REALITY AND POETIC TRADITION IN LORCA'S 'LLANTO POR IGNACIO SANCHEZ MEJIAS'

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the elegy that Federico García Lorca wrote to commemorate the death of his friend Ignacio Sánchez Mejías, fatally gored in mid-August 1934. Because the poem celebrates an historical event attention is first directed to the life of Ignacio and to the details of his fatal injury and its repercussions. Because some of these details have been incorporated into the poem there follows a commentary on the poem which seeks to explain these references, as well as some of the images and metaphors. Some lines lack a convincing explanation but their obscurity does not hinder to any great extent an overall comprehension of the poem. The second part of the study looks at the history of the Spanish Elegy, tracing its formation and development from the eleventh-century 'Planctus' to the form used by Lorca. It is in the final chapter that Lorca's debt to history and tradition is assessed, at the same time pointing out that the poem, although based on an historical event and drawing from a long tradition of the Elegy, is very much an example of the work of a sophisticated and talented twentieth-century poet.
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INTRODUCTION

Before beginning an analysis of the poem it is interesting to consider a declaration made by Lorca himself in his talk, 'Imaginación, Inspiración, Evasión' in 1928. His comments are made all the more pertinent by the fact that an historical event is commemorated by the 'Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías'. On the process of poetic creation Lorca had this to say,

"La imagionación es el primer escalón y la base de toda poesía ... está limitada por la realidad. No se puede imaginar lo que no existe: necesita de objetos, paisajes, números, planetas y se hacen precisas las relaciones entre ellos dentro de la lógica más pura."

If the poet remains true to his creed then one can expect to find a basic reality in his work, adorned by his own imagination. This is certainly true in the case of 'Rudas de Sangre', inspired by a newspaper report, and 'La Casa de Bernarda Alba', based on a real family that lived in a village near to Lorca's native Fuentevaqueros. Because the events at Manzanares have given rise to a work of art this thesis studies Ignacio's life and the circumstances of his death before discussing the lines of the poem. By doing this it may be possible to reach a deeper and more complete understanding of the fusion of a realistic base and Spanish poetic tradition achieved in this poem.

In a most interesting article in the Hispanic Review, Calvin Cannon considers the 'Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías' and its relation to the Elegiac Tradition. This is the first time that such a
study had been made and because of the special approach taken by Cannon his article is discussed in the final chapter which deals with the 'Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías' as an elegy.

Throughout this thesis the text of the poem used is that of the first edition. It was published in Madrid, in May 1934, by Ediciones Arbol, Cruz y Raya. Consisting of twenty-two pages, with pen and ink drawings by José Caballero, it was limited to a printing of two thousand copies. In later editions consulted there are no significant variants from the original text.
The Life and Death of Ignacio Sánchez Mejías

Ignacio Sánchez Mejías was born in Seville on June 6th, 1891, of a distinguished, rich family. His father was a doctor at the "Beneficencia Municipal" and wanted Ignacio to follow him in medicine; his elder brother José had already done so. In fact he never finished his studies for the Bachillerato and, in 1909, he finally gave up the study of medicine. In his early teens, according to Marcelle Auclair, 'he spent some of his time playing with the bulls in the ranches and plains near his home'.

Probably to avoid the anger of his father at giving up his studies Ignacio left Cádiz for New York on the ship Manuel Calvo in 1909. He had neither ticket nor money, only the companionship of Enrique Ortega, the great bullfighter, who, like Ignacio at that time, wanted to become a matador. They were made to work on board ship to pay for their passage and were not allowed to land in New York. However, Ignacio's brother Aurelio helped them to gain entry to Mexico at Veracruz.

In Mexico Ignacio appeared, with little success, as a banderillero and returned to Spain in 1911 as a member of the cuadrilla of Fermín Muñoz (Corchaíto). After returning, in 1913, to Mexico and the U.S.A. for a brief visit, Ignacio appeared in a novillada in Madrid on September 7th. This is the first record of his appearing in a
bullring in a capacity other than that of a peón. From this date onwards Ignacio's fame as a banderillero grew, as he was successively a member of the famous cuadrillas of Juan Belmonte and Rafael, El Gallo. As a novillero Ignacio fought but twice, in 1915. After marrying the younger sister of Los Gallos he rose to be the outstanding peón and banderillero of the time in the cuadrilla of his brother-in-law Joselito. In 1918 he returned to the ring as an espada in the Plaza Monumental of his home town. For the rest of the year he enjoyed great success, taking the alternativa on March 6th 1919 from Joselito with the bull Buñolero. It was an afternoon on which Ignacio exhibited exceptional skill and which resulted in over eighty contracts for the season that followed. Don Ventura in El Anuario of 1919 said of his style,

Este torero ha traído algo nuevo a la fiesta de los toros: la exageracion del peligro: más aun: la creacion del peligro. Una y otra tarde se ha complacido en llevar a los astados a los terrenos mas peligrosos, para exponer más. Cuando no podía haber emoción la ha buscado él; ha procurado que la hubiera, inventando el peligro...²

On April 5th 1920 he confirmed his alternativa in Madrid, Joselito again acting as his padrino. That evening Ignacio said,

...os aseguro que a mí no me dan cuidado alguno los toros... pero en el momento de perfilarme y arrancarme a matar, yo no sé lo que hago...; pierdo la noción de como debo obrar³

He was already revealing the characteristics that were to mark his entire career: on the one hand a total lack of fear, and on the other, a deep preoccupation with his incomplete mastery of the final act.

When Joselito was killed on May 16th 1920 Ignacio, also on the bill,
killed the bull Bailador. He then accompanied the coffin back to Seville and was present for the funeral and burial. Some fourteen years later Ignacio, likewise killed in the ring by a bull, was to make the identical journey to his brother-in-law's tomb.

With increasing success Ignacio continued fighting. He would spend the summer season in Spain and the winter in Mexico. Then, with an unexpected suddenness he announced that his fight in Ávila in October 1922 would be his last. He fought no corridas in 1923 but the following year he was back, as popular as ever and equally successful. Don Ventura in El Anuario commented, "Mejías se ha impuesto por su voluntad férrea y por su valor. Hay que rendirse a la evidencia". The years 1925 and 1926 were his best and he dominated his profession. Then as he struck up friendships with men of letters, in particular with the young poets, his interest in the bulls waned. He had literary aspirations and began to write a novel, about which he spoke to the Ateneo in Valladolid in 1926. It was never published. After only three corridas in 1927 he announced his second retirement on July 3rd at Pontevedra.

His life now became filled by his literary occupations. In December 1927 Jorge Guillén went on a literary excursion to Seville, of which he said later: "la excursión está patrocinada por un mecenas". Ignacio was the patron referred to. Also included in the party were Lorca, Dámaso Alonso, Gerardo Diego, Juan Chabás, José Bergamín, Mauricio Bacarisse and Rafael Alberti. They gave lectures
and recited their poetry before small audiences of the general public in the Ateneo. Lorca was received with great warmth and excitement. He read some of his then unpublished 'romances gitanos' and the public threw him their jackets and handkerchiefs as they would to a triumphant bullfighter.

Only a small fraction of the time was spent in formal lectures, for the group stayed up till dawn each night enjoying each other’s company and, on at least one occasion, going on a boat trip in the middle of the night. Ignacio had booked them into the luxurious Hotel Madrid, but when the official invitation ended the group stayed on, at their own expense in cheaper lodgings. During this time Lorca met Luis Cernuda, who had yet to publish anything, and was introduced to Fernando Villalón, both a poet and bull-breeder, by Ignacio. The expedition ended with a large party at Ignacio’s ranch at Pino Montano. After the drinking, singing and recitation of poems, Dámaso Alonso brought the whole affair to a fittingly climactic end by reciting from memory Góngora’s Soledad Primera. On this note ended the tercentenary celebrations of Góngora.

The testimonies of those who knew Ignacio show that his interest in the Arts was not merely a passing whim or a desire to capture the limelight now that his ring career was over. Marcelle Auclair tells how he committed to memory the romances of Góngora and how he loved to entertain his friends by reciting them. Jorge Guillén recalls his surprise at realizing that this bullfighter also had a very fine mind: "Lo más sorprendente es que Ignacio discurría con
una de las mentes más claras de nuestro tiempo.\textsuperscript{5} even if his favourite argument was that José Ortega y Gasset was a gypsy. Guillén sums up the man succinctly: "...su elogio requería la palabra indispensable: inteligencia."\textsuperscript{7} The word seems all the more applicable when one knows that Ignacio was also a playwright, an impresario and the founder of a company of Spanish dancers headed by his friend Le Argentinita-Encarnación López, to whom the "Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías" is dedicated.

In 1928 his play Sinrazón had its première in Madrid. It was well received with a mixture of surprise and admiration for it had little to do with bullfighting, being an attempt to present the problem of madness and reason. Cossío describes how a bullfighter was grudgingly accepted as a playwright: "...se desenvolvía gallardamente entre sus escollos".\textsuperscript{8} His second play, "Zayas", appeared the same year in Santander. Filled with atmosphere of the bullring and of Andalusia it was both well written and warmly received.

While on a brief visit to New York in 1930 Ignacio again met Lorca, who was, officially, enrolled at Columbia University. The details of Ignacio's life for the next four years are somewhat sketchy. It is known that he helped and enthusiastically encouraged a group of young poets, and was forever in their company. Of this group the poet that Ignacio helped most was probably Fernando Villalón, who, likewise, was both a man of letters and bullfighting. He listened to his confidences and plans and convinced him that he should continue his attempts to become a poet.
After a seven-year retirement and a total immersion in literary pursuits it came as a universal surprise when, in 1934, Ignacio decided to return to the ring as a matador. He had become rather restless and found that life lacked sufficient challenge for him in spite of his publicly-acknowledged success in the world of literature. His decision was not taken lightly: he spent several weeks practising and shed a good deal of excess weight before he pronounced himself fit to return.

Starting off well into the season, his first fight was on July 15th. at Cádiz. Although it was a very windy, and therefore very dangerous afternoon, there was obviously no diminishing in his skill or bravery. After fighting a week later at San Sebastián he fought again at Santander on August 5th. For his efforts he was awarded both ears and the tail. Cossío reported,

\textit{El desprecio del riesgo llegó a extremos mayores a\ñ \'n que en su época de novel, cuando, a fuerza de valor, se abriría paso en todos los carteles para colocarse junto a Joselito y Belmonte.}^9

The following day, the 6th, Ignacio fought at La Coruña in a corrida which held tragic repercussions for the three espadas who fought that afternoon. When Belmonte went in for the estocada he hit bone and the sword flew into the crowd fatally injuring a twenty-year old youth. Immediately after the fight Domingo Ortega heard of the death of his brother and set off from the ring in great haste. His car was in an accident: he was injured and a passenger friend was killed. Ignacio was invited to substitute for the injured Domingo Ortega in Manzanares
on the next day.

With the myths that grow with time it is not easy to ascertain the true reactions of Ignacio to this invitation. For the superstitious Ignacio it was significant that he was forced to stay in room number 13, there being no other hotel room available in the town, and that he departed from his strict rule of seeing the bull for the first time when it enters the ring by attending the drawing of lots for allocating the bulls to the espadas. It may also be true that, initially, he refused the fight because of the immense size of the bulls, only agreeing to appear when it was pointed out to him that a refusal would be a public admission of fear. What is certain is that, on August 11th 1934, he was fatally gored by the first bull, Granadino.

Ignacio, says Cossío, "Fue muy valiente con el capote, e inició la faena de muleta con un pase cambiado por alto con la derecha". He tried to repeat this favourite trick of his while still seated on the estribo but something went wrong and the bull caught him.

The most obvious source of reports about Ignacio's death and the circumstances around it is the newspapers of Madrid of the time. A.B.C. printed a report, under the heading 'Manzanares ll. 7 Tarde', which included a brief account of the event, "sentado en el estribo, es enganchado por la ingle y volteado horriblemente, saliendo suspendido y dando la impresión de una grave cornada." At the end of the report of the afternoon's proceedings the Parte Facultativo spoke of,
"una herida penetrante en la región autero-interna del muslo derecho, de dirección ascendente, y de unos 12 centímetros de profundidad. El pronóstico es grave." 14

For some reason Ignacio received only superficial treatment at the enfermería in Manzanares. He suffered a jolting journey to Madrid, delayed by a breakdown in the ambulance and arrived in the capital at half past one on the Sunday morning. He required blood transfusions and developed a fever. Throughout Sunday he was delirious and the fatal, gaseous gangrene had already set in. He was visited by a whole host of friends and relatives and died at 9:45 a.m. on Monday August 13th 1934 at the Sanatorio Crespo, Calle Goya 22.

But where was Lorca? Morla Lynch 15 suggests but does not state definitely that Lorca was in the north of Spain, directing La Barraca.

This suggestion is supported by Masini in his diary of the towns visited by the theatre group. For August 1934 he lists the following towns:-

Santander
Ampuero
Villarcajo [sic]
Fromista
Valencia
Penafiel [sic]
Sepulveda [sic]
Riaza
Segovia

with the following plays,

Tirso de Molina: El Burlador de Sevilla.
Juan del Encina: Plácida y Victoriano.
Antonio Machado: La Tierra de Alvargonzález. 16
Andre Belamich pinpoints the place and the plays with more detail,

Ce même mois [August], La Barraca s'installe sur une petite place en plein air de Santander. Répertoire varié:

Le Trompeur de Séville, de Tirso de Molina, ...(13 août)
Le lendemain: l'éloge Placida y Victoriano de Juan del Encina.17

On the other hand Marcelle Auclair18 suggests that Lorca had left Santander for Madrid because of the catastrophe at Manzanares. She says that Lorca made many phone calls, the most important being to Jorge Guillén who was in Santander, giving details of Ignacio's death and saying that he was returning: presumably to Santander from Madrid.

It seems that he must have returned immediately because the Aguilar edition of the Obras Completas includes, dated '14 de agosto, 1934', a short explanation by Lorca of the aims of La Barraca, together with a welcome to all students, under the title 'En La Universidad Internacional de Santander'.19

On piecing together this information there emerges the picture of Lorca paying a brief visit to the capital, but, apparently, he never visited Ignacio in the Sanatorio Crespo, "à aucun moment Garcia' Lorca n'a pénétré dans la pièce où Sanchez' Mejías criait sa soif de vie et d'eau".20

That Lorca had always possessed a deep fear of death is a fact that has been mentioned by many of his biographers. Váquez Ocaña21 recalls how Salvador Dalí and his sister Ana María had to hold the poet's hands when they went bathing at Cadaqués because he was afraid of drowning. When Lorca found himself, although in the
company of friends, in a boat on the Guadalquivir in the middle of the night he became extremely frightened. Angel del Río tells how Lorca was frightened in the Catskill Mountains because he was left alone with a taxi-driver whom he could not understand. In each of these three episodes it was a fear of death that caused Lorca to be so strange in his behaviour. This fear of his could quite easily be the simple reason why he did not visit the Calle Goya. His name certainly does not figure in the list of visitors to the clinic, either before or after Ignacio’s death. In fact Lorca’s name is most conspicuous for its absence from the Madrid newspapers for the whole of the period August 9th - 16th 1934.

Lorca was kept busy with La Barraca until the end of August. During September and October he must have worked almost exclusively on the poem for, in the first week of November he had ready his poetic homage to his late friend. The first known reading of the "Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías" took place on November 4th 1934, at the house of Carlos Morla Lynch who recalls the immediate impact of the poem, "se produce el hechizo ....No se puede alcanzar mayor altura ni mayor grandeza".

It was not until March 12th of the following year that the first public reading of the poem took place. Lorca read the "Llanto" in the 'Teatro Español' after the one hundredth performance of Yerma. The first edition of the poem was printed some two months later by Ediciones del Arbol, Cruz y Raya in Madrid.
FOOTNOTES

Chapter I


3. __________. Loc. Cit.


12. The 'estribo' is like a bench that runs around the inside of the wall of the bullring. Its main function is to help a 'torero' leap the wall to escape from the pursuing bull.


Reality in the Poem

The first section of the 'Llanto' claims, in its title 'La Cogida y la Muerte', to be the story of the fatal event. It is that and more, but the narration of the story occupies only a small fraction of the whole poem. Ignacio himself is not mentioned at all in the first section, although it is obvious from the title that it is his death that Lorca is describing. It is the description of a bullfighter, gored fatally in the thigh, including details that could apply to almost any such death. However, the facts in general agree with the facts surrounding Ignacio's death. The three remaining sections of the 'Llanto' are made up of poetry that, progressively, is more concerned with the creation of atmosphere than with the stating of historical facts. There are, in these three sections, several flashes of reality but few which could be claimed to refer directly, and uniquely, to Ignacio.

The opening line of the poem is, because of its constant repetition, obviously a line of supreme importance and therefore its source may well be very close to the events surrounding Ignacio's death. It mentions a point in time, a time apparently of great significance. It was not the time at which Ignacio died; nor is it the time at which he was gored, nor at which the bullfight started, nor at which any significant event, except one, took place. Morla Lynch's explanation is both vague and inaccurate, "cita, puntual e implacable, del 'espada' con la muerte."
In all of the contemporary newspaper reports on Ignacio's death the only mentions of 'a las cinco de la tarde' refer to the time at which the funeral procession left the Sanatorio Crespo in the Calle Goya. A black-bordered announcement of Ignacio's death appeared on the last page of A.B.C., August 14th, 1934. Dominated by the letters R.I.P., its last paragraph read,

Su viuda, hijos, madre, hermanos, hermanos políticos y demás parientes ruegan a sus amigos le encomiendan a Dios y asistan a la conducción del cadáver, tendrá lugar hoy, día 14, a las cinco de la tarde, desde el Sanatorio de los doctores Crespo-González, calle de Goya 22, a la estación del Mediodía.2

The words that are printed in bold type, immediately capturing the eyes of the reader from all else on that page are "A LAS CINCO DE LA TARDE". With the punctuality typical of a Spanish bullfight the procession left on time. The following day's papers contain photographs of the procession with the streets lined several deep on either side. Ignacio's last journey in the capital took him to the overnight train to Seville. There he was buried in the same tomb as Joselito on August 15th, 1934. A.B.C. of that date notes, "A las cinco en punto fue sacado de la capilla ardiente el féretro que contenía los restos de Sánchez Mejía [sic]".3 To find the famous opening line and its variant in newspaper reports that describe specific details of the death and burial of Ignacio seems to be more than a coincidence. A more definite link seems to be established when, one reads lines 33 and 34 of the poem, "Un ataúd con ruedas es la cama / a las cinco de la tarde". Photographs taken at 5 p.m. August 14th. 1934, and printed
in A.B.C. of the following day show that the coffin was laid on some kind of gun carriage and dragged through the streets of Madrid to Atocha Station. In this instance there does appear to be a definite correlation between an historical event and the words of the poem. Marcelle Auclair's evidence about Lorca being in Madrid, but not visiting the clinic, tends to suggest that his communication with events as they progressed was by word of mouth and through the Madrid newspapers. If Lorca was reading the newspapers it is reasonable to assume that it was there that he found the source for the line.

The idea of covering the body with a sheet has a base in the events surrounding Ignacio's death. A Madrid newspaper reported

"Como era especial deseo de Sánchez Mejía [sic] que cuando falleciera no fuera expuesto su cadáver, porque era enemigo de exhibiciones, el cuerpo ha sido cubierto con una sábana." When a bullfighter is killed in the ring there is a tradition that his body should be covered with a shroud but that his face should be left exposed. If this is done it gives his friends and the public a chance to see the features and pay a more personal homage. Lorca demands that this be done with Ignacio too. He believes that he should face death, and is against everything that would tend to diminish the courage and outstanding greatness of his friend,

No quiero que le tapen la cara con pañuelos para que se acostumbre con la muerte que lleva.

Although Lorca did not go near the room in which Ignacio died he does include many references to the hospital and its
accompanying associations. He remains faithful to the actual events, recording that Ignacio died because his thigh wound became infected with gangrene,

un muslo con un asta desolada

..........................

A lo lejos ya viene la gangrena.

It was the setting-in of the gaseous gangrene that heralded Ignacio's death, expressed by Lorca in a line that is at once poetically moving and shockingly realistic,

Trompa de lirio por las verdes ingles.

With the infection came a day of high fever and delirium as Ignacio fought for his life,

Las heridas quemaban como soles.

After having twice retired, Ignacio returned to the ring in a serious attempt to recapture the glory of his youth. Lorca uses a complicated metaphor to express this idea. Taking the evening to be the approach of old age, and night, old age itself, he tells us how Ignacio sought the dawn of his youth,

Buscaba el amanecer
y el amanecer no era.

The use of the simple negative conveys the absolute futility in seeking something that is past. He tried to regain the body of his youth, his previous heights of power, and died in the attempt,

Buscaba su hermoso cuerpo
y encontró su sangre abierta.

For twenty lines Lorca concentrates solely on a panegyric
of the fine qualities of Ignacio as he recalls his friend in life. He begins by bestowing on him the title of Prince of Seville, his birthplace. His tremendous strength was,

como un río de leones.

Ignacio's torso de mármol suggests the static, immobile posture of the bravest and best bullfighters. Strong, handsome and brave, Ignacio was also a man with a quick mind,

... su risa era un nardo
de sal y de inteligencia.

Inteligencia is the very word that Jorge Guillén used to describe the outstanding quality of Ignacio.

In a series of interjections Lorca marvels at the exceptional qualities of Ignacio's character, using a careful juxtaposition to show his skill as a horseman and his gentle nature as a person,

¡Qué duro con las espuelas!
¡Qué tierno con el rocío!

For a matador to be an expert banderillero, as was Ignacio, is something of a rarity. Miguel Mateo (Miguelín) is a contemporary fighter who is skilled in both these arts: after a triumphant exhibition of his versatility in the Corrida de la Prensa in Madrid in 1968, A.B.C. compared him to Ignacio Sánchez Mejías at the height of his career. Ignacio originally won fame as a placer of the banderillas and it is in this act, in the twilight of his career, that Lorca remembers him last of all,

¡Qué tremendo con las últimas banderillas de tinieblas!
A report of the vigil kept over Ignacio's body was given in A.B.C.6 His brother, Don Aurelio, a fellow banderillero, Mella, and a mozo de espada, Conde, were the only people in the room. All the public were excluded from this intimate scene. Therefore, apart from the general idea of the body being laid out, the section "Cuerpo Presente" (which means lying in state) is a product of the poetic imagination of Lorca.

The line,

El ontono vendrá con caracolas,

reveals an association with the poet's native region. This season is marked in the area around Granada by the shepherds bringing their flocks down from the hills to escape the cold of the approaching winter. As a form of communication they use conch-shells.

Marcelle Auclair6 remembers Ignacio telling of how he had first fought bulls at the age of sixteen. Alone with the bulls in the fields at night his one companion was the wind whistling through the trees. Whenever he heard the wind blowing through the olive branches he would turn his mind back and salute with his hand the beginning of an apprenticeship that was, eventually, to lead to his premature death. Lorca was aware of these facts, as Marcelle Auclair relates, and his last line is a reminder of Ignacio's humble beginnings as a bull-fighter and of how his subsequent life was influenced and ended by bulls,

Y recuerdo una brisa triste por los olivos.
FOOTNOTES

Chapter II


8. __________. Loc. Cit.
Some Traditional Forms and Symbols in the Poem

The purpose of this chapter is to work through the poem, considering the use of traditional forms and symbols in relation both to works of earlier Spanish writers and to earlier works by Lorca.

The first line of the poem is made up of eight syllables as was the traditional verso of the ballad. Another aspect of this line that is both popular and traditional is its use of a fixed numerical detail. Carlos Ramos-Gil explains that such fórmulas pormenorizadas are very frequent in the old Spanish Romancero, citing as examples,

\[
\text{con trescientos cascabeles / alrededor del pretal.}
\]

siete veces lo pensaba / si lo tiraría o no.\(^1\)

Lorca himself makes an identical use of detailed numerical references,

\[
\text{Este toro ha de morir}
\]

\[
\text{antes de las cuatro y media.}\(^2\)
\]

\[
\text{El veinticinco de junio}
\]

\[
\text{le dijeron a el Amargo}
\]

\[
\text{El veinticinco de junio}
\]

\[
\text{abrió sus ojos Amargo}
\]

\[
\text{y el veinticinco de agosto}
\]

\[
\text{se tendió para cerrarlos.}\(^3\)
\]

\[
\text{un día señalado entre las dos y las tres.}\(^4\)
\]

Ramos-Gil thinks that this line is an echo of the tendency to fix times and numbers exactly, the intention being to "materializar lo irracional, valiéndose del dato preciso y matemático".\(^5\)
All these examples show how close attention to detail brings about a feeling of realism and importance to the description.

Nearly all critics have referred to the opening line as an 'estribillo' but few have tried to give any explanation of its meaning. J.B. Trend points out that the 'estribillo' is a device used in sixteenth-century Romanceros and by the playwrights Gil Vicente and Lope de Vega. In Spanish poetry the 'estribillo' in its simplest form, is a refrain repeated at the end of a stanza. If this use of the 'estribillo' is taken literally here, it gives an example of one line stanzas each with the same 'estribillo'. However, from the layout of the first edition it is obvious that the first eight lines and the remainder of the first section are designed to stand as two separate stanzas. This follows quite logically for, after the opening announcement of the death, the poet then goes on to give details of the death in this second stanza. The innovation in this 'estribillo' is its repetition after each line of the narrative. The insistence upon the 'estribillo' breaks up the flow of the verse with a perpetual swing from the intervening lines as they tell the story, back to the inescapable reference to time; reproducing the sensation of a tolling bell. Associations with a bell, are also brought to mind by the fact that the time is stated to be exactly five o'clock; a time at which a clock would strike. One further comment is required to point out that here, Lorca takes full advantage of poetic licence with respect to time. He enumerates a sequence of
events, though not in chronological order, that, apparently, all
took place at the same time. This is, obviously, totally impossible
unless time itself were to have stopped. For Ignacio it has stopped
and so events concerning him no longer occupy any amount of time.

The estribillo was used by Lorca in some dozen other
poems, appearing only rarely before his Primeras Canciones of
1922. The first poem of Poema del Cante Hondo, 1921, "Baladilla
de los Tres Ríos" has the refrain,

¡Ay, Amor
que se fue y no vino!

which is a form of lament placed between stanzas. Its main function
is to crystallize the all-pervading mood of sadness and regret of
the poem while remaining completely separated from the lines that
describe the three rivers. Printed in italics, it stands alone as a
separate stanza and alternates all the way through the poem with,

¡Ay, Amor
que se fue por el aire!

Lorca uses this refrain to express the finality of the loss of some­
thing nebulous. It is significant that this poem of atmosphere is
given the title of 'Baladilla', acknowledging the poet's debt to
music for the use of the refrain. The majority of his later poems
that employ the estribillo technique are called Canciones.

Another poem that uses an estribillo is the "Muerte de la
Petenera". Here Lorca uses the lines,

Cien jacas caracolean.
Sus jinetes están muertos.
to create a background of mystery to the tragedy of the narrative
and to reinforce the idea that death is everywhere and inevitable.

The book of poems entitled Primeras Canciones 1922 shows
some unusual uses of the estribillo. Normally its rôle is secondary
to the rest of the poem, its use being to aid in the creation of
an atmosphere and to comment upon the happenings of the narrative.
However, in "Remanso, Canción Final" the line,

   Ya viene la noche.

expresses the theme of the poem, and the remainder of the poem is
an elaboration of it, as for example, the lines

   Golpean rayos de luna
   sobre el yunque de la tarde.

Of the "Cuatro Baladas Amarillas" number II gives an example of
a refrain that has no literal meaning and is merely a musical chant
placed in between descriptions of the landscape,

   Orillo, orillo,
   pastorcillo.

In its simplicity it is very close to a child's song: being just a
succession of words that rhyme.

"Canción de Jinete (1860)" shows a definite development
on the part of Lorca in the use of the estribillo. In each of the
two estribillos used there is a description of the caballito; in
one it is negro and in the other it is frío. These are two adjectives
closely related to the idea of death, each commanding the use of one
of the senses, but it is the rider and not the horse that is dead. By transferring the power of these adjectives to the horse the poet introduces the concept of the horse as both the messenger and the carrier of death. The second line of the estribillo allows the poet to ask a direct question of the horse, that increases the mystery surrounding its rider's death,

¿Dónde llevas tu jinete muerto?.

By introducing a reference to the smell of death, which calls for the exercise of yet another of the senses, Lorca increases the feeling of the presence of death,

¡Qué perfume de flor de cuchillo!

During the journey of the horse Lorca uses the estribillo to help in the creation of an aura of mystery about the destination of the horse and its rider. The metaphorical and sensorial evocations in this estribillo show the increased sophistication of the poet.

One of the most musical of Lorca's estribillos appears in "Anda Jaleo", 12 from his Canciones Populares. It is a poem about confusion and death by shooting, superbly mirrored in the refrain,

Anda jaleo-jaleo;
y a se acabó el alboroto
y ahora empieza el tiroteo.

His careful choice of words allows him to summarize the events of the poem, at the same time reproducing the noise of the disturbing events in his verse. This rare example of an estribillo that is both a reflection and a summary of the main body of the poem was set to music by the poet himself. The melody is printed in the Aguilar
Edition of the *Obras Completas*.\(^{13}\)

The 'Llanto' itself uses two refrains in addition to that which begins in the opening line. The second section of the poem resembles a traditional *Romance* both in its changes from the present to the past tenses and in its use of an *estribillo*,

¡Que no quiero verla!

It is used at irregular intervals throughout the section, intruding with a violence that conveys well the poet's recoil from seeing his friend's blood on the sand of the bullring. From the ring there are flashbacks to Ignacio's life and the narrative is then taken up again, continuing till the burial, with the six-syllable jarring line bursting in at several points. A climax is reached in the final line when the exclamation marks are doubled and the personal pronoun added,

¡Yo no quiero verla!!

As the poet calms down in the gentle tranquility of the fourth, and final, section- 'Alma Ausente' he realizes that, because of his death, his friend is, no longer, a part of this earthly existence,

*Por que te has muerto para siempre.*

Each of the first three stanzas ends with this line of protest. Lorca now realizes that this great man has joined the anonymous dead. With an immediate repetition of the line at the beginning of the fourth stanza, Lorca spits out the words that complain of...
the levelling of all animate objects brought about by death,

Porque te has muerto para siempre,
como todos los muertos de la tierra,
como todos los muertos que se olvidan
en un montón de perros apagados.

Deeply grieved by the death of this close friend, who had been an extraordinary man and died prematurely, Lorca is shocked by the realization that Ignacio will now lose all his glory and be equal to each and every other dead thing and person. What shocks the poet most is that Ignacio will be forgotten; for death means oblivion and Lorca is saddened by the thought that this should be the fate of Ignacio.

The three estribillos used by Lorca in this poem insist upon one fact which is elaborated by the narrative. In 'La Cogida y la Muerte' the verses are almost suffocated between the refrain which accounts for more than half the lines. With the idea that time has stopped impressed upon the reader, Lorca introduces both the fact and the circumstances of the death. In the second section he describes his repulsion at the sight of the spilt blood by refusing to look at it, but, essentially, the second refrain plays only a minor part in the verse, which concerns itself with the physical dissolution of a fine man. In the fourth section the acknowledgement of death as something final is expressed quite calmly, but it is repeated because the author finds the idea abhorrent in itself and because it leads people to forget the
greatness of the dead. In each section a preoccupation, almost an obsession, of the poet is introduced, by means of the estribillo, without disturbing the narrative function of the poem.

The symbols and images used by Lorca are not new but the dramatic impact of the poem derives, in part from the integrated metaphors. As the culmination of his poetic work the 'Llanto' fuses the styles and techniques of Poeta en Nueva York and Romancero Gitano.

When the story of the poem begins Lorca immediately introduces the figure of a child,

Un niño trajo la blanca sábana.

A niño also appears, 'vestido de blanco', at the beginning of Yerma. In the opening scene of La Zapatera Prodigiosa another niño is present, in a setting 'completamente blanca'. Innocence and purity are the concepts that the poet is portraying here, both in the form of a child and by using the colour white that, so often in Lorca's work, symbolizes something totally lacking in blemishes. The combining of the two elements is employed by Lorca as a means of reinforcing an idea through suggesting it in two ways. A child may seem to be a strange witness for death, but death itself is something very pure and simple, making all men equal as they were, originally, at birth.

After the mention of medicines and the attempts to save Ignacio, realism departs, momentarily, with the image of a
Ya luchan la paloma y el leopardo.

There seem to be many ways of interpreting this line. It can be Ignacio fighting death, in the figure of a leopard; or purity fighting cruelty. Whatever the poet intended, the qualities of a dove are traditionally peace, gentleness and fragility. Against these he set a fierce and wild adversary, many times larger. Marcelle Auclair has pointed out that "'blanca paloma'... en Andalousie c'est toujours la Vierge de la Rosee." Although this information adds a specifically Andalusian weight to the image it does not explain the significance of the struggle. Because of the unequal nature of the struggle, with the leopard being the inevitable victor, it seems that the idea of man, in particular Ignacio, fighting a losing battle against death is the most plausible explanation.

As the condition of the patient worsened Lorca tells how death spread out from the wound,

La muerte puso huevos en la herida.

The laying of eggs is, normally, a symbol of vitality, of the beginning of life. Lorca uses the phrase in a rather paradoxical way with the laying of eggs signifying the beginning of an end death. The overall impression left by the first section is one of a kaleidoscopic view of a man fatally tossed in the bullring, of many of the horrific sights, smells and sounds that ensued. All this takes place in an instant. When the human brain recalls such
an event it seems to be able to flash scores of pictures across the mind in an instant; Lorca achieves the same effect with his verse.

Section II is concerned with the large amount of blood that Ignacio lost and the physical results of his death. It represents a nightmarish view of events, with the location changing rapidly in a night-time setting. At the beginning, as at the end, the poet is concerned with ridding himself of the red of the life blood. He invokes the moon to come and change its colour to one of silvery white. All his attempts to rid himself of the haunting redness involve the idea of substituting for it something either white or silver,

¡Avisad a los jazmines  
con su blancura pequeña!

but they do not succeed. Such was the greatness of the man that nothing is capable of containing his blood. Lorca is proud to admit this,

No hay escarcha de luz que la enfríe.  
no hay canto ni diluvio de azucenas  
no hay cristal que la cubra de plata.

His wish is to erase the horror of the blood with a colour of purity and negation; his attempts fail.

On his return to the bullring at night Lorca sees everything, except the blood, in the grey light of the full moon. Willow, traditionally a symbol of weeping and mourning, now grow around the ring's perimeter. Ignacio's blood still stains the sand as the
poet recalls the long tradition of bullfights and bulls in Spanish history. Mention of the Toros de Guisando, large stone sculptures, the work of the Iberians, is one such evocation. Another is 'la vaca del viejo mundo,' a symbol of motherhood, licking at the blood shed in the ring: not only Ignacio's, but all the blood—'sangres derramadas'—that has ever been shed in all the bullrings of the world. There is no condemnation of bullfighting 'per se' here but rather a sadness caused by the inevitable death that is its major facet. The cow has a 'triste lengua' which re-appears some sixty lines later, representing the blood of Ignacio as it is soaked up by the earth and meets the 'miles de pezuñas' of the dead animals. Although it has changed from its literal sense to a metaphorical sense it still carries the same concept of regret.

For the first time Ignacio is mentioned in the poem by name, already a dead man,

Por las gradas sube Ignacio
con toda su muerte a cuestas.

These lines may well be a reference to the ascension of Christ, but there is no direct mention here, or elsewhere in the poem, of Heaven. The major interest lies in the concept of a man who is strong enough to carry away death. When a man loses his struggle he is, traditionally, depicted as being absorbed or carried away by death. Here is a rare example of the reverse, of Der grosse Tod of Rilke, a personal death in which a man carries off Death. Although Ignacio has lost the
struggle he is still man enough to be the dominant force in his death.

Throughout this second section the primary concern of the poet is with Ignacio's blood. After the explicit announcement of his friend's death he no longer has to make direct reference to it, but constantly returns to the idea through allusions to blood. Such was the strength of the link between the two that, in a way, Lorca dies with Ignacio, expressing his empathy as he feels Ignacio's pulse, in the form of a spurting wound, gradually weakening,

No quiero sentir el chorro 
cada vez con menos fuerza;

A direct censure of the blood-thirsty crowds that attend bullfights is apparent in the description of Ignacio spilling his blood over them as he ascends the steps of the bull-ring,

ese chorro que ilumina
los tendidos y se vuelca
sobre la pana y el cuero
de muchedumbre sedienta.

Lorca himself was not against bullfights. His invective in this instance is directed against those who went to see a bloody spectacle and were satisfied; on this occasion, with Ignacio's blood. The poet's answer is to pour that blood over their clothes, and so charging them with some of the responsibility for Ignacio's death.

At the moment of the fatal impact two sympathetic reactions occur: the 'madres terribles' lift up their heads and the bull-breeders on the ranches cry out. They shout because a
bull has killed an extraordinary man, because it is they who have bred that bull. Their responsibility for the death of a man is made all the more direct by the greatness of Ignacio. The significance of the 'madres terribles' is obscure but may well be explained by a book, published in Barcelona in 1931, about Spanish folklore and customs. Lorca is known to have been a keen student of folklore and was, most probably, acquainted with this book. It explains that the madres existed in Pre-Roman Spain as a force that was neither specifically malevolent nor benevolent, but existed as fates, or a force of death. That they acted as an overseer of man's life seems to explain their presence and reaction at a sudden and violent death.

Lorca turns suddenly away from the nightmarish atmosphere to one in which he recalls his friend in life. His tremendous strength was, como un río de leones.

A river is sometimes used by Lorca as a symbol of strength, closely linked with virility and sexual prowess. La Novia in Bodas de Sangre rejected her husband because he was only 'un poquito de agua' and preferred instead Leonardo -- 'un río oscuro'. However, the poet, writing in very condensed verse, is not content to use simply the river, but increases the power of the simile by introducing figures of great strength of lions. With this hyperbole Lorca underlines the unusual strength of Ignacio. The next six lines
interweave a whole series of images; *risa*, *nardo*, *sal* and *inteligencia* suggest Andalusian qualities. Roman influence and culture are present in the 'aire' that gilds Ignacio's head: 'torso de mármol' and 'dibujada. prudencia' give an impression of the skillful and circumspect matador in the ring.

A sharp reminder of the physical decay brought about by death is introduced by a gentle line,

Pero ya duerme sin fin.

The buildup to a frenzied fear of blood begins immediately with the shocking lines,

Ya los musgos y la hierba
abren con dedos seguros
la flor de su calavera.

which contrast sharply with the description of the handsome Ignacio during his life of only a few lines previously. His blood has left his body and now spreads through the earth,

Y su sangre viene cantando:
cantando por marismas y praderas,

Lorca had used the identical image of a river of blood before, in "New York: Oficina y Denuncia."¹⁹

Un río que viene cantando
por los dormitorios de los arrabales

It sings because it announces the death of the person to whom it belonged, and because it sings it is called a nightingale,

¡Oh ruiseñor de sus venas!
representing the living song that contrasts with the generations of
dead. Partial immortality, in the beauty of the bird's song,
introduces a note of slight consolation. In the final two lines
of the poem it is song that consoles the poet.

Ignacio's blood reaches up to the 'Guadalquivir de las
estrellas' - the Milky Way- and here there is, possibly, a reference
to the ascension of Christ to Heaven. Although this poem is not
in the least based on a Christian outlook of death, there is most
certainly a link between the crucifixion of Christ and the lines,

Que no hay cáiliz que la contenga,
que no hay golondrinas que se la beban.

According to Spanish legends swallows drank Christ's blood at
Golgotha. Lorca evokes the parallel of Christ to exalt Ignacio,
for both were sacrificial victims. There is, too, the implication
that the greatness of Ignacio, seen in his blood, exceeds that of
Christ, for there is not a chalice large enough to contain it,
nor are the swallows able to drink up his blood. It is with the
idea of the inescapable redness of Ignacio's blood which all the
images of whiteness cannot change that the poet ends this section,
still refusing to look at it.

A readily recognizable system of versification appears for
the first time in the section entitled "Cuerpo Presente".
Consisting of quatrains written in the elegiac metre of the Spanish
Alexandrine, which contains fourteen syllables, it describes the scene
of Ignacio's body laid out on a stone slab. The verse recalls the *cuaderna vía* of Berceo but, while retaining the hemistich, Lorca has dispensed with rhyme.

The significance of much of this section is obscure. In the first edition the opening twelve lines are set out apart from the others.

It is not until the fourth quatrains that any specific meaning or reference begins to appear. The line,

\[ \text{Ya está sobre la piedra Ignacio el bien nacido.} \]

calls to mind the epic epithet used in the *Poema de Mio Cid*,

\[ \text{el que en buen ora nasco:} \]

The use of a succinct line similar to the recurring epithet applied to the folk hero implies an equality in the stature of the two men.

Dialogue, a technique often used in the elegy and also in the *romance*, is introduced into the poem in the form of a question - "¿Qué dicen?". This is linked up to the first line of the following stanza, the seventh, which contains an extra line,

\[ \text{¿Quién arruga el sudario? ¡No es verdad lo que dice!} \]

Somebody has pulled back the shroud and spoken, seeking to bring the traditional message of comfort that the man is not really dead; that he, in fact, lives on. Lorca omits the words of the unknown speaker but the interruption is easy to imagine for the poet himself breaks into the flow of the verse with his retort. He knows that Ignacio is dead and wishes to continue his task of
lamenting this fact and so keeps the interrupting dialogue down to the barest minimum.

Following the tradition of Seneca, Lorca demands a stoical and quiet reception of death. Bernarda Alba, in her last speech, expresses her desire for the conduct of her children on the death of Adela,

Yo no quiero llantos. La muerte hay que mirarla cara a cara. ¡Silencio!'23

Lorca wants a similar reaction to the death of Ignacio,

Aquí no canta nadie, ni llora en el rincón.

He wants the sole witnesses to be men who embody qualities similar to those possessed by Ignacio,

Los que doman caballos y dominan los ríos.

Again the river is used as a symbol of strength and again Lorca reinforces the metaphor by adding an extra concept to it. Instead of using a straightforward comparison, in the form of a simile, he uses the verb 'dominar' to stress once more the great strength of the man. Additional force is added, in a similar fashion, by the use of the horse and the verb 'domar'. The using of four such meaningful words in one line gives another example of the compression of meaning that Lorca achieved in this poem. A metaphor suggesting the skills of horsemanship is also used to make allusion to the fact that Ignacio is now dead,

este cuerpo con las riendas quebradas.
which follows very closely the metaphor used in 'Canción de Jinete (1860)\(^2\) in which reference is made to the dead bandit "que perdió las riendas".

Lorca, recognizing the finality and inevitability of death, demands a spiritual permanence for Ignacio,

Yo quiero que me enseñen donde está la salida para este capitán atado por la muerte.

Because his friend was no ordinary man he is not content to see him burdened with the shackles that death normally brings to mortals. The ideal 'salida' is seen in Ignacio's losing himself in the moon when it is full. In this way he would, quite literally, rise up above other men and become something as marvellous and distant as the stars and planets. The idea of the moon as a symbol and witness of death is not new, but the complicated metaphor used for the full moon is particularly striking,

Que se pierda en la plaza redonda de la luna que finge cuando niña doliente res inmóvil;

The shape of the crescent moon appears like the horns of a young motionless, bull. When it grows, it fills out like a bullring, thus completing the taurine metaphor.

As this section ends a consolatory note is struck. Death is the ultimate fate of all men, whatever their greatness, and Ignacio had nothing to be ashamed of either in his life or in the manner of his death; he has now won his rest,

Duerme, vuelá, reposa; ¡También se muere el mar!
Four stanzas above the river is used as a symbol of strength, here Jorge Manrique's famous metaphor of man's life being a river that flows into the sea of death is clearly echoed,

Nuestras vidas son los ríos
que van a dar en la mar,
que es el morir.

By using the hyperbole that even the sea dies Lorca is seeking to reconcile Ignacio with death.

As the poem draws to a close in the last section the title of which, 'Alma Ausente, balances with that of section three, Cuerpo Presente, Lorca again takes up the complaint that people will forget Ignacio. He uses quatrains of hendecasyllables of blank verse and a series of statements that express the short memories of people. There is a repetition of the verb conocer which carries both the meanings of 'recognize' plus the meaning of 'recall'. In an earlier poem, 'Sorpresa', Lorca had used a similar line on the fatal stabbing of an unknown person,

No lo conocía nadie.

Objects of everyday life like horses and ants and even the bull no longer remember Ignacio. The 'niño', too, has forgotten him. This is a very poignant statement, for the 'niño' was the first character to appear in the poem, carrying the white sheet. If somebody who was so intimately involved with the death forgets, few people can be counted on to remember.

Spring, traditionally, is associated with birth, happiness
and vitality. Autumn heralds the end of the year and begins within two months of Ignacio's death, but, by this time, nobody will think of him,

    porque te has muerto para siempre.

Again Lorca inserts an extra line into the form of his stanzas, and again it is a line of great significance,

    No te conoce nadie. No. Pero yo te canto.

It is a line that explains above all else why the poem was written. Lorca did not, and could not, forget Ignacio and, in writing this elegy, he immortalized his friend so that we shall never forget.

In three lines he summarizes the worth of Ignacio, giving one line each to his physical bearing, his intelligence and his career as a bullfighter,

    Yo canto para luego tu perfil y tu gracia.
    La madurez insigne de tu conocimiento.
    Tu apetencia de muerte y el gusto de su boca.

The final stanza is the most impressive part of the poem. For three lines it builds up to a crescendo, blending panegyric and lament, balancing precariously on the final word filled with emotion,

    Tardará much tiempo en nacer, si es que nace,
    un andaluz tan claro, tan rico de aventura.
    Yo canto su elegancia con palabras que gimen

before plummeting down into a sorrowful nostalgia

    Y recuerdo una brisa triste por los olivos.

The "Llanto" is one of Lorca's last poems. After writing *Poeta en Nueva York* he turned his attention in the 1930's to drama.
When he returned to poetry to write the "Llanto" it was as a mature artist. He displays fully his intimate knowledge of myth and folklore. When Lorca evokes an image or sensation he does it with flamboyance, often using hyperbole or a double reference. He shows complete command of a changing atmosphere and total mastery of his verse. An outstanding feature of this poem is his cultivation of the metaphor. His earliest work shows a tendency to use metaphors and it is in the "Llanto" that his power in their use is most obvious and most successful. They do not play a merely decorative function but are integral parts of the verse. The great talents of a modern Spanish poet are evident but there remains also a debt on the part of Lorca to a long tradition of Spanish Elegies.
FOOTNOTES

Chapter III


The Elegiac Tradition in Spanish Poetry

An elegy can be either a lament or a funeral ode, it is with the latter type that we are concerned in this thesis.

In Spain the tradition begins in the eleventh century with the *planctus*, a poem written in Latin. Generally the poem opens with a brief epitaph which dwells on the death of one particular man; a man of some standing such as a political, religious or military chief, or an aristocrat. The *planctus* enumerates the accomplishments and personal qualities of the deceased thus demonstrating the significance of the loss to those who live on. Only occasionally does the *planctus* contain a prayer for the soul of the departed. The primary aim is not to console but to heighten the feelings of grief and to lament the fact that death is common to all men.

The first example of an elegy written in the vernacular is in the epic poem, known as the fragment of *Roncesvalles*, written in the thirteenth century. As he laments the death of Roland on the battlefield covered with corpses, Charlemagne tugs at his beard in a frenzy, causing his face to bleed,

Muerto es mío sobrino, el buen de don Roldane.  
Aquí veo atal cosa que nunca vij tan grande:  
Jo era pora morir e uos pora escapare.¹

His major complaint is that he himself, a very old man, has not been killed, but that a youth with many years of great deeds ahead of him has perished. He feels that death has been unfair in its choice of
victims, at the same time that it condemns an old man to a lonely existence, with all his friends and relatives now killed off.

This same feeling is apparent in the words of Gonzalo Gustios in the *Cantar de Los Infantes de Lara*. As he takes the heads of his seven slaughtered sons in his hands he delivers an elegy over each one:

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comenzó de facer su duelo et su llanto tan grande sobre ellos que no ha hombre que lo viese que se pudiese sufrir de non llorar;... e contaba de los infantes todos los buenos fechos que ficieran.²
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His complaint is also that younger men have died while an old man has been allowed to live on. It is made all the more poignant by the fact that the lineage of a proud family has come to an end.

These two epic fragments base their complaints on the unfairness of death in striking down youth while leaving old age to suffer in loneliness. The grief is a very personal one that seems to be lacking consolation because the significance of death remains incomprehensible, and therefore disturbing. A series of rhetorical questions which are addressed to the dead are really addressed to death itself. An obvious development from the *planctus* is the introduction of a personal involvement on the part of the mourner and an increased concern with the meaning and understanding of death.

Chronologically, the next important elegy appears in Juan Ruiz's *Libro de Buen Amor*. Occupying some two hundred lines, it consists of the 'planto' pronounced by the Arcipreste on the death of Trotaconventos,

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De cómo morió Trotaconventos e de como el Arcipreste faze su planto denostando e maldiendo la muerte.³
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It consists of four distinct sections; beginning with an apostrophe to death,

¡Ay muerte! ¡muerta seas!
Mataste a vi vieja,
Enemiga del mundo,
de tu memoria amarga.4

it is followed by an expression of the author's personal sorrow. The Arcipreste then offers a prayer for the repose of the soul of the departed and concludes with a eulogizing epitaph,

Fízelo un pitafio
la tristeza me fizo.5

Like Charlemagne and Gonzalo Gustios the Arcipreste dwells upon the personal loss caused by death. However, he introduces a novelty into the complaint by lamenting the fact that Trotaconventos, who was of great use to him as a procuress, can no longer serve him. His selfishness intrudes rudely into what had hitherto seemed to be a traditional elegy. This fact shows that not even an elegy was exempt from the humour and irony which the Arcipreste injected into so much of his book.

With the lyric poets of the fifteenth century personal and private grief is no longer in fashion. Like the planctus, they are very concerned with the forms of grief, at the same time introducing innovations in the personification of abstract qualities such as Virtue and Bravery. These personified qualities weep for that part of themselves that died with the person being mourned.

The Dezir de las vanidades del Mundo, attributed to
Ferrant Sánchez Calavera, shows the poet concerned in a general sense with the mortality of mankind,

Certidumbre de vida un ora non avemos;
con llanto venimos, con llanto nos imos. 6

Stress is laid upon the fact that all the fine qualities of a living man are, inevitably, destined to be lost in a decaying heap of flesh,

Por ende buen sesso era guarnecer
de virtudes las almas que están despojadas,
tirar estas horas del cuerpo juntadas,
pues somos ciertos que se han de perder. 7

An individual death sets off a train of thought that dwells upon the annihilation caused by death. The elegy in the epic poem was able to strike a joyful note amidst the general note of mourning by looking back to the past glories of the dead; the fifteenth-century lyric poets in their elegies pointed out only the terrible, blank fate that awaits all men.

It is in the celebrated Coplas por la muerte de su padre, written by Jorge Manrique in 1476, that a blending of a personal grief with a universal grief is seen for the first time. These verses set out the orthodox Christian attitude towards death. A man should welcome death as a gift from God, certain that he will be saved because of the exemplary life that he has led on earth. Any man who believes in God and who repents his sins before death can expect God's blessing in the pyramid-like world of the Middle Ages in which God rules over everything. Following Christian teaching, death is seen as an escape from a world full of cares into a form of paradise,
Este mundo es el camino
para el otro, que es morada
sin pesar.8

The qualities of Don Rodrigo as a man are recalled in:

Aquel de buenos abrigo,
amado por virtuoso
de la gente,
el maestre don Rodrigo
Manrique, tanto famoso,
y tan valiente;9

The whole poem is noticeably lacking in pessimism and it ends on a
note of consolation, verging on jubilation,

y aunque la vida murio,
nos dexo harto consuelo
su memoria.10

The Coplas celebrate the passing of an exemplary life and are,
themselves, a prime example of the orthodox Christian attitude to
death.

The 'planto' of Pleberio in the last act of La Celestina
is caused by very different circumstances. Melibea had committed
suicide and was, on her own admission, a fallen woman. However,
some aspects of previous laments are present on this occasion.
Pleberio chastises death for taking away his young daughter,

Mas dignos eran mis sesenta años de la sepultura
que tus veinte.11

His complaint is based on two familiar grievances. Firstly, she
has died young while he, an old man, lives on, and, secondly, he is
now forced to live out his old age in loneliness. The cause of
the tragedy is named as love,
Here the novelty lies in seeking, and claiming to have found, a complete explanation of the course of events.

By the time of Pleberio's lament the basic foundations of the Spanish funeral lament had been laid. We have seen the lament that death is common to all, but unfair to some. Personal involvement, public grief and a Christian view of death, plus the unpleasant physical aspects of death are the main features of Spanish elegies. From here onwards there are no fundamental innovations in any later elegies. This point can be illustrated by looking at Zorrilla's elegy, written on the suicide of Larra. The opening lines of the poem lead straight in to the unpleasant physical realities of death and decay,

un cadáver sombrío y macilento
que en sucio polvo dormirá mañana. 13

Melodramatic violence and restrained hysteria, combined with a total lack of reverence, are the outstanding features of this poem,

como una virgen al placer perdida
cuelga el profano velo en el altar. 14

Perplexed by his doubt concerning the after-life, the poet thinks of his late friend,

Poeta, si en el no ser
hay un recuerdo de ayer
una vida como aquí
..................
conságrame un pensamiento
como el que tengo de ti. 15
We are never given any details about the manner in which Larra died. The poet is concerned only with the ugly, unknown, nature of death.

On the death of 'Joselito' in 1920 Gerardo Diego wrote an elegy to commemorate the event. The poem entitled 'Elegía a Joselito', opens in an evening setting, with the shadows climbing grada a grada. Complete silence greets the death of the matador as his life ebbs away, captured in a line that is a metaphor derived from a play on words,

apagarse las luces de su traje.  

After the announcement and brief description of 'Joselito's death Diego goes back to the day on which he confirmed the alternativa. He describes the following fifteen years of glory with packed stadiums, dwelling at some length of 'Joselito' s technical virtuosity with the cape,

dibujando en la arena, a flor de riesgo, un radiante teorema entrecruzado.

The whole art of bullfighting is summarized in one line,

sabio ajedrez contra el funesto hado.

Maintaining a strictly eulogizing tone, Diego puts forward the idea that 'Joselito' gave himself, almost willingly, to death,

Y todo cesó al fin, porque quisiste.

and he stresses that 'Joselito' was a brave master of the bulls who dictated the events in the ring. In form, the elegy consists of
fifteen quatrains, with no dialogue or refrain. Diego restricts himself to considering one death, omitting any intrusion of the 'Yo', any general comments on death or complaints against death. Keeping a strong check on his emotions, he simply tells the story of the life and death of a great bullfighter.

Rafael Alberti has also written an elegy to Ignacio Sánchez Mejías. 'ELEGIA — A Ignacio Sánchez Mejías' dated exactly one year after his death and written, allegedly, in the bullring in Mexico City. It is a long and difficult poem made up of four sonnets, each followed by a parenthesis in italics and this, in turn, followed by about twenty lines of irregular verse. It is a poem concerned completely with atmosphere and philosophical musings, without any lamentations about death or any expression of sorrow on the part of the author.

The poem begins with an explanation that the bulls bred to fight also have to die. It is their job to try and kill a man, a un torero de espuma, sal y arena, ya que intentas herir, dale la muerte. 20

Alberti gives a sober, reasoned account of bullfighting with death as the logical, inevitable end. No doubt the passing of a year and the publication of Lorca's poem are major reasons why personal grief seems to be lacking in this poem. For the bullfighter, as for the bull, death is inevitable and he may well meet his end in the ring, and should be prepared for it:
Me va a coger la muerte en zapatillas,
así, con medias rosas y zapatillas negras me va a matar la muerte.  

When death does strike time stops for the individual concerned,

No hay reloj
no hay ya tiempo,
no existe ya reloj que quiera darme tiempo a salir de la muerte.

but there is no attempt to give an identity to the dead man. This poem explores the two major roles played in the bullring, those of the bull and the matador, but keeps entirely within the realms of Alberti's imagination, mentioning Ignacio but twice. The elegies of Diego and Alberti lack dramatic impact and treat their subject coldly; for these reasons they leave little impression on the reader.

This brief survey of the Spanish Elegy and the history of its tradition shows the development of the elegy with two twentieth-century examples, both dedicated to matadors killed in the ring. Both the poems are notable for their cool attitudes towards death, in distinct contrast to the passionate complaints of all previous elegies, with the possible exception of Manrique's Coplas. It is now time to see where Lorca's "Llanto" stands in that tradition.


15. Loc. Cit.

The 'Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías' as an Elegy

Lorca's debt to the past is evident, first of all, in the title of the poem. In choosing to call it "Llanto..." he was continuing a tradition that began in the eleventh century with the word 'planctus'. By the time of the Arcipreste de Hita philological development had changed the word to "planto" which then later developed into the form as used by Lorca. The fact that he chose not to call this poem "Elegía" or "Lamento" illustrates well Lorca's consciousness of all the various elements that he fused together in his poetry. He once explained to Gerardo Diego:

Si es verdad que soy poeta por la gracia de Dios - o del domonio - , también lo es que lo soy por la gracia de la técnica y del esfuerzo, y de darme cuenta en absoluto de lo que es un poema.¹

When considering Lorca's poem as one of a long line of elegies it is wise to keep within the limits of the 'planctus' and poems written in Spanish; for it is from these that he drew most, if not all, of his knowledge of such poems. Calvin Cannon in his study of Lorca's 'Llanto'² and the elegiac tradition mentions the classics and then concerns himself entirely with elegies written in English. His second paragraph begins, The
debt of Lorca's elegy to the tradition is considerable.

Of the seventeen or so devices commonly used from Theocritus to Arnold, ten appear in the 'Llanto':

Announcement of death of person to be mourned,
Expression of grief and bitter resentment against cruelty of death,
Exaltation of dead man,
Eulogy of life of dead man,
Account of how and when he died,
Funeral with mourners,
Use of flowers,
Use of refrain,
Use of dramatic frame, utilizing dialogue,
Conclusion on note of consolation, tranquillity, or even rejoicing.

The implication in his article is that Lorca used as his direct sources the tradition as explained by Cannon. In omitting to study any other Spanish elegy, Cannon has, apparently, failed to see that Spanish elegies too always contain some of these ten devices. It would be more correct, therefore, to say that Lorca drew from the European tradition indirectly by making use of his knowledge of the tradition in Spanish elegiac poetry.

The 'Llanto' coincides with the form of the "planctus" in so far as it dwells upon the particular death of a famous man of some standing. It recalls his fine qualities and exceptional accomplishments and points out the loss suffered by mankind on the death of this great man. An expression of personal grief is first found in the elegy in epic poetry. There, as in the Libro de Buen Amor and in La Celestina it is a grief suffered by one of the protagonists. The Arcipreste was the first author to express
his own grief, though he, too, also appears as a protagonist. Before the Romantics the author tended to keep his own feelings out of his work. With the Romantics personal feelings enter to such an extent that the elegy seems to consist of self-pity and little else. Religious attitudes towards death are very rare in elegies, Manrique's *Coplas* being the outstanding exception. He builds his long poem on a Christian framework and, for the first time, introduces the idea of immortality. For this reason Manrique's work is very different from the laments of all the other writers. He accepts death calmly, almost joyfully, extolling an exemplary life and ending on a strong note of consolation. Both the lyric poets of the fifteenth century and the Romantics discuss the physical decay of a corpse, which is unpleasant in itself but more so because it is a sad, but universal, end for a great man.

In respect of technique and use of form and versification there is no set pattern used in the elegy down the centuries. There is no attempt to correlate form and emotion in the strictly regular verse schemes of Manrique, the Arcipreste and Diego, whereas Lorca, as we have seen, paid great attention to this aspect of his work.

It can be readily seen how Lorca incorporated his own deep feelings into a complaint against the absurd negativism of death while at the same time writing a traditional elegy. This is very much a personal poem that keeps in mind the death of Ignacio all the time, rarely discussing death as a universal fact.
without making reference to Ignacio. He announces the death and describes how it happened. He then begins his complaint which is directed at Ignacio's blood alone. He recalls Ignacio and his gentle disposition fused with great courage, copying exactly Manrique's series of lines beginning with "Que:"

Que amigo de sus amigos!
que señor para criados
........................
Que seso para discretos!
que gracia para donosos.4

The physical decay of the body is captured in a very striking image:

Ya los musgos y la hierba
abren con dedos seguros
la flor de su calavera.

Although God is never mentioned and this could never be described as a Christian poem, the parallel of Christ and Ignacio is observable. It is both an exaggeration of the standing of Ignacio and an implicit hope for immortality. There is no philosophical discussion about death nor is there a general complaint against the inevitability of death. Lorca's friend is dead, having died bravely,

No se cerraron sus ojos
cuando vio los cuernos cerca.

and the author is seeking to praise, and if possible to perpetuate, the memory of Ignacio, at the same time offering some kind of consolation. He draws freely from all previous stages in the development of the elegy to provide some of the material for his poem.
There remains much that has not been derived from previous authors. The most obvious sections that are purely Lorca's creation are those which have a relation with the facts concerning Ignacio's life. Outstanding in this category is the opening line of the poem, very probably taken from a newspaper. The facts surrounding Ignacio's death; the fatal wound in the thigh, the gangrene and the fever all appear in the poem. From Lorca's personal recollection come the references to conch shells in autumn. The reference to the breeze through the olive trees comes from Lorca's knowledge of a recollection of Ignacio's.

The history and the tradition are the bedrock upon which the "Llanto" is built, but the superstructure, the most striking part of the whole, is created by Lorca's poetic powers. He uses short lines in irregular patterns to mirror his anguish, returning to a more regular set of stanzas for his quiet, contemplative moods. When something of supreme importance is said it has a line to itself.

Images of great variety and many colours catch the readers' eyes. Some of the surrealism of Poeta en Nueva York is still in evidence but the totally incomprehensible images are very few. Lorca shows his great skill in his use of metaphor. His metaphors are unusual in that they are not simply an adornment but they also have a significance of their own within the context of the narrative.
The blood, nightingale of his veins, that sings in the earth is simple and striking. More difficult is the metaphor of the full moon as a bull ring and the crescent moon as the horns of a young, motionless bull. The unravelling of the complexities of such lines shows how Lorca was able to compress into a few words intricate concepts and images. Seemingly insignificant touches like the reference to a handkerchief to cover the face and to the "madres terribles" show the conscious attempts of Lorca to instil a wealth of meaning into each line. This concentration of meaning and emotion helps the reader to understand and sympathize with the feelings of friendship that caused this poem to be written, and is a key factor in its success. The story is told using traditional elements but it is the verse of Lorca that makes this a great poem. He pours out his soul in an attempt to console himself and laments his friend's mortality. A ray of hope is seen in the line,

No te conoce nadie. No. Pero yo te canto.

Because Lorca was moved to write this poem he has succeeded in providing an immortal memory and epitaph for Ignacio Sánchez Mejías. A good bullfighter is remembered as a great man in, as Cossió points out

versos que han de perpetuar su memoria
más que sus fugaces hazañas taurinas.3

And, as Manrique says, the memory of him is "harto consuelo".
FOOTNOTES

Chapter V


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1. La cogida y la muerte

A las cinco de la tarde.
Eran las cinco en punto de la tarde.
Un niño trajo la blanca sábana
a las cinco de la tarde.
Una espuela de cal ya prevenida
a las cinco de la tarde.
Lo demás era muerte y sólo muerte
a las cinco de la tarde.

El viento se llevó los algodones
a las cinco de la tarde.
Y el óxido sembró cristal y níquel
a las cinco de la tarde.
Ya luchan la paloma y el leopardo
a las cinco de la tarde.
Y un muslo con un asta desolada
a las cinco de la tarde.
Comenzaron los sones de bordón
a las cinco de la tarde.
Las campanas de arsénico y el humo
a las cinco de la tarde.
En las esquinas grupos de silencio
a las cinco de la tarde.
¡Y el toro solo corazón arriba!
a las cinco de tarde.
Cuando el sudor de nieve fue llegando
a las cinco de la tarde,
cuando la plaza se cubrió de yodo
a las cinco de la tarde,
la muerte puso huevos en la herida
a las cinco de la tarde.
A las cinco de la tarde.
A las cinco en punto de la tarde.

Un ataúd con ruedas es la cama
a las cinco de la tarde.
Huesos y flautas suenan en su oído
a las cinco de la tarde.
El toro ya mugía por su frente
a las cinco de la tarde.
El cuarto se irrigaba de agonía
a las cinco de la tarde.
A lo lejos ya viene la gangrena
a las cinco de la tarde.
Trompa de lirio por las verdes ingles
a las cinco de la tarde.
Las heridas quemaban como soles
a las cinco de la tarde,
y el gentío rompía las ventanas
a las cinco de la tarde.
A las cinco de la tarde.
¡Ay, qué terribles cinco de la tarde!
¡Eran las cinco en todos los relojes!
¡Eran las cinco en asombra de la tarde!
2. La sangre derramada

¡Que no quiero verla!

Dile a la luna que venga,
que no quiero ver la sangre de Ignacio sobre la arena.

¡Que no quiero verla!

La luna de par en par,
Caballo de nubes quietas,
y la plaza gris del sueño
con sauces en las barreras.

¡Que no quiero verla!

Que mi recuerdo se quema.
¡Avisad a los jazmines
con su blancura pequeña!

¡Que no quiero verla!

La vaca del viejo mundo
pasaba su triste lengua
sobre un hocico de sangres
derramadas en la arena,
y los toros de Guisando,
casi muerte y casi piedra,
mugieron como dos siglos
hartos de pisar la tierra.
No.
¡Que no quiero verla!

Por las gradas sube Ignacio
con toda su muerte a cuestas.
Buscaba el amanecer,
y el amanecer no era.
Busca su perfil seguro,
y el sueño lo desorienta.
Buscaba su hermoso cuerpo
y encontró su sangre abierta.
¡No me digáis que la vea!
No quiero sentir el chorro
cada vez con menos fuerza;
eso chorro que ilumina
los tendidos y se vuelca
sobre la pana y el cuero
de muchedumbre sedienta.
¡Quién me grita que me asome!
¡No me digáis que la vea!.

No se cerraron sus ojos
cuando vió los cuernos cerca,
pero las madres terribles
levantaron la cabeza.
Y a través de las ganaderías,
hubo un aire de voces secretas
que gritaban a toros celestes,
mayorales de pálida niebla.
No hubo príncipe en Sevilla
que comparárselle pueda,
ni espada como su espada
ni corazón tan de veras.
Como un río de leones
su maravillosa fuerza,
y como un torso de mármol
su dibujada prudencia.
Aire de Roma andaluza
le doraba la cabeza
donde su risa era un nardo
de sal y de inteligencia.
¡Qué gran torero en la plaza!
¡Qué buen serrano en la sierra!
¡Qué blando con las espigas!
¡Qué duro con las espuelas!
¡Qué tierno con el rocío!
¡Que deslumbrante en la feria!
¡Qué tremendