda

who ordered the girls to pass the time of the mourning period by preparing their hope chest linens, yet the events of Act I indicate conclusively that only Angustias has any hope of marriage. The low chairs suggest the daughters' subservient position to their mother as if they were handmaidens to a queen. Even though Bernarda does not appear on stage in the opening scene, her presence, nevertheless, is felt in the obsequious condition in which the girls are shown.

The setting for Act III moves to the interior patio. The four walls are suffused with the soft blue radiance of night. The patio also possesses little decoration. Lights from the house seep under the doors providing soft illumination. Center stage contains a table around which are seated Bernarda and her daughters eating. Poncia serves them. Light for the table comes from a shaded oil lamp. Prudencia, a friend of Bernarda, sits apart. As the curtain rises, the heavy silence is broken only by the noise of plates and silverware (p. 178).

The setting for the last act like the first is rich in symbolism. The walls which have so far dominated the stage, though softened by the evening light, seem even more imposing because all four are now visible, thereby completing the picture of the house as a prison.

There has been another transition regarding the walls through Lorca's use of two Spanish words for wall; in Act I they are "muros gruesos," heavy thick walls, such as those used for outside supporting walls of a house or for surrounding a house or a city, whereas in the last act they become "paredes," lighter, thinner, interior walls ordinarily used for room dividers. Four key conclusions emerge from the distinction between the two words: (1) the heavy outer walls visible in Act I effectively separate the outside world or the village from the inside world or Bernarda's house; (2) while the outer walls are like those of an impregnable fortress, the interior walls are more fragile, capable of being torn down; (3) although the outer walls may successfully shield the occupants from prying neighbors, the inner walls are incapable of providing privacy for anyone; (4) finally, there is movement from a room constructed partially of an outer wall to the patio, constructed entirely of inner walls, or, in other words, movement toward the center.

The location of the scene in the interior patio, the center of the Spanish home, adds to the sense of entrapment. On a deeper level movement toward the center suggests movement to the depths of the unconscious, to the deepest recesses of the minds of the characters. It also implies arrival at the crux or the heart of the problem.

Steady progression occurs in the time element also. Although not expressly stated in the setting for Acts I and II, the first act takes place during the morning, the second around noon, and, finally, Act III at night. The time of day is specifically mentioned midway in Act I when Magdalena tells Angustias it is twelve o'clock (p. 134), and midway in Act II when Poncia mentions it is three o'clock when the girls watch the reapers returning from the fields (p. 157).

The lighting offers a number of important insights into the unfolding of the dramatic action. The indirect light from the house interior, the shaded lamp on the table, and the muted bluish tone of the walls combine to show the weakness of the light and the strength of darkness. Night's dominance of the scene reveals that the forces of darkness have gained control over the lives of the women living in the house, cloaking the stage in a cloud of impending doom. The sense of foreboding deepens with the realization that the darkness also symbolizes Bernarda's blindness in refusing to acknowledge the conflict between her daughters.

The stage directions for all three acts provide for the subtle reduction in light intensity through the word "white"; in Act I the room is "blanquísima" (very white), in Act II it is "blanca" (white), and in Act III the walls are "blancas ligeramente azuladas" (lightly bluish white).

Later in the third act the state is enveloped in complete darkness. J. Rubía Barcía in an article in Revista Hispánica Moderna states, "De la claridad máxima en el primer acto, se pasa en transición gradual a la máxima oscuridad, en el acto último."<sup>16</sup> (From maximum clarity in the first act one passes in gradual transition to maximum darkness in the last act.)

The delicate shift in lighting demonstrates the systematic breakdown in communication among the principal characters. In Act I they speak freely with one another, openly giving vent to their feelings. The servants berate Bernarda for her inhuman treatment of them. They join Bernarda in scornfully commenting on the mourners. Bernarda explains to her daughters precisely how they will observe the mourning period for their father. The girls frankly express their sense of frustration at the thought of being imprisoned for eight years. In Act II the conversations become more veiled. The girls talk among themselves but not to their mother. Poncia attempts to converse with Bernarda about what is happening among her daughters and with Adela about her shameful conduct with Pepe but is repulsed by both of them. In Act III communication has deteriorated to the point that no one is speaking to anyone

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<sup>16</sup>J. Rubía Barcía, "El realismo 'mágico' de 'La casa de Bernarda Alba,'" Revista Hispánica Moderna, XXXI, Nos. 1-4 (January-October, 1965), 397.

at dinner until Prudencia, an outsider, breaks the silence and begins a conversation with Bernarda; the girls remain silent. Later in the act Martirio confronts Adela about Adela's clandestine affair with Pepe. The violent debate accomplishes nothing; Martirio cannot dissuade Adela from continuing to see Pepe, and Adela cannot convince Martirio to leave her alone.

The soft blue radiance of the white walls coupled with the presence of Prudencia, who has retreated from her earthly problems by seeking refuge in the church, projects a spiritual aura over the stage, indicating the entry of a divine force into Bernarda's house, one that previously has been successfully shut out by her. The reintroduction of the spiritual and the church recalls the opening scene where the funeral rites for Bernarda's husband are being concluded off stage; now death has crossed the threshold and penetrated the very center of the house itself, showing that both the setting and the action that is to take place in Act III has come full circle in the drama.

The central image of the meal, a commonplace domestic scene, recalling the cleaning scene in Act I and the sewing scene in Act II, conceals the undercurrent of tension among the family members, but the immense silence around the dinner table betrays it.

Bernarda's friend, Prudencia, sits apart from the family group around the table, indicating she neither participates in the meal nor comes under Bernarda's realm of influence. Bernarda's refusal or inability to provide nourishment for other than family members supplies yet another link to the first act in which the servants eat greedily in Bernarda's absence and condemn her for not giving them enough food and Bernarda's failure to offer food to the mourners when they come to the house. Bernarda does offer Prudencia some honey and cheese later, but Prudencia, upset by the sound of the stallion drumming against the wall with its hoofs, declines, saying she has lost her appetite (p. 180), illustrating once again the negative aura that permeates Bernarda, her house, and all she possesses. Food is a symbol of nourishment--physical, spiritual, and psychological. Bernarda is incapable of providing any type of nourishment to anyone, including herself.

The great silence only interrupted by the sounds of plates and silverware joins the heavy silence and the empty stage in Act I, enhancing even more the domed atmosphere of Bernarda's house and the sense of foreboding felt by anyone viewing the setting for the last act.

A close analysis of the setting in La casa de Bernarda Alba reveals that the house itself is the controlling symbol of the play and that it along with its owner merge into one

overpowering symbol of repression and tyranny, barrenness and sterility, doom and death.

## V. IMAGERY

The tautness of Lorca's style, the economy of his language, and his use of prose with minor exceptions have contributed to a more realistic drama than either of his first two tragedies--Bodas de sangre or Yerma. A close friend of Lorca's, Adolfo Salazar, reports that a private reading of the play, Lorca exclaimed with enthusiasm after he finished reading each scene, "¡Ni una gota de poesía! ¡Realidad! ¡Realismo!"<sup>17</sup> (Not a drop of poetry! Reality! Realism!) Although Lorca felt he had succeeded in eliminating poetry from his drama, La casa de Bernarda Alba offers some of the most poetic prose written for the stage. Lorca's prose abounds in the kind of imagery usually found only in poetry, and as in poetry it exerts a profound influence on the development of the play--its theme, setting, characterization, and action. The controlling symbol of the house which, in reality, is a projection of Bernarda herself, appears as a backdrop for some of the image clusters, such as the first one to be discussed--the color symbolism of white in all its varied forms.

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<sup>17</sup>Barcía, Ibid., p. 335, citing Adolfo Salazar, "Un drama inédito de Federico García Lorca," Carteles, (April 10, 1938).

White. Following the house and the character of Bernarda in importance as major symbols and closely linked to both is the large and complex white image cluster. The title, La casa de Bernarda Alba (The House of Bernarda Alba), and Bernarda's name, which is a part of the title, demonstrate their association with one another. Bernarda's last name, Alba, is derived from the Latin word albus meaning white.<sup>18</sup> In Spanish "alba" signifies the early light of dawn before the sun rises or the white robes worn by priests at mass.<sup>19</sup> Both of these definitions can be applied to Bernarda. Early dawn light is cold, lacking warmth because the sun has not yet risen; Bernarda is cold and unmoved by the problems of others. The white priests' robes recall that Bernarda's strict enforcement of her personal code of honor is her substitute for religion; she, therefore, symbolically dons the priest's robe and becomes a priestess to her own religion of negation.

Indirectly white relates to the sheets the daughters are making in the sewing scene in Act II, and, as such, acts as an ironic comment on the fate of Bernarda's daughters. Angustias' bridal sheets and those being made for the other

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<sup>18</sup> Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>19</sup> Mariano Velásquez de la Cadena, Edward Gray, and Juan L. Iribas, New Revised Velasquez Spanish and English Dictionary (New York: Follett Publishing Company, 1960), p. 41.

daughters are destined never to be used. Rather than suggesting sexual fulfillment, they become just another symbol for sexual frustration and sterility. When Martirio takes Pepe's picture, she hides it between the sheets of her bed. Placing a copy of him there is as close as she will ever come to sharing a bed with Pepe or any man. Even the stallion which is the major symbol with Pepe of male sexuality looks white to Adela and like a ghost to Amelia when they see it in the blackness of the night (p. 187). The great stallion also has been desexed but only temporarily, for it will be placed with the mares the following morning. Adela's eerie vision of the stallion infers that she, too, will fail in her attempt to obtain the love of Pepe.

María Josefa, Bernarda's mother, has white hair. In Act III when she interrupts Martirio's pursuit of Adela, she carries a white lamb in her arms. She tells Martirio:

Como tengo el pelo blanco crees que no puedo tener crías, y sí, crías y crías y crías. Este niño tendrá el pelo blanco y tendrá otro niño y éste otro, y todos con el pelo de nieve, seremos como las olas, una y otra y otra. Luego nos sentaremos todos y todos tendremos el cabello blanco y seremos espuma (pp. 196-197).

(Because I have white hair you believe that I cannot have babies, but I can, babies and babies and babies. This baby will have white hair and the other baby will have white hair and this one also, and all with snow white hair. We will be like the waves, one and another and another. Then we will all sit down, and we will all have white hair and we will be seafoam.)

She seeks rejuvenation from the barrenness of old age by a return to the sea, the source of life and fertility. Her reference to seafoam recalls the birth of Venus, the goddess of love, who was born of seafoam. This submerged mythical allusion links the sea to sexuality and shows that María Josefa yearns for sexual fulfillment while being doomed to the solitary existence of an old woman. In this, she resembles Bernarda's daughters.

It is one of the bitterest ironies of the play that the only one who forcefully attempts to escape Bernarda's prison is her eighty-year-old mother. In her madness she comprehends more than the girls do about their situation. Even at her age she does not wish to spend the rest of her days imprisoned in Bernarda's house of mourning.

Words in Spanish that are etymologically <sup>described by relation</sup> joined by sharing the same root word or possess several related definitions or form an alliance by their English translations juxtapose several minor image clusters with that of white. These include cleanliness, heat (fire), and cosmic imagery. Each one will be discussed separately with their correlation to one another specified.

<sup>in limpieza, age</sup> Cleanliness. <sup>blancura</sup> Whiteness and cleanliness merge through <sup>combining with image</sup> the universally accepted belief that they are synonymous. Morris Freedman refers to Bernarda's desire for cleanliness:

Bernarda Alba is sadistically compulsive about order, pathological about cleanliness. As in Yerma, in which two old maids spend all their time keeping their house spotless, so the barrenness, immaculateness of Bernarda Alba's establishment are related to sterility; her house is not merely a denial of passion but a denigration of it.<sup>20</sup>

In Act I the servants laboriously clean the house in preparation for the arrival of the mourners for the wake. They discuss Bernarda's preoccupation with cleanliness, using words, such as cleanest (aseada), clean (limpia), polished (barnizado), scour (fregar), soap (jabón), wash (lavar), and whitewash (blanquear). The word "blanquear" (whitewash) ties the cleaning <sup>motivo</sup> motif to the large white image cluster. The following dialogue between the servant and Poncia typifies their conversation and points out the symbolic importance of the cleaning motif:

La Poncia. Limpia bien todo. Si Bernarda no ve relucientes las cosas me arrancará los pocos pelos que me quedan.

Criada. Sangre en las manos tengo de fregarlo todo.

La Poncia. Ella, la más aseada; ella, la más decente; ella, la más alta. ¡Buen descanso ganó su pobre marido! (p. 113).

(La Poncia. Clean everything well. If Bernarda does not see everything shining, she will pull out the little hair I have left.

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<sup>20</sup> Morris Freeman, "The Morality of Passion: Lorca's Three Tragedies," in The Moral Impulse, Modern Drama from Ibsen to Present (London: Feffer & Simms, Inc., 1967), p.94.

Servant. I have blood on my hands from scouring everything.

La Poncia. She, the cleanest; she, the most decent; she, the highest. Her poor husband earned a good rest!)

A spotless house symbolizes an unblemished reputation, the ultimate goal of all Bernarda's vigilance. Poncia's remarks also disclose the unquestionable link between Bernarda and her house. As long as her house shines, so does her name. Ironically, in La Poncia's remarks the house's sterility is also recognizable.

Bernarda's diligence or, rather, the servants' Herculean efforts on her behalf, has fallen short of her goal. Poncia notices that the glassware has spots on it to which the servant replies that she could not get them off with soap or flannel cloths (p. 115). Spots on the glassware indicate Bernarda's prescription for respectability is flawed. Her fanatic adherence to an outmoded code sets her in conflict with everyone around her, her family and villagers alike. Instead of commanding their respect, she is gossiped about, attacked for her caustic remarks, and hated for her superciliousness. Bernarda's error is not so much the code she has made her own, but her narrow interpretation of it. She has only taken that portion which suits her purpose; she wants the end product of the code, honor and respect, but fails to contribute those

personal attributes that the code requires. The chivalric code of honor expects from its proponents generosity of spirit, just consideration of those in its power, faithfulness, virtue, bravery, honor, courtesy, and mutual respect. Bernarda does not adhere to the code herself, so can not expect to reap its benefits.

Heat (fire). Lorca employs the heat-fire imagery to mirror conflict, sexual passion, and fertility, following a long-accepted technique in literature to use nature to reflect the emotional state of the characters. Included in this cluster are hot (caliente), heat (calor), warmth (calentura), fire (fuego), burned (quemado, encendido), burning (ardiendo), fingers of fire (dedos de lumbre), and hell (infierno).

Early in Act II Amelia asks Poncia to open the patio door for a little fresh air. This turns the conversation to a discussion of the weather, revealing that the stifling heat of the previous night had kept nearly everyone awake, causing them to be aware of Pepe's departure from the window of Angustias; they, however, disagree as to the hour he left (p. 145). Inability to sleep, spying on Pepe's courtship of Angustias, and questioning the actual departure time of Pepe give evidence of the hidden conflict and the building tension among the women.

A short time later the reapers pass the house, returning to the fields to work. Poncia describes them as burned trees (*árboles quemados*), referring to their sun-blackened complexions. The oppressive heat (*calor*) does not affect them; they reap through flames (*llamaradas*) (pp. 158-159). After the reapers have gone, Martirio complains that the heat makes her feel ill (p. 160). The reapers who symbolize earthiness, uninhibited sexuality, and virility, work out in the hot sun in the fertile fields of grain with no ill effects, but Martirio, deformed and sickly, who is prevented from satisfying her natural instincts by her mother's code of honor, becomes ill from the heat, even though or because she is indoors and protected from the full effect of the sun's rays.

Act II ends dramatically with Bernarda crying out for revenge on a young woman who has borne a child out of wedlock and killed it. Before killing her, Bernarda shrieks, "*¡Carbón ardiendo en el sitio de su pecado!*" (Hot coals in the place of her sin!) (p. 178). This is the old code of eye for eye, tooth for tooth. Her hot sexuality must be purged with heat. Thus it is a perversion of the begetting of life.

The heat image symbolizes sexuality and fertility at the beginning of Act III when the stallion kicks against the wall. Bernarda whispers to her friend, Prudencia,

"Debe tener calor." (He must be too hot.) (p. 180).

Cosmic. The word sun (sol) unites the heat-fire cluster with that of cosmic imagery. The main purpose of this image cluster is to inject the element of fate into the action, for it foreshadows the tragic destiny of all the characters but especially Adela, who contemplates the night sky and wonders about the significance of the stars and the lightning. The cosmic imagery includes sun (sol), star (estrella), cloud (nube and nublo), thunderbolt or flash of lightning (rayo), lightning flashes (luce un relámpago), sky (cielo), and moon (luna).

The foreshadowing begins in Act II during the conversation about the sleepless night when Magdalena informs the others there was a black storm cloud and some drops of rain fell (p. 145). The storm clouds gathering over the house depict the repressed passions, the jealousy and bitter rivalry between the sisters, the hatred and suspicion that eats away at the spirit of the imprisoned women.

The foreboding becomes more ominous in Act III when Adela declares, "Tiene el cielo unas estrellas como punos." (The sky has stars like fists.) (p. 187). Adela's vision of the sky and the stars denotes nature as hostile and retaliatory. Martirio's reply prophesies Adela's tragic

fate, "Ésta se puso a mirarlas de modo que se iba a tronchar el cuello." (This one stared at them until she almost broke her neck.) (p. 187).

Adela questions her mother about the meaning of an old saying people repeat when they see a star fall or a lightning flash, but Bernarda has forgotten (p. 188). Both the falling star and lightning imply nature out of joint. Stars long associated with the foretelling of human destiny through their appearance as falling stars indicate a fall in fortune. Falling stars are dying stars that burn up as they plummet to earth. The lightning flash, too, conveys a sense of impending doom, though for an opposite reason. It implies a raw, unbridled dynamic force, an unleashed, terrifying, uncontrollable power that carries death and destruction in its wake. Though the images are divergent in that the stars represent dying energy and the lightning an excessive amount of energy, both portray destruction and death. Since only Adela expresses an interest in the sky, this cosmic imagery concerns her alone and foretells her tragic fate. She is the only daughter who dares to disobey her mother and acts to free herself from Bernarda's prison but falls short of her goal. She burns herself out and only in death does she finally find release from her torment.

Hiding-blindness. The hiding-blindness imagery conveys in figurative language Bernarda's manipulation of her code of honor, coinciding with the ideas expressed by Brennan and Carrier that the appearance of honor becomes more important than honor itself.<sup>21</sup> Bernarda's single-minded concern for preserving her reputation moves her to unscrupulous, despotic, and arbitrary actions to maintain it, including locking up her aged mad mother and her daughters, denying reality, blinding herself to the signs of conflict among her daughters, and refusing the counsel of Poncia because she must keep up the facade even in her own household.

In the cluster of images are closed or locked up (cerrado), stop up or wall up (tapiado), cover up (tapar, se tapan, tapara, tapo), has not seen (no ha visto), hidden (escondido), blind (ciego), hide (ocultar), hiding place (escondrijo), darkness (oscuridad), in darkness (por lo oscuro), blindfold (venda).

Bernarda's callous treatment of her old mother is a result of her attempt to hide the fact she has a madwoman in the house. She keeps her locked in her room. While the mourners are in the house, the servant has to cover María Josefa's mouth with an empty sack to keep her from crying

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<sup>21</sup>nn. 8 and 9.

out and exposing her presence (p. 124). Bernarda instructs the servant to take her mother out to the patio for some fresh air but cautions her not to let María Josefa go near the well, not because she is afraid her mother will fall in but because the neighbors can see her there (p. 125).

During the wake one of the girls remarks she has seen Pepe el Romano among the men. Angustias affirms she has seen him, too. Bernarda immediately retorts it was not Pepe but Darajalí, the widower. She and Angustias have seen Pepe's mother, not him (p. 119). Bernarda disclaims the truth, so that no one will know of her secret negotiations to arrange a marriage between Angustias and Pepe. She fools no one but herself, however, and all she really accomplishes is to make herself the target for biting, vindictive comments by the women. Ironically, her plans for Angustias are common gossip in the village whereas not even her daughters knew about it until they overheard the women discussing the matter at the funeral.

Martirio's explanation that her hiding of Pepe's picture was a joke is accepted by Bernarda because she does not wish to acknowledge the discord it exhibits. Poncia tries to make Bernarda see the gravity of the picture episode in the following dialogue:

Yo solo te digo: abre los ojos y verás. . . Siempre has sido lista. Has visto lo malo de las gentes a cien leguas; muchas veces creí que adivinabas los pensamientos.

Pero los hijos son los hijos. Ahora estás ciega. . .  
 Bueno, a Martirio. . . (Con curiosidad.) ¿ Por qué  
 habrá escondido el retrato? (p. 169).

(I only tell you: open your eyes and you will see. . .  
 You have always been smart. You have seen the evil in  
 people one hundred leagues away; many times I believed  
 that you read thoughts. But your children are your  
 children. Now you are blind. . . Good, to Martirio. . .  
 (With curiosity.) Why would she have hidden the  
 picture?)

The servant and Poncia decide they are powerless to  
 make Bernarda see what is happening among her daughters  
 because she is too proud to acknowledge it. The servant  
 comments, "Es tan orgullosa que ella misma se pone una  
 venda en los ojos." (She is so proud that she herself puts  
 a blindfold over her eyes.) (p. 192).

Bernarda's heartlessness continues to the end when  
 she coldly admonishes the daughters and the servants not to  
 say anything about Adela's death, for it would mean her  
 ruin (p. 204).

Time. The frequent references to time and the  
 passage of time, first introduced in the setting, demon-  
 strates its considerable influence on the entire drama--theme,  
 setting, characters, and action. Time weighs heavily on the  
 hearts and minds of the girls who face eight years of  
 imprisonment, the thought of which breeds frustration,  
 dissension, and hatred. The continual mention of time  
 also reflects Bernarda's regard for the past; most of the

references apply to something that has already taken place. The time of day becomes a topic of conversation when the girls attempt to pinpoint the actual time Pepe leaves Angustias' window; this discussion reveals that Pepe is tarrying at a second window until much later, disclosing he is playing a double game of courtship and that one sister is not conducting herself honorably.

A few representative examples of the time imagery include two hours (dos horas), one day (un día), last night (anoche), clock (reloj), a long time ago (hace tiempo), the first time (la primera vez), almost day (casi de día), at times (a veces), at dawn (al amanecer), time (tiempo), and year (año).

Time is mentioned by Poncia in the first line she speaks in Act I when she sarcastically remarks that already more than two hours of mumbo-jumbo have taken place at the funeral (p. 111). Magdalena recalls their childhood was a happy time and that a wedding lasted ten days and no one gossiped (p. 133). The bleakness of their future causes her to reminisce about a time in the past when they knew happier days.

The problem of Pepe's time of departure originates during the sewing scene early in Act II. Amelia thinks he left at 1:30 because she heard him cough and heard his mare's hoofbeats. Poncia disagrees, saying she heard him

go at 4:00. Amelia then reverses herself and concurs with Poncia (pp. 145-146). Time seems to suggest the inevitability of a tragedy of nubile women who are made to live without love in a timeless household.

Water. One of the most important of all ancient archetypal symbols is that of water, a dual symbol which can be either good or evil or even both. Erich Neumann in his book, The Great Mother, makes the distinction between contained water and flowing water, a distinction also made by Lorca. Neumann states:

Since water is undifferentiated and elementary and is often uroboric, containing male elements side by side with the maternal, flowing and moving waters, such as streams, are bisexual and male and are worshiped as fructifiers and movers. . . . While in the well the elementary character of the Feminine is still evident--it is no accident that in fairy tales a well is often the gate to the underworld and specifically to the domain of the earth mother--in the spring the rising, erupting motif of "being born" and of creative movement is more strongly accented than that of being contained.<sup>22</sup>

Water, like time, is a major symbol in Lorca's theatre pictorially introduced by the nymphs in Act I.<sup>23</sup> In La casa de Bernarda Alba, Lorca distinguishes between the contained water of Bernarda's well, symbolizing the

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<sup>22</sup> Erich Neumann, The Great Mother, An Analysis of the Archetype, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1955), p. 48.

<sup>23</sup> Supra, pp. 12-13, n. 13.

sterility of her world, repression, and death, and the moving water of María Josefa's fantasy, the seafoam and waves, symbolizing fertility, male sexuality, and the life force.

Water imagery includes water (agua), river (río), well (pozo), sea (mar), drops (gotas), rains (lluvias), waves (olas), and spume or seafoam (espuma).

The village's only source of water comes from wells. Arturo Barea writes, "The village itself lies in a hot plain. It is far from the river, its inhabitants drink their water from wells and live a life as stagnant as that water."<sup>24</sup> Bernarda herself describes it, ". . . en este *agua* maldito pueblo sin río, pueblo de pozos, donde siempre se bebe el agua con el miedo de que esté envenenada." (. . . in this cursed village without a river, village of wells, where always one drinks water with the fear that it is poisoned.) (p. 122). The identification of the water with poison affirms Lorca's symbolism. A second linking of the two images occurs when Poncia characterizes Martirio as a well of poison (p. 193).

Another meaningful use of water occurs in the last act when Martirio and Adela by turns drink water (pp. 181-194). Alberich discusses the sexual overtones of this act

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<sup>24</sup> Arturo Barea, Lorca: The Poet and His People (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1949), p. 52.

in a psychological study of Lorca's plays entitled, "El erotismo femenino en el teatro de García Lorca," (Feminine Eroticism in the Theatre of García Lorca):

En Yerma y La casa de B. A. volvemos a encontrar numerosas imágenes acuáticas. A veces, éstas toman la forma obvia y tradicional de la sed como símil del deseo genésico (ya sea en su fin inmediato de copulación o en su objetivo ulterior de procreación), pero tratadas de manera impresionante por su insistencia obsesiva. Las hijas de Bernarda Alba, atormentadas por el calor estival (y por su hambre de varón), están siempre sedientas, con las fauces secas, se levantan continuamente a beber agua por la noche.<sup>25</sup>

(In Yerma and The House of B. A. we encounter again numerous aquatic images. At times, these take the obvious and traditional form of thirst as a simile for the desire for generation (now it may be in its immediate aim of copulation or in its ulterior objective of procreation), but dealt with in an impressive manner by their obsessive persistence. The daughters of Bernarda Alba, tormented by the summer heat (and their hunger for a man), are always thirsty; with dry throats, they continually get up to drink water in the night.)

The well, poisoned by Bernarda's stagnant determination that her daughters marry men of their class, even though there is no money for suitable dowries and no such men available, dooms them never to quench their thirst.

María Josefa through that gift of instinctive perception bestowed on the mad realizes that no chance for marital happiness exists for anyone in Bernarda's house or in the village. She escapes from her room and pleads

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<sup>25</sup> J. Alberich, "El erotismo femenino en el teatro de García Lorca," Papeles de Son Armadans (Mallorca), Vol. XXXIX, 24.

with Bernarda:

Me escapé porque me quiero casar, porque quiero casarme con un varón hermoso de la orilla del mar, ya que aquí los hombres huyen de las mujeres (p. 142).

(I escaped because I want to get married, because I want to marry a handsome man from the seashore, now that here men flee from the women.)

In the last act, carrying a white lamb symbolizing her baby, María Josefa appears suddenly before Martirio and tells her that she and her child will be like waves, one and another and another (pp. 196-197).<sup>26</sup> The sterility of Bernarda's nunnery and the static atmosphere of the village require their leaving and going far away to the seashore. Union with the sea will transform their white hair of old age and sterility to sea foam, a force of creative energy and fertility, and they will multiply.

Through the water imagery Lorca subtly has increased the vision of sterility and death to include the entire village, not just Bernarda's house. agua

Horse. Jung connects the horse on account of his fleetness of foot with the wind, sea foam, fire, and light.<sup>27</sup> Coincidentally, Lorca's symbols for male sexuality, passion, vital energy, and fertility in this play are the stallion, semenal

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<sup>26</sup> Supra, p. 24, for complete quotation of this passage.

<sup>27</sup> Cirlot, op. cit., p. 145, citing C. G. Jung, Symbols of Transformation (Collected Works, 5) (London: 1956).

sea foam (as part of the sea), and the sunlight from the hot African sun blazing down on the fields of ripe wheat; the primary one is the stallion (el caballo garañón). The other two words in this image pattern are horse (caballo) and mare (jaca).

Like Pepe the stallion is never seen on stage, only heard. The ominous silence of the dinner scene of Act III is broken abruptly by the brute force of the stallion <sup>semenal</sup> pounding on the walls with its hoofs. <sup>actual</sup> Bernarda has it <sup>enseñado</sup> penned up, drawing an obvious parallel to what she is doing to her daughters with one notable exception--the stallion will be placed with the mares at dawn while the <sup>awareness</sup> daughters have no hope of release for their sexual fulfillment (p. 180).

Later that night Adela, Amelia, and Martirio go to the doorway for a breath of air. Adela and Amelia describe the stallion:

Adela. El caballo garañón estaba en el centro del corral / blanco! Doble de grande, llenando todo lo oscuro.

Amelia. Es verdad. Daba miedo. Parecía una aparición.

(Adela. The stallion was in the middle of the corral. White! Double in size, filling up the darkness.

Amelia. It is true. It frightened me. It seemed like a ghost (p. 187).

The unnatural appearance of the stallion, looming like a monstrous apparition, embodies Adela's hopeless passion for Pepe; its gigantic size illustrates the magnitude of her desire and her frailty in the face of a superior force. Later in the scene, María Josefa tells Martirio, "Pepe el Romano es un gigante. Todas lo queréis. Pero él os va a devorar porque vosotras sois granos de trigo. No granos de trigo. /Ranas sin lengua! (Pepe el Romano is a giant. You all love him. But he is going to devour you because you are grains of wheat. Not grains of wheat. Frogs without tongues!) (p. 197). The whiteness of the stallion, the symbolic color of sterility and death in the play, foretells Adela's failure to obtain Pepe and her subsequent death. Significant, too, is Amelia's reaction; the stallion's ghostly appearance frightens her, portraying in concrete terms the fear she expresses of men and the meek acquiescence to her mother's domination.

Fusion of the horse image and Pepe occurs in similar fashion as Leonardo and his horse in Bodas de sangre; Pepe travels on horseback. On the fateful last night of the play, Pepe flees on his mare after Bernarda fires a shot in his direction (p. 204).

One notable addition, little she-mule (mulilla), should be made to the horse image pattern for two important reasons: its connotation and its context. A mule, being a

hybrid, is sterile. In Act II Martirio attempts to draw Amelia into her plot to discredit Adela. In their conversation Martirio tells Amelia she thinks she heard people in the corral very late the previous night and other nights, too. Amelia asks if it could be the shepherds, but Martirio replies they arrive at six. Then Amelia suggests perhaps it was an unbroken little she-mule. Martirio agrees that that is what it was, meaning, of course, Adela, but Martirio's sly allusion falls on deaf ears, for Amelia does not comprehend her veiled reference to their sister (p. 161).

The linking of the image of the little mule to Adela conveys an analagous meaning to that of Adela's vision of the stallion in the corral. Martirio's reference to Adela as a little mule desexes her and renders her sterile just as Adela's vision of the stallion desexes it; both images denote sterility, a means whereby the dramatist forewarns of the failure of the love of Adela and Pepe. Through these striking images of the stallion and Adela as a little mule, Lorca shows that given the conditions that exist in the play, even normally fertile and productive animals and people are rendered impotent. This illustrates graphically one of Lorca's major criticisms of Spanish society, especially in the small villages, that their way of life founded on an outmoded code distorts man's basically productive nature and makes him sterile.

Other Animals. Through the use of the other animal imagery, Lorca forcibly depicts the deep-rooted hatred and profound contempt that exists between most of the women in the play, including the villagers, certainly not the mutual respect so important to Bernarda's sacred code of honor, rather the exact opposite. The manner in which this imagery is used to vilify the person with whom it is connected leaves no doubt as to the real emotional climate of the drama.

The major animal metaphors are the dog (perro) and bitch (perra); others are lizard (lagarto), goats (cabras), sow (marrana), and frogs (ranas).

The disparagement of the characters begins immediately during the housecleaning scene in Act I when Poncia vehemently declares that Bernarda treats her like a dog (bitch), "Pero yo soy buena perra; ladro cuando me lo dicen y muerdo los talones de los que piden limosna cuando ella me azuza; . . ." (But I am a good dog (bitch); I bark when they tell me to do it, and I bite the heels of those who beg when she sics me on them.) (p. 114).

Regardless of how loudly they denounce Bernarda's airs and treatment of them, ironically, they do not hesitate to adopt her superior attitude when dealing with those they consider beneath them. When the beggarwoman appears

asking for the table scraps, pleading that she and her daughter are all alone, the servant peremptorily retorts that dogs are also alone and they manage to live (p. 116).

Martirio bitterly explains to Amelia that men deem women no better than dogs; all that is important to them is land and oxen (p. 132).

Bernarda's sense of superiority and insensitivity to the feelings of others is mirrored in her coldly ordering the servant to be quiet and stop crying, telling her she should have had everything cleaner for the wake. She continues her tirade, "Vete. No es este tu lugar. (La Criada se va llorando.) Los pobres son como los animales; parece como si estuvieran hechos de otras sustancias." (Get out. This is not your place. (The servant goes out crying.) The poor are like animals; they seem as if they were made of other substances.) (p. 117).

Following the departure of the mourners, Bernarda and Poncia complain that they have dirtied the floor; Bernarda remarks that the place looks as if a herd of goats had passed through it (p. 123).

The mourners do not think any better of Bernarda either. One woman calls her a dried-up old lizard (p. 119). Poncia, giving vent to her pent-up hatred of Bernarda after working for her for thirty years, fervently wishes she could be closed up in a room with her and spit on her for an entire

year then leave her as children do a crushed lizard (p. 114).

When Poncia startles Adela by announcing she knows that Adela has been seeing Pepe, Adela calls her an old sow (p. 153).

This animal imagery demonstrates how Lorca uses figurative language to indicate the undercurrent of bitterness, long-festered hatreds, and contempt that run rampant among the characters in La casa de Bernarda Alba. It should be noted, too, how the use of this animal imagery contrasts with the code of honor.

Body. One of the largest image patterns in the play is that of body imagery--fingers (dedos), hands (manos), head (cabeza), hair (pelo), breast (pecho), mouth (boca), legs (piernas), heart (corazón), face (cara), and feet (pies). However, only the three major images will be discussed: tongue (lengua), body (cuerpo), and eyes (ojos).

The constant repetition of body images draws attention to the physical level, the basic problems of the daughters' health, deformities, and hunger for men. The tongue image conveys Bernarda's fanatical concern for "lo que dirán" (what people will say); the body metaphor crystallizes the girls' desire for love and their hidden passions; the eyes image serves a three-fold purpose--as a mirror of the mind,

as an organ of sight, and as an indicator of the emotions, especially love. This imagery also embodies the watchful atmosphere that envelops the house--almost everyone seems to be watching everyone else, even though, paradoxically, they watch but do not see whether by design as in the case of Bernarda or not. The inability to see acts as a parallel to the motif of hiding and blindness, showing that although there is little or no privacy in the house, only a few of the occupants see clearly what is happening within its walls.

In Act I Poncia and Bernarda recount Bernarda's problem of having marriageable daughters with no suitable men available. Poncia tells Bernarda she should have moved to another village, but if she had, the daughters would be the poor ones. Bernarda angrily retorts, "Calla esa lengua atormentadora!" (Hold your tormenting tongue!) (p. 129).

Later in the act Martirio and Amelia deliberate on whether they are not better off without boyfriends. Amelia recalls that Enrique Humanas had been interested in Martirio. Martirio reveals she waited all night for him to come to her window, but he never did. Bitterly, she states, "Fue todo cosa de lenguas." (It was all gossip.) (p. 132). He really was not interested in her at all; it was just village gossip.

In Act II when Adela casts doubt on Martirio's explanation for taking Pepe's picture, Martirio tells her to be quiet, or she will tell such things that the walls will

close together with shame. Adela answers, "¡La mala lengua no tiene fin para inventar!" (An evil tongue never stops inventing lies!) (p. 166). Tongue seems a very appropriate image for a way of life that stresses reputation-report (honor) so much.

Poncia uses body imagery when she tells the girls about the first time her husband approached her window, saying, "Me corría el sudor por todo el cuerpo." (Sweat ran down my body.) (p. 148). The excitement of having a man visit caused her to break out in perspiration.

During the early part of Act II through dialogue, exposition of the action that has taken place reveals that Adela has not been sleeping well and that Martirio has been following her everywhere. Martirio continually attempts to make Adela admit she has been seeing Pepe surreptitiously by insinuating she has, but Adela will not do so. Adela tells Martirio to leave her alone. She will do with her body what she wants (p. 151). After Martirio leaves, Poncia chides Adela for her outburst against her sister. Adela replies:

Me sigue a todos lados. A veces se asoma a mi cuarto para ver si duermo. No me deja respirar. Y siempre: "¡Qué lástima de cara!", "¡Qué lástima de cuerpo que no vaya a ser para nadie!" ¡Y eso no! Mi cuerpo será de quien yo quiera.

(She follows me everywhere. Sometimes she looks in my room to see if I am sleeping. She does not let me breathe. And always: "What a pity about that body

that is never going to be for anyone!" And that is not so! My body will be for whomever I want it to be for.) (p. 151).

Adela's last remark hints that perhaps there is some substance to Martirio's suspicions and that Adela has not resigned herself to following her mother's orders in regard to the mourning period, that she will not be sealed inside a nunnery.

In the waning moments of the drama, Adela, her petticoat covered with straw, faces her mother and sisters. Angustias grabs her, declaring, "De aquí no sales tú con tu cuerpo en triunfo. ¡Ladrona! ¡Deshonra de nuestra casa!" (You don't leave here with your body in triumph. Robber! Disgrace of our house!) (p. 202). The latter citation provides a fitting climax to this particular image pattern, for it bares the fact that Adela indeed has been seeing Pepe, doing with her body what she wants, and rebelling against her mother's authority.

Angustias applies the eyes imagery as a mirror of the mind when she refers to Adela's eyes to demonstrate the alteration in appearance and behavior, suggesting she is taking on the appearance of a madwoman (p. 151).

Poncia, one of the few who does see clearly, warns Adela that her head and hands are full of eyes whatever Adela tries to do (p. 152). She is going to keep a close watch over Adela to see that Adela does not bring shame upon the house. Later in the conversation Adela expresses

how much she loves Pepe. When she looks into his eyes, it is like drinking his blood slowly (p. 154).

The body image cluster puts into concrete terms some of the basic thematic concerns of the drama. It strengthens by making concrete the honor theme, conveys the extreme importance put on the body because of repression of normal instincts, and shows forth conditions of the soul.

Far-near, inside-outside. The far-near, inside-outside imagery symbolizes the chasm that exists between the nearby village and the distant world, the village outside and Bernarda's house within. Lorca creates these distinctions to depict how wide the rift is between each of them, criticizing the provincial nature of the village as well as the hermetically-sealed house. The inhabitants of the dry, barren village suffer, only to a lesser extent, than do the occupants of Bernarda's white, sterile prison, but all endure the stifling atmosphere of repression, deprivation, and hatred. The inside-outside metaphor on a secondary level detaches the outward demeanor of the characters from their inner selves--their inner torment and despair, spiritual and moral disintegration.

Words in this pattern include near (cerca de), to near (acercar), vicinity (contornos), here (aquí), far (lejos, ajenos), strangers or outsiders (forasteros),

there (allí), to get away or remove at a distance (alejar, retirar), to go away (irse, marcharse), outside (por fuera), there outside (ahí fuera), interior (interior).

Those who enjoy a free and uninhibited sex life, who openly gratify their sexual urges through direct action without fear of recrimination are outsiders or strangers in the village. In the episode of Paca la Roseta, Poncia points out that Paca is not originally from their village, that she is from far away, and the men who take her to the olive grove are sons of outsiders. Men from the village are not capable of doing such a thing (p. 128). The reapers are also from far away, from the mountains, and the prostitute with whom they contract to go to the olive grove had just arrived in the village the night before (p. 157). María Josefa voices a similar thought when she tells Bernarda she wants to marry a virile young man from the seashore (p. 142).

Bernarda carefully separates the men from the women at the wake--the women inside the house and the men outside in the patio (p. 119). No men ever set foot inside the house during the course of the action. A group of men linger outside at the wake conversing when Angustias overhears them recounting the details of the story of Paca la Roseta (p. 126). Pepe el Romano never appears on stage; he comes to the window, walks around the house, or meets

Adela in the barn. The stallion, too, is separated from the house interior by the thick walls.

Bernarda's solution to the problem that Pepe poses for her and her daughters is to advance Angustias' wedding day in order to get him away from the house (p. 168).

Poncia endeavors to get Bernarda to see the mounting conflict that is raging under her roof; she admonishes Bernarda:

No pasa nada por fuera. Eso es verdad. Tus hijas están y viven como metidas en alacenas. Pero ni tú ni nadie puede vigilar por el interior de los pechos.

(Nothing is happening outside. That is true. Your daughters act and live as though stuck in cupboards. But neither you nor no one can keep watch on the inside of their breasts.) (p. 190).

She calls Bernarda's attention to the difference between observation of overt behavior and comprehension of inner thoughts and feelings. Bernarda, however, is not concerned about feelings, only outward appearances. She makes this emphatically clear to Angustias when Angustias betrays her own anxiety because Martirio does not like her:

Cada uno sabe lo que piensa por dentro. Yo no me meto en los corazones, pero quiero buena fachada y armonía familiar. ¿Lo entiendes?

(Each one knows what he thinks inside. I do not put myself in your hearts, but I want a good front and family harmony. Do you understand?) (p. 185).

The real action happens offstage, outside Bernarda's house--the reapers, the stories of Paca and the daughter of

la Librada--all concerned with sexual passion consummated, which implicitly specifies once more that fulfillment of natural desires will be denied to the daughters of Bernarda while under her roof.

Household items - clothing. Through the repetition of the names of household items and clothing, Lorca stresses what Bernarda considers to be most important--material possessions, indicating again her obsession with status and reputation, believing that inanimate objects of value insure her social position. When she tells Prudencia about the furniture she has purchased for Angustias, she especially mentions its cost (p. 183). Her interest in personal property also spotlights her concern for outward appearances while dismissing anything of deeper significance, such as natural instincts, spiritual and moral principles.

Bernarda's iron rule over her household, consulting no one, issuing terse commands, forcefully brings into sharp relief the startling fact that Bernarda looks upon her servants and daughters not as human beings but as chattels, merely additional possessions of hers to do with whatever she arbitrarily decides.

Pounding her cane, symbol of her authority, on the floor, Bernarda advises Angustias and the other girls:

No os hagáis ilusiones de que vais a poder conmigo.  
Hasta que salga de esta casa con los pies adelante

mandaré en lo mío y en lo vuestro!

(Don't have any illusions that you are going to sway me. Until I leave this house feet first I will give the orders for myself and for you!) (p. 142).

Angustias' large inheritance does not give her a voice in the decision-making; Bernarda will take full charge of that herself alone.

Following the episode of Pepe's missing picture, angry recriminations fly from one daughter to another. Bernarda takes control of the situation by loudly ordering silence and proclaiming that she is not old yet and has five chains for each of them and the house built by her father (p. 167).

By means of this detailed discussion of the imagery of La casa de Bernarda Alba, the care with which Lorca chose his words becomes evident; he created an interlocking pattern of symbolic images to transmit his thematic statements.

## VI. CHARACTERS

The major characters in La casa de Bernarda Alba, although individualized by name, follow a long succession of multi-dimensional Lorquian dramatic personnel who through their distinctive qualities and specific actions expand from singular people into national as well as universal types since they remain, above all, Spaniards. Francisco García

Lorca in the Prologue to the authorized translation of his brother's tragedies, referring to all three, states that the major characters are more in the nature of symbols than the individual beings.<sup>28</sup> Lorca himself underscores the symbolic nature of La casa de Bernarda Alba by adding a subtitle, "Drama de mujeres en los pueblos de España" (Drama of Women in the Villages of Spain) (p. 111).

Carrier refers to this quality when he asserts that woman in her Spanish essence is the character.<sup>29</sup> The introduction to an article written by Marta Elena Samatan eloquently explains why the women in Lorca's plays lend themselves so well to tragedy:

Nadie como García Lorca ha hecho sentir más hondamente la sujeción impuesta a la mujer por una serie de prejuicios ancestrales. Nadie, como él, ha mostrado con mas crudeza que la vida de muchas mujeres suele ser una silenciosa tragedia de anhelos sofocados y de esperanzas muertas.<sup>30</sup>

(No one like García Lorca has felt more deeply the control imposed on the woman by a series of ancestral prejudices. No one, like him, has shown with more crudity that the life of many women is apt to be a silent tragedy of suffocated desires and dead hopes.)

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<sup>28</sup> Francisco García Lorca, "Prologue," Three Tragedies of Federico García Lorca, trans. James Graham-Lujan and Richard L. O'Connell (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1955), p. 13.

<sup>29</sup> Carrier, op. cit., 300.

<sup>30</sup> Marta Elena Samatan, "El tema de la mujer en García Lorca," Universidad, LX (Abril-Junio, 1964), 55.

Allan Lewis, too, remarks that the rotting past weighs down on the living, and the women are left alone among the dead, or go mad with frustration, "dried up forever;" out of the tragedy of women is implicit the story of Spain herself.<sup>31</sup>

The observations made by these North American and Latin American scholars in regard to Lorca's intent in molding his characters into symbols will be borne out in the discussion of them that follows.

Bernarda. Lorca selects names for his characters that blend into or enlarge his conception of them as symbols. The name may help explain the character by reflecting her personality traits or add another dimension to the character's importance to the play. The name Bernarda is the feminine equivalent for Bernard, a name of Germanic origin meaning bold as a bear; the last part of the name, "hard," means either bold or hard.<sup>32</sup> Lorca's choice of name for his female protagonist aptly reflects her outstanding character traits--her bold, ruthless defense of her reputation, her hardness and intransigence in the denial of the existence of emotions in others, and her

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<sup>31</sup>Allan Lewis, "The Folklore Theatre--García Lorca," The Contemporary Theatre, The Significant Playwrights of Our Time (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1962), p. 249.

<sup>32</sup>Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, op. cit., p. 140.

animalistic negation of the humanity of those socially inferior to her.

The character of Bernarda as symbol operates on three levels--the most obvious, of course, is that of the surface level as the tyrannical mother and protagonist in the play named after her; the second, as a composite character, representing all women of the villages of Spain; and on the most profound level, as a reflection of Spain herself.

Bernarda's concern with honor is not an isolated instance used by Lorca merely as a catalyst to further the action, but is, in fact, a very basic fact in the life of the ordinary Spanish woman, especially if she lives in rural Spain. The burden of family honor falls most heavily on the woman, for she must strictly abide by the code while the man is not so tightly bound by it.<sup>33</sup>

Carrier sees in Bernarda the image of Spain herself, cloistering herself into sterility and frustration for the sake of practical honor and religious mysticism.<sup>34</sup> Lorca and his intellectual friends at the Institución Libre de Enseñanza in Madrid saw Spain as isolated and outside the mainstream of Twentieth-century life. They believed that

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<sup>33</sup> Supra, p. 9 for complete quotation of this passage.

<sup>34</sup> Carrier, op. cit., 304.

the intellectual and political turmoil of the times required new outlooks, better Europeanization of Spain, and better opportunities for all Spaniards.<sup>35</sup>

Proof that Lorca did have these three levels of symbol in mind when he wrote La casa de Bernarda Alba is provided by the dramatist himself through the subtitle, "Drama de las mujeres en los pueblos de España," (Drama of Women in the Villages of Spain), and an explanatory footnote, "El poeta advierte que estos tres actos tienen la intención de un documental fotográfico." (The poet warns that these three acts are intended as a photographic document.) (p. 110).

As a multi-leveled symbol Bernarda comes to represent all that is evil in the social customs of Spain. Through her, Lorca demonstrates that the Spanish concept of honor by distortion over the centuries has lost its validity. People cannot live productive, worthwhile lives while they are chained to rules that deny life, vitality, and nature. Life which is basically fruitful becomes barren and sterile when it is brought into conflict with the code of honor which society has arbitrarily imposed upon itself. Any code that places public honor above personal integrity or, for that matter, separates them at all, has distorted the fundamental principle of honor, for public honor is only

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<sup>35</sup> Lima, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

meritorious when it is accompanied by personal integrity.<sup>36</sup> Lorca depicts this dichotomy in Bernarda. She desires public honor and respect above all else but fails to achieve it; her tragic flaw is her lack of personal integrity and blindness in not realizing it. Her relationship with her neighbors denies them their right to respect; they, in turn, deny Bernarda hers. The atmosphere, therefore, of the whole village is affected by the hatred and suspicion that exists among everyone; no one escapes unscathed from the poisoned and stifling air.

Virginia Higginbotham, exploring the problem of whether Bernarda is a tragic or a comic character, writes:

Bernarda suffers defeat but never gains a sense of her own error. The result is a distorted figure whose excessive pride and desire for respect are not merely tragic flaws but constitute her entire personality. Her obsession appeals to no higher law outside herself. Incapable of self-realization or enlightenment, she is, therefore, not simply a woman obsessed but, <sup>37</sup>a consistently evil character who does not develop.

Virginia Higginbotham's observations bear a close resemblance to Lorca's intent in depicting Bernarda as a national symbol. He draws the character of Bernarda as an instrument by which he can direct his social criticism at the evils he finds in

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<sup>36</sup>Pring-Mill, op. cit., p. xxi.

<sup>37</sup>Virginia Higginbotham, "Bernarda Alba: A Comic Character?" Drama Survey, Vol. VI, No. 3 (Spring, 1968), 259.

Spanish society; Bernarda, thereby, becomes the symbol for all that is repressive, sterile, and hypocritical and must needs be corrected in that society. Through Bernarda, Lorca strikes at the very heart of Spain--her family structure, centuries-old customs, allegiance to antiquated codes of conduct, and narrowness of intellectual horizons.

Poncia. Poncia, the main servant in Bernarda's house and the same age as her mistress, continues the traditional role of servants in drama, who, being of a lower class, are not bound by the code of conduct which restrains their masters and mistresses. For this reason, they possess an earthiness, a frankness, and an intuitive insight into the problems that confront those around them. Barcia states Poncia is the feminine form of the first name of Pilate and has in common with him the tendency to wash her hands of all important decisions and to be governess or mistress, although in her case, only in domestic matters.<sup>38</sup>

Poncia, relying on her thirty years service with Bernarda, speaks openly to her about the conflict raging among her daughters. Bernarda rebuffs Poncia, refers to her base origins, reminds her of her dependence on Bernarda for a livelihood, effectively breaking off the close com-

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<sup>38</sup> Barcia, op. cit., 388.

panionship they once enjoyed. Intimidated by all this, Poncia ceases her efforts to warn Bernarda about the worsening situation in her household. In other words, like the other Pontius, she washes her hands of the affair which is none of her business, according to Bernarda.

Through Poncia, Lorca has the opportunity also to focus on class structure or the hierarchical social order, a basic precept of the code of honor. Bernarda issues commands to Poncia; Poncia, mistress in charge of house-keeping, passes them on to the servant.

Poncia's tirade on her ill treatment by Bernarda over the years at the same time she is greedily eating food during Bernarda's absence at the funeral reflects the lack of respect on both sides. Bernarda's penuriousness and Poncia's vindictiveness indicate that no real friendship ever really existed between them. It also suggests that basically Poncia is a great deal like the mistress she so despises. She addresses the servant in a commanding tone, she displays no remorse at the death of Bernarda's husband, she angrily condemns the village women for dirtying the floors, and she worries about the reputation of Bernarda's house because it affects her own reputation. She makes an effective foil for Bernarda.

Poncia typifies the old family retainer who spends her entire life in the service of one family. Residing under

the same roof in such close proximity over the span of many years causes her to adopt many of the same opinions and values as her master or mistress. Her reputation and standing in the village, too, depends on that of the family for whom she works. With advancing age, her dependency on the family for a livelihood grows and so does a more rigid acceptance of their way of life.

Criada (servant). The servant is at the bottom of the social ladder in Bernarda's house. Her lack of a proper name in contrast to the other characters calls attention to her lack of identity and relative insignificance in the household. She takes orders from Bernarda and Poncia. Although she joins with Poncia in lashing out at Bernarda's poor treatment of them, it is ironic that she does not hesitate to employ the same commanding tone when she orders the beggarwoman out of the house (p. 116).

It is the servant who breaks the heavy silence with an outburst of emotion which reveals that she, besides Magdalena, is the only one who really mourns the death of Bernarda's husband. She had loved him and her love was reciprocated. Her loud display of sorrow occurs just as the mourners are filing into the house, eliciting from Bernarda her first word in the play, a demand for silence (p. 117). Like Poncia, the servant is not restricted by

the code and may express her feelings openly except, of course, in Bernarda's presence when the code is in full force.

The servant's duties include housecleaning and taking care of María Josefa. The relatively few lines she speaks generally come as interruptions in the dialogue in progress and call attention to something important, such as the arrival of don Arturo, the man who settles the estate of Bernarda's late husband (p. 130). In addition, she provides information and comments on the action.

The servant never converses with Bernarda but merely receives her orders or notifies her when a task has been completed. Most often orders are handed down from Bernarda to Poncia and then from Poncia to the servant.

In contrast to Poncia who is so closely associated with her mistress, the servant represents another kind of life existing under Bernarda's roof that has feelings and problems of her own to solve.

Angustias. Angustias, the eldest daughter and Bernarda's child by her first husband, is thirty-nine years old, dark-complexioned, ugly, sickly, and talks through her nose; balanced against this array of defects, her inheritance from her father and her stepfather makes her the richest and, by Bernarda's standards, the only daughter with sufficient dowry to marry a suitable man. Lorca's irony

here is unmistakable; Bernarda's arbitrary application of the code has distorted life to the point that the least physically able daughter becomes the only marriageable one, completely perverting the primary law of survival in nature that the best physical specimens should propagate the species. Angustias' chances of a fruitful marriage are small as Poncia tells Adela; she will never live through her first childbirth because she is too old and narrow in the waist(p. 153).

The name Angustias means anguish or great mental or physical pain,<sup>39</sup> which refers to her outstanding physical characteristics. Virginia Higginbotham remarks, "Lorca draws attention to the physical repugnance of his characters, suggesting that their frustrations have deformed their bodies as well as their minds."<sup>40</sup>

Lorca injects more irony into the situation by making Angustias ungrateful for her stepfather's munificence. His generosity cannot overcome her bitterness at seeing the years slip by her, bringing her only pain and frustration. When her chance for marriage finally comes, she is not unaware of its incongruity, knowing very well that she has bought herself a husband. The years of frustration and

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<sup>39</sup> Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>40</sup> Higginbotham, op. cit., pp. 259-260.

mental torture transfer to her body, and she becomes diseased and sickly.

Angustias symbolizes the negative results achieved by the code of honor; she is restrained from marriage until she is so old, she no longer can look forward to a productive married life, and it mates her to a young man who does not love her but only wants the money and property she brings as a dowry. She becomes merely a pawn between her mother and Pepe's family. Bernarda's attempt to defy nature in arranging such an unsuitable match goes awry, and Angustias is destined to go on living her remaining years alone with her dowry.

Amelia. The name Amelia, according to Lima, is derived from an Arabic word meaning a district governed by a chieftain.<sup>41</sup> Barcía casts some doubt on this origin,<sup>42</sup> but includes it in a footnote to his article. The definition, if correct, is appropriate, for of the daughters Amelia is the one most dominated by Bernarda, actually to the point of being terrified of her. The two sisters who best adapt themselves to a bleak future without husbands are Amelia and Magdalena. Barea suggests that

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<sup>41</sup>Lima, op. cit., p. 271.

<sup>42</sup>Barcía, op. cit., 388, n. 13.

Amelia is spared suffering by her almost infantile, brainless vacuity.<sup>43</sup> Barea's judgment seems somewhat harsh but true; Amelia does exhibit a childishness and naiveté out of place in a twenty-seven-year-old woman. Her mother's total domination of her may be cited as a contributory cause to her arrested mental development. She assumes a defense against the world similar to that of her mother--she closes her eyes and her mind in hopes that the unpleasantness will go away--but from a very different perspective; Bernarda does it consciously, Amelia, unconsciously, as a child might.

Amelia does not grasp Martirio's intent in slyly insinuating that Adela has been in the corral late at night on several occasions but takes literally her own suggestion that it must have been a young unbroken mule (p. 161). She expresses a juvenile fear of falling stars and lightning flashes and reacts to them as a child would by closing her eyes so that she cannot see them (p. 188).

Amelia rationalizes that since fate has decreed a barren life for her, children must be a nuisance to their parents, and, therefore, her inability to have them is really a blessing in disguise. She vehemently rejects Poncia's suggestion that they will all help Angustias with hers by asserting she is not going to help take care

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<sup>43</sup> Barea, op. cit., p. 54.

of another's children. She continues her negative viewpoint by observing that their neighbors on the alley have to make many sacrifices for four brats (p. 156).

Amelia symbolizes the village woman dominated by some authoritarian figure and horizons limited to the narrow confines of home and church. These have so stunted her emotional and intellectual growth that she retreats from the harsh realities of life by assuming a child's eye view of the world.

Magdalena. Magdalena, thirty years old, face of a hyena, according to María Josefa (p. 195), shares the name and personality of the woman mentioned in the Bible and identified with her weeping and abnegation in love.<sup>44</sup> Magdalena offers a vivid contrast to her sisters because, basically, she is a positive character, not a negative one. She is capable of loving or caring for someone besides herself. She alone truly loved and mourned the death of her father; she faints at the funeral (p. 111), and weeps at the wake until ordered to stop by her mother (p. 122). Magdalena expresses concern for Adela, knowing the mourning period will fall heaviest on her. She worries about Adela's health (p. 149) and voices a desire to see her happy (p. 134).

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<sup>44</sup>Barcía, loc. cit.

Magdalena remembers the happy times they enjoyed as children when life was not so complicated, possessed an elegance and a gaiety that no longer exists. Neighbors did not gossip about each other in contrast to the present in which they rot for what people will say (p. 133).

She is creative and talented in sewing and embroidery; Bernarda assigns her the task of embroidering the hope chest linens for everyone. She also made Adela's beautiful green birthday dress.

Magdalena sees clearly and objectively the ironies inherent in their situation. She criticizes the proposed marriage between Pepe and Angustias on the ground that he is only after her money. If he had come because he admired Angustias as a woman, Magdalena would have been pleased about the match. Realistically she recounts Angustias' defects and makes the statement that Angustias least merits Pepe of them all, and that he should have chosen Amelia or Adela for his fiancée (pp. 135-136). She senses the unfairness of a marriage being decided upon for material gain and the woman becoming merely a pawn in the negotiations. "Malditas sean las mujeres." (Cursed be all women.) (p. 124). Later she mentions that not even their eyes belong to them (p. 158).

Because Magdalena cares deeply, she reacts drastically when she sees everything she values being perverted--the imposition of the public mourning period in place of a real

sense of sorrow over the death of their father, her wasted hours embroidering linens that will never be used, the marriage arranged on the basis of money instead of love or compatibility--she becomes cynical and resigned. Barea suggests that Magdalena saves her sanity by desperate cynicism and a clear-sighted resignation to her fate.<sup>45</sup>

At one point she appears with her shoelaces untied. Amelia tells her she will step on them and fall. Magdalena retorts, "¡Una menos!" (One less!) (p. 133).

Magdalena symbolizes the woman who, accepting her fate quietly but cynically, loses interest in life, stops keeping up appearances, and slowly deteriorates or rots away in her isolation, a mere skeleton of her former self. In Magdalena's case, it is a waste of one of the more admirable characters in the drama.

Martirio. Martirio at twenty-four years of age is the second youngest daughter, whose name pictures what she has become, a martyr, for she is the homeliest and the only deformed offspring of Bernarda.<sup>46</sup> Martirio, like Adela and unlike the others, possesses an ardent body racked by suppressed desire. Only once had a man wanted to court her,

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<sup>45</sup> Barea, loc. cit.

<sup>46</sup> Lima, loc. cit.

but Bernarda drove him off because his father had once been a common laborer. Her passion is kindled by the sight of Pepe el Romano on his daily visits to the windows of her sisters, and the thought of him is driving her crazy. She could stand a conventional marriage between Pepe and Angustias because there would be no love or joy in it, but she could not bear the thought of Adela having what has been denied her.<sup>47</sup>

Since Martirio cannot hope to take Pepe away from Angustias or Adela, she steals Angustias' picture of him and places it between the sheets of her bed, substituting a copy of Pepe for the man himself (p. 165).

Hiding her hatred and longing under a mask of meekness and martyrdom, Martirio sets out to discredit Adela and put an end to her affair with Pepe. She follows Adela everywhere, spying on her night and day and making veiled insinuating remarks about Adela's nocturnal activities that hit the mark with Adela and Poncia but go unnoticed by the others.

Martirio's own thwarted love affair which she blames on her lack of dowry since she does not know her mother interceded has had a profound effect on her. Her hopeless longing for Pepe envenoms her mind against her sisters because they have him. Her distorted mind is symbolically

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<sup>47</sup> Barea, op. cit., pp. 53-54.

represented by her hunchback-deformed body. Poncia recognizes Martirio's true nature; she tells the servant that Martirio is a well of poison (p. 193). Martirio seems to sense her mental affliction and explains to Adela that she no longer has any control over it, "Tengo el corazón lleno de una fuerza tan mala, que sin quererlo yo, a mí misma me ahoga." (My heart is full of a force so evil that without my wanting it, it is drowning me.) (p. 200).

It is Martirio who triggers the succession of events that occur that last fateful night which culminate in Adela's tragic death. Martirio follows Adela, confronts her with the evidence of the straw on her petticoats that proves she has been with Pepe, and calls Bernarda. She accompanies Bernarda, armed with a gun, out of the house to the corral, and then, upon returning, deliberately lies by saying that Bernarda has killed Pepe. Adela, without waiting to hear any more, runs from the room and hangs herself in her bedroom. Following the discovery of Adela's body and Bernarda's dramatic reassertion of her daughter's virginity, Martirio voices the hidden sentiments of all the sisters, "Dichosa ella mil veces que lo pudo tener." (A thousand times fortunate she who had him.) (p. 204).

Martirio, more than the other daughters, stands for the woman in whom frustration and repressed natural desire so twists her mind and poisons her personality that she

develops a hatred for everyone and everything around her.

Adela. Adela, at twenty, is the youngest and best looking daughter of Bernarda; her name of Germanic origin is the diminutive of Adelaide, and signifies being of noble nature.<sup>48</sup> Adela, in contrast to her sisters, does not passively acquiesce to her mother's decree for maintaining the prescribed rituals connected with proper public mourning, nor does she resign herself to a nun's existence of living out her years without a man to love. She first defies her mother by putting on her bright green dress which was to have been her birthday dress and goes outside (p. 134).

When Adela learns her ugly, aged stepsister is betrothed to Pepe, she vows to break out of Bernarda's white-walled prison before she withers away as her sisters have. Adela passionately loves Pepe and knows he has desired her. She is determined to fight for her right to his love. She lures him to her window the second night he comes to see Angustias; after that he pays duty calls on Angustias and then tarries until the early morning hours at another window with Adela, and their encounters are passionate.

Adela's success in obtaining Pepe's love creates anxiety when she witnesses her mother calling for the death

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<sup>48</sup> Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, op. cit., p. 17.

of a young village woman who had borne a child out of wedlock and subsequently killed it. Adela interprets this as being her fate if her mother finds out about her clandestine affair with Pepe. She does not realize that Bernarda subscribes to a double standard--one for the outside world and one for her family. She would never allow any hint of scandal to touch her house. Adela's failure to understand her mother's duality contributes to her tragic death at the end of the drama.<sup>49</sup>

The action focuses on Adela in the last act when, faced with the signs of her dishonor, the straw on her petticoats, she boldly counters by breaking her mother's cane and announcing that from now on only Pepe is her master (p. 201). Bernarda's attempt to eliminate this rival to her authority by shooting him fails, but Bernarda and Martirio cruelly imply that Bernarda was successful and that Pepe is dead. Adela's world crumbles around her; her sense of guilt over her relationship with Pepe combined with desperation at facing the future without him, culminates in the taking of her own life, her final act of rebellion against Bernarda's authority. She achieves her freedom the only way possible, through death.

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<sup>49</sup> Lima, op. cit., pp. 280-281.

Adela demonstrates how an essentially noble nature can be driven to tragedy and death by breaking the code of honor and desiring what that code expressly forbids the woman--sexual fulfillment. She embodies the split between erotic and maternal love since she is willing to lead a life of dishonor as Pepe's mistress in order to obtain his love.

The daughters as a group symbolize the consequences of strict adherence to a code that has lost its basic reason for existence, the desire of society for betterment, being twisted by taboos and pharasaical dominance into an instrument of oppression,<sup>50</sup> which perverts nature and makes it sterile instead of productive, even resulting in death. Bernarda's refusal to allow her daughters to marry beneath them condemns them to a saintly existence that is the opposite of life, and their natural desires come to explosion.<sup>51</sup>

María Josefa. María Josefa, the eighty-year-old mother of Bernarda, who is mad and kept locked in her room, escapes twice--once, to dramatically appear on stage at the end of Act I and once, to interrupt Martirio's search for Adela near the end of Act III. Her madness places her outside the bounds of Bernarda's soulless code but incar-

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 291.

<sup>51</sup> Carrier, op. cit., 303.

cerates her inside a room within the larger prison of Bernarda's house. If one should feel any sympathy for Bernarda and her problems, it must necessarily be removed by her cruel and inhuman treatment of her mother.

María Josefa's role in the drama follows a long Spanish literary tradition as explained by Barcía:

No hay personaje más libre de ataduras mentales y morales que el loco. En las letras españolas, acaso por tradición oriental, los locos son los portavoces por antonomasia de aquellas grandes verdades que la intuición entreve<sup>52</sup> con frecuencia, y la razón normalmente desconoce.

(There is no person freer from mental and moral bonds than the madman. In Spanish literature, perhaps from oriental tradition, madmen are the spokesmen by antonomasia of those great truths intuition glimpses frequently and reason normally disregards.)

In La casa de Bernarda Alba, María Josefa in her incoherent rambling dialogue articulates the secret longings for freedom and marriage felt by the daughters.

At the end of the first act María Josefa appears adorned with flowers in her hair and at her breast. She informs them she is not going to leave any of her belongings to them--her rings or her black moiré dress--because since they never will marry, they will not need them. Then she tells Bernarda she escaped from her room because she wants to marry a handsome virile young man from the seashore since where they live the men run from the women (p. 142). Her

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<sup>52</sup> Barcía, op. cit., pp. 394-395.

most significant dialogue follows Bernarda's ordering her to be quiet:

No quiero ver a estas mujeres solteras rabiando por la boda, haciéndose polvo el corazón, y yo me quiero ir a mi pueblo. Bernarda, yo quiero un varón para casarme y para tener alegría (p. 142).

(I do not want to see these single women desperately longing for marriage, turning their hearts to dust, and I want to go away to my village. Bernarda, I want to marry a virile young man and be happy.)

In her madness, as Barcía suggests, she does see more clearly and intuitively than Bernarda what is eating away at the spirit of the daughters. Bernarda ignores her mother and orders her locked up again.

Lorca's deft manipulation of María Josefa's dialogue makes her serve a three-fold purpose: (1) as spokesman for the hidden souls of the daughters, she voices their desire for marriage and shows that the hopelessness of their situation is killing their spirit and turning their hearts to dust; (2) she suggests they will have to leave the village to find satisfactory husbands, linking the sea with sexuality and the life force for the first time; (3) she forges a solid bond between the images of sterility and the village. The village men are pictured as being cowardly and unmanly, whereas the men from the seashore are described as virile and handsome. Though deranged in mind, María Josefa evokes a vitality and a desire to escape the deathly atmosphere of Bernarda's house absent in all except Adela; her revelation

that she is not a native of their village sets her apart from its sterile image. This fact coincides with Poncia's suggestion to Bernarda that she ought to go to another village to find husbands for her daughters (p. 129). Evidently, Bernarda's mother's or father's family had done so.

María Josefa's longest dialogue occurs in Act III when she sings a lullaby to a little lamb she carries in her arms, pretending it is her child; but she is not so deluded that she does not know the difference; it is merely a substitute (p. 195). In her song she includes three fertility symbols--the sea, the palms, and the coral hut; thus, the lullaby becomes secondarily a hymn to fertility. The door to the little coral hut will open by itself; there will be no locked doors on the hut; it will open to the sea and to the air. After Martirio locks her in again, she repeats the first verse, crying pathetically, knowing she will never escape except in death as Adela does a short while later.

Lima suggests that María Josefa is symbolic of the decay to which the daughters will fall if Bernarda is allowed to continue her oppression. . . . She is an impressive symbol of the future.<sup>53</sup> Barcía disagrees with Lima

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<sup>53</sup> Lima, op. cit., p. 274.

that she is a symbol of the future, seeing her simply as the spokesman for the daughters.<sup>54</sup> Besides her role as a spokesman, María Josefa really seems to symbolize the past when people enjoyed the simple pleasures of life, before their lives had become so distorted by a narrow interpretation of the code of honor. She recalls what life in the village was like for Martirio:

Cuando mi vecina tenía un niño yo le llevaba chocolate y luego ella me lo traía a mí y así siempre, siempre, siempre. . . . Yo quiero campo. Yo quiero casas, pero casas abiertas y las vecinas acostadas en sus camas con sus niños chiquitos y los hombres fuera sentados en sus sillas (p. 197).

(When my neighbor had a baby, I took her chocolate and then she brought it to me and so on always, always, always. . . . I like the fields. I like houses but open houses and the neighbor women in bed with their youngest children and the men outside seated in their chairs.)

What a contrast to the atmosphere of La casa de Bernarda Alba! In María Josefa's time there was love not hate, neighborliness not suspicion, an open not a closed society. Social stratification, the spread of slanderous gossip, the putting on of airs did not take place. María Josefa intuitively emphasizes what is truly important to make life worthwhile--a husband, children, friends, home, fields, and, above all, love, not just between man and woman but among neighbors and among parents and children.

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<sup>54</sup>Barcía, op. cit., 394.

Magdalena connects María Josefa with the past when she mentions she has been to see her grandmother's needle-point pictures which remind her of the happier times they knew as children (p. 133).

María Josefa serves as the focal character of the play. Her madness typifies the unnatural lives the daughters are leading and the unnatural atmosphere of hatred, suspicion, and repression that saturates the world of the play. She is the antithesis of Bernarda, yet she is her mother. She most nearly resembles Adela in her desire for freedom and a full life. Barcía declares that in the third act she becomes an extra dimension of Adela.<sup>55</sup>

In her gentleness and concern for others, her creativity, her fond remembrance of the past, she resembles Magdalena. There can be no doubt that she is the most admirable character in the play; therein lies the irony. It is her madness that draws attention to her and causes one eventually to wonder who is really mad in La casa de Bernarda Alba; the answer seems to be in keeping with the special brand of Lorquian irony; everyone is mad except María Josefa. Lorca is stating that Spain has gone mad with its zealous regard for social status, reputation, and honor; it has superimposed an artificiality on human relationships

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 397.

through application of the code that has strained them to the breaking point, and its repressiveness has destroyed all that used to be natural and good in people and replaced it with all that is unnatural and evil. María Josefa emerges, therefore, as the sanest and most admirable character, and, for these reasons, she must be sealed off from Bernarda's demented unnatural world.

Prudencia. Prudencia, a friend of Bernarda, appears briefly at the beginning of Act III. She stops by for a visit on her way to church. Prudencia's story offers a parallel to Bernarda's up to a point but a contrast in her resolution of problems. She also supplies information that foreshadows the tragic ending. Her name when it is preceded by "la," according to Barcía, often is used by Andalusians to refer to just a village woman. Whether Lorca intended prudence as a virtue or Prudence as a woman is not clear,<sup>56</sup> although he does omit the "la" in front of her name and does include it before that of Poncia. Prudencia evinces caution, discretion, and circumspection to such an extreme that she seems more an embodiment of resignation and wisdom that comes with old age<sup>57</sup> than simply prudence.

As in Bernarda's family, ill feelings have arisen over the division of an inheritance and Prudencia's husband has

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 396.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 389.

quarreled with his brothers over it. He now refuses to use the front door but instead places a ladder against the back wall and climbs over it (p. 179). Bernarda admires his actions, calling him a real man (p. 179).

Prudencia's husband has never forgiven his daughter for what is unclear, but Bernarda's remark about a disobedient daughter becoming an enemy (p. 179) intimates her transgression. Bernarda approves his actions; but Prudencia disconsolately tells Bernarda that she suffers because of it (p. 179), probably meaning she has not seen her daughter since the quarrel.

Brenan remarks that honor was a defensive conception and consisted not in committing but in receiving an injury and inclined to pride and touchiness.<sup>58</sup> Prudencia's husband feels dishonored by his brothers and daughter. His reaction to each insult displays an injured pride that cuts him off from them while his consequent touchiness revealed by his refusal to enter the street cuts him off from the village. Coincidentally, Bernarda has severed herself from her husband's family, her daughters, servants, and the village through a desire to preserve her honor at all costs.

Prudencia does nothing to ease the situation; instead she takes refuge in the church. Barcía comments that Prudencia's solution is not to look for a solution. She has

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<sup>58</sup> Brenan, op. cit., pp. 281, 460.

placed her life and her destiny in the hands of God through faith and from Him she waits direction and guidance.<sup>59</sup>

Prudencia's passivity and reliance on faith furnish a sharp contrast to Bernarda's actions in which she intends to shape her own destiny without seeking assistance from God. Barcía observes, "Ni la religión ni la superstición ejercen influencia alguna sobre el alma ensoberbecida de Bernarda."<sup>60</sup> (Neither religion nor superstition exercises any influence over the arrogant soul of Bernarda.)

Prudencia is losing her eyesight, and she tells Bernarda she will have to stop going to church so the little children will not make fun of her (p. 180). Prudencia's real blindness symbolizes Bernarda's apparent blindness to her daughters' activities and the undercurrent of tension in the household. When Prudencia no longer can attend church, she will lose the crutch she depends on for support and that gives meaning to her life. Equally when Bernarda can no longer use her apparent blindness as a support for her code of honor, she will be left bereft of her defenses against the assaults against it.

Prudencia adds foreshadowing when she observes that in her time the pearls in Angustias' engagement ring signified tears (p. 182). Bernarda dismisses this omen by

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<sup>59</sup> Barcía, loc. cit.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 397.

continuing to insist that things are as one proposes (p. 182), or, in other words, one can control his own destiny, denying that there is any supernatural force which can affect it.

Prudencia's presence, though brief, is significant because she symbolizes an alternative solution to that of Bernarda for coping with the restrictions placed on the women of Spain, stoic resignation to her fate and dependence on faith for consolation and guidance.

## VII. ACTION

The action in La casa de Bernarda Alba like the imagery and the characterization symbolizes portions of Lorca's theme and skillfully bares the ultimate and often tragic consequences of either breaking the code or complying with it. Two separate arenas of action are set up--outside Bernarda's house, by far the more important, and inside it. Outside the action comprises capsule stories about other people in the village that serve as a commentary on the major action of the drama by illustrating various facets of it or by providing viewpoints that either conflict or agree with those of Bernarda. The prime purpose for the outside action is to provide a brilliant contrast to the action inside Bernarda's house. Outside there are the people, the village, the fields, life being lived vividly; inside there is only the frustration of women not allowed

to live by their mother's dogmatic devotion to the preservation of her honor and that of her family and house. Inside the house the action includes pictorial presentation of thematically-oriented events and acts of rebellion by the servants and the daughters against Bernarda's domination.

Paca la Roseta. The story of Paca la Roseta offers an episode diametrically opposed to everything Bernarda and the village represent. Roseta or rosette or rose is associated with Aphrodite and her son Eros in Greek mythology and later with the heart and the mystic center.<sup>61</sup> Some men tie Paca's husband to the manger and take her by horseback to the depths of the olive grove. Her breasts were exposed, and one of the men, Maximiliano, held her as if he were playing a guitar. They did not return until almost daylight. Paca's hair hung loose, and she had a wreath of flowers on her head (pp. 127-128).

Paca symbolizes the earthy, sensual lower-class woman, not chained to the iron-bound code, who openly flaunts the morality of the village and takes delight in sex. As Carrier points out, "A woman of Spain is either a mother or a prostitute; lust and family are at opposite ends of the spectrum, and the one is not allowed without the other."<sup>62</sup> Sex for the middle-class Spanish woman is

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<sup>61</sup>Cirlot, op. cit., p. 263.

<sup>62</sup>Carrier, op. cit., 304.

"obligación," something that must be endured in order to produce children; this concept that erotic love is sinful forms part of the Catholic Christian doctrine in which most Spanish women devoutly believe.

Poncia quickly emphasizes that Paca is not a native of the village, and the men who take her are sons of outsiders, too. Men from the village would not be capable of doing such a thing (p. 128). Through Poncia's dialogue, Lorca separates this unabashed sexual revel from the village as well as Bernarda's house. Natural instincts are followed by Paca and her friends, not repressed as they are in the rest of the village. That they carry her off on horseback provides a typical Lorquian link between the horse and unbridled sexual passion. Their passion symbolically carries them off to the depths of the olive grove.

The story of Paca la Roseta suggests a kind of sexual fantasy for the women without men in Bernarda's house and presents a contrasting picture for them--one woman and many men instead of many women and one man, the five daughters and only one Pepe el Romano. Lorca, adding his usual ironic touch here, shows that Bernarda, who assumes such a pious attitude on morality, and Poncia receive vicarious pleasure from hearing the lascivious details of Paca's sabine-styled abduction.

Adelaida. Adelaida, a young woman in the village and a friend of Bernarda's daughters, did not attend the funeral because her sweetheart will not allow her to set foot outside her door. She used to be happy, but now she does not even wear face powder. She fears Bernarda because Bernarda knows how Adelaida's father obtained his lands. In Cuba, he shot the husband of his first wife, so he could marry her. He left her for another woman who already had a daughter. He had relations with the girl and married her after her mother died insane (p. 131).

Amelia and Martirio, who relates Adelaida's story to Amelia, comment on the details. Adelaida has what the girls want, a sweetheart, but she has made her unhappy. Amelia does not know whether it is better to have a sweetheart or not. Martirio responds that it is all the same. Amelia blames gossip that does not allow them to live and prophesies that Adelaida will have a bad time (p. 131).

After Martirio recounts the sordid details about Adelaida's father, Amelia wonders why he is not in jail; Martirio retorts because men stick together and cover up for each other. Amelia mentions Adelaida is not to blame for the sins of her father. Martirio agrees but that things have a way of repeating themselves, and Adelaida is suffering the same fate as her mother and grandmother (pp. 131-132).

Adelaida's unhappiness stems from her being controlled so closely by her sweetheart she cannot leave the house, a similar situation to the daughters. She reveals her feelings in a loss of interest in her appearance, demonstrated by her no longer wearing face powder. Adelaida's reaction resembles Magdalena who does not tie her shoelaces, both signs of a rotting away of the spirit and the will to live. Martirio's thwarted romance embitters her, so that she cannot bear seeing anyone else happy, a contributory factor to her relentless pursuit of Adela. Angustias has what the others want, Pepe, but it has not brought her happiness; her mother advises her that happiness or unhappiness is all the same (p. 186), echoing Martirio's words about having a sweetheart. Adelaida's father builds his estate over the bodies of one man and three women. Marrying a woman for her dowry alludes to the parallel situation of the twenty-five-year-old Pepe's willingness to marry the thirty-nine-year-old Angustias while he really wants Adela and intimates possible dire consequences for the woman in such a loveless marriage. The father's immunity from prosecution for his crimes demonstrates the disparity between the sexes in Spain. Adelaida's story and the girls' comments on it elicit Lorca's social criticism on the plight of women of Spain who have become the prime victims of the code which dooms them to being prisoners

of tradition and servants of the men. Lorca observes the great sorrows Fate has bestowed on the woman;<sup>63</sup> it is no accident that she emerges as the central character in all three of his great tragedies.

The reapers. The reapers arrive in the village from the mountains to harvest the wheat. Fifteen of them contract to take a prostitute to the olive grove. She had arrived in the village only the night before. A young man, taut as a sheaf of grain and green-eyed, makes the arrangements. The next day, returning to work in the fields, the reapers pass by Bernarda's house singing a song to the accompaniment of carrañacas and timbrels that relates how the reapers go in search of the wheat and carry off the hearts of the girls who look at them. They ask the village girls to open their doors and windows. The reaper asks for roses to adorn his hat (pp. 157-159). The daughters listen longingly to the lusty singing of the men, rushing to the windows to catch a glimpse of them and being cautioned by Poncia not to get too close, or the reapers will push open the windows to see who is watching them (p. 160).

The reapers, the wheat they harvest in the hot afternoon sun, and the song they sing celebrate fertility-- fertility that lies in the bright fields beyond the village.

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<sup>63</sup> Lima, Supra, p. 9 for the complete quotation of this passage.

The young reaper who contracts with the prostitute takes on the aspect of the wheat he harvests; even the green color of his eyes is a symbol of fertility. The mention of the rose as a love token in the song links the story of the reapers with a comparable one, that of Paca la Roseta. Like Paca, the reapers represent the earthy, uninhibited sexuality that obeys its natural urges in an open manner, a striking contrast to the restrained life style of most of the villagers and the frustrated desires of the daughters of Bernarda Alba. The girls envy the reapers their masculinity which allows them the freedom to come and go as they please. The reapers symbolize everything the girls so deeply desire--life, love, and freedom.

The daughter of la Librada. The name Librada signifies freed, delivered, extricated, preserved from ill.<sup>64</sup> The illegitimate daughter of la Librada has an illegitimate child; in order to hide the enormity of her crime, she commits another by killing it. Some dogs find the body, dig it out from under the rocks where she had hidden it, and carry it to her doorstep. An unruly crowd quickly gathers armed with olive limbs and pickaxe handles to kill the girl to avenge her deed. Bernarda and Martirio add their voices to the clamor demanding her death, but Adela

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<sup>64</sup> Velásquez, op. cit., p. 428.

voices the hope the girl can escape the mob (p. 177). Bernarda vindictively calls for the placing of hot coals in the place of her sin.<sup>65</sup> Adela, holding her stomach, cries, "No! No!" (p. 178). The second act ends dramatically with Bernarda screaming to kill the girl (p. 178).

Lorca inserts irony through the name he assigns to the woman and her daughter, for they of all people are imprisoned by their indiscretions; the daughter achieves release only through death, foreshadowing the similar fate of Adela.

The hideous death of the daughter of la Librada supplies a gruesome example of the ignominious code carried to its ultimate conclusion. The girl so fears the consequences of breaking the code she commits a worse crime to cover up her first one.

This episode similar to that of Adelaida brings out with clarity and irony the double standard of morality the code encourages; the man may take his pleasure with any woman, and his conduct considered acceptable, but let the woman's indiscretion become known, and she is ruined. The daughter of la Librada so feared discovery she was driven to commit a far worse crime to protect herself. The same men who carry Paca la Roseta to the olive grove

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<sup>65</sup> Supra, pp. 28-29.

and contract with the prostitute club to death a young girl one of them probably violated. The girl herself being illegitimate recalls Martirio's dialogue referring to Adelaida that life has a way of repeating itself (p. 132). One's destiny is inexorably bound to that of one's parents; the sins of the fathers and mothers are visited upon the children.

Although the other stories make concrete portions of Lorca's theme or contain comparable or contrasting details to the story of Bernarda and her daughters, they remain apart from it and have no direct bearing on the major action. This is not true, however, with the story of la Librada's daughter; it does influence the action in several important ways. First, Bernarda's violent reaction to the girl's sin warns Adela what her fate is likely to be if her own guilt becomes known. Adela's response to the girl's predicament verifies the accusations of Poncia and the insinuations of Martirio that Adela has been meeting Pepe secretly. Holding her stomach discloses how far her affair with Pepe has gone, far enough for her to worry that the same fate may befall her. The events place Martirio solidly on her mother's side and against Adela, a situation which will repeat itself fatefully in the tragic third act. The stoning of the girl provides Bernarda and her daughters with an emotional release for the tensions that have been

rapidly building up among everyone and within each one. In addition, the story of la Librada proves Poncia's earlier declaration that Bernarda can see sin one hundred leagues away, but is blind to what her daughters are doing (p. 169).

The wake. Two hundred village women dressed in black file into Bernarda's house for the wake following the funeral of Bernarda's husband. After the women enter, Bernarda and her daughters appear on stage. She hushes the servant's lamentations, commenting the poor are made of other stuff, thereby setting up the class distinctions. Several women sympathize with the servant; the ensuing dialogue between them shows the women do not agree with Bernarda. Bernarda then silences Magdalena's tears and orders the servants to serve lemonade. Another conversation pits Bernarda against several women as to whether Pepe had been at the funeral. Bernarda's vehement denial of his presence and remark that women should not look at any man in church except the priest brings out how much the women hate Bernarda's superior attitude. The wake concludes with Bernarda repeating the litany for her deceased husband and the women chanting the responses (pp. 117-121).

The opening scene of Poncia surreptitiously eating while berating Bernarda's treatment of her and the servant

assiduously cleaning the house prepares for the entrance of Bernarda herself. The subsequent dialogue between Bernarda and the women at the wake coupled with the opening scene sets the tone of the drama, one of mutual mistrust and hatred, establishes the character of Bernarda, and offers an insight into the relationship between Bernarda, her servants, and the village women.

The women come to Bernarda's house for the wake, and Bernarda admits them because it is traditional, not because of any real sense of loss by any of them. The only ones who show real sorrow, Magdalena and the servant, are silenced by Bernarda. Tradition requires public mourning, not the display of private emotions; personal feelings must be kept bottled up within oneself. The litany symbolizes the kind of mourning they all observe, devoid of emotion, merely recited by rote because custom dictates it should be done. Bernarda, reminiscent of the opening scene between Poncia and the servant, omits one integral part of the funeral observance--food; she does not offer the mourners anything to eat which is customary but only some lemonade for the women and brandy for the men. Bernarda's deliberate omission of the food indicates a lack of respect for the other villagers. The wake has been the first occasion that anyone has entered Bernarda's house since the death of her father (p. 114), demonstrating that Bernarda, who considers

herself the matriarch of the village, has cut herself off from everyone. Even her husband's family does not attend his funeral because they hate Bernarda so much (p. 113). Bernarda's house is her castle and her protection against the outside world; no one enters it without her permission, and following the wake, no one does except Prudencia.

Acts of rebellion. Bernarda's obsession with proper decorum leads her to a despotic and altogether soulless domination of the lives of her daughters, her aged mother, and her servants. She seems not to realize that her conduct so contrary to human nature breeds frustration, despair, and hatred. A natural outgrowth of such action is rebellion. Interspersed throughout La casa de Bernarda Alba are instances in which Bernarda's subjects do indeed revolt, especially against her tyrannical imposition of the eight-year-mourning period which the girls correctly judge to be their death warrant, a living death behind the walls of Bernarda's prison. Adela understands this clearly; late in the play she tells Martirio why she wants to run away with Pepe, "He visto la muerte debajo de estos techos. . ." (I have seen death beneath this roof. . .) (p. 198). Being the youngest, the prospect of eight years of imprisonment in her mother's house seems a lifetime to her. She early reveals her intention of freeing herself from her mother's domination. Contrary to Bernarda's orders

for black mourning clothes, she dons her green birthday dress and goes out for the chickens to see her (p. 134). Childish, perhaps, and a little pathetic that there is no person to admire her but also significant, for the green dress symbolizes life and fertility, the antithesis of black, and indicates Adela plans to fight for her right to live and love.

Immediately following the division of the inheritance in which Angustias receives the lion's share, she appears with a great deal of make-up on her face. Bernarda, already upset by the inequable partitioning of the estate, angrily confronts Angustias, citing her lack of respect for her dead father. Angustias coldly reminds Bernarda that he was not her father. Bernarda retorts that Angustias has him to thank for making her fortune. Angustias replies she will have to see if that be true. Bernarda grabs her forcibly and violently wipes off the power (pp. 139-141).

Angustias' act of rebellion is ironic; if anyone is going to get out, it is she, and if anyone should be grateful, it is she, yet she is not. Her mind is on Pepe and her chance to live, not on the man who made it all possible. She also does not believe her mother's report of her good fortune. The incident illustrates how Bernarda's methods have destroyed the basically decent side of human nature and replaced it with ingratitude and distrust.

Martirio's taking Angustias' picture of Pepe and placing it between the sheets of her bed reflects the frustration all the girls feel for being denied a chance to marry and have homes of their own. Martirio, catching a glimpse of Pepe when he comes to visit Angustias at her window, recalls her own broken dreams when she thought Enrique Humanas was coming to see her. The theft of the picture symbolizes her hidden desire to steal Pepe but, realizing her limitations and small chance for success, contents herself with taking his imitation. Actually the theft of the picture is more a cry for love than an act of rebellion against Bernarda.

The two acts of rebellion of major importance occur at the tragic climax; both involve Adela. When Bernarda and Martirio face Adela with accusations directed toward her petticoats covered with straw, Adela is not intimidated by them but instead takes the offensive by breaking her mother's cane. Adela calls it her mother's rod of domination (p. 201). Bernarda carries her cane with her everywhere and pounds on the floor with it to give emphasis when she is issuing orders, as if it were the sceptre of a king or queen. Adela views the cane as her mother's symbol of authority and domination. Her act of breaking the cane symbolizes her breaking away from her mother's control. She notifies Bernarda that from now

on no one orders her but Pepe (p. 201).

Dishonor must be avenged. Since there is no man in the family to handle an affair of honor, Bernarda takes the gun to shoot Pepe for bringing dishonor on her house. Adela, believing Pepe has been killed, hangs herself, symbolic of her unfulfilled longing<sup>66</sup> to have Pepe, committing her final act of rebellion, which sets her free at last.

Bernarda's immediate response to her daughter's death is to take steps to protect the honor of her house by declaring that Adela has died a virgin; the bells shall ring twice at dawn in her memory. Next, she reiterates her decree for public mourning, silencing the cries of her other daughters. The family will drown itself in a sea of mourning. Her final words, the same as her first, are a call for silence (p. 204). Bernarda's repetition of her first words as her last ones dramatically encloses the action of the play in a framework of repression as absolute as Bernarda's inflexibility. This enclosure of the repeated lines form in dialogue dramatic brackets representing the prison that Bernarda has constructed of her world.

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<sup>66</sup> Cirlot, op. cit., p. 132, citing C. G. Jung, Symbols of Transformation (Collected Works, 5) (London, 1956).

As Martirio observed in the case of Adelaida and the tragic tale of the daughter of la Librada, things have a way of repeating themselves, and in the case of the occupants of the house of Bernarda Alba, the cycle is about to begin over again with the church bells ringing, a funeral, a wake, a mourning period, and a call for silence. Bernarda's sense of obligation to protect her family's honor at all costs reigns supreme above all other considerations, even that of truly expressing grief for a dead daughter. Bernarda's enslavement to the code does not allow her the luxury of tears.

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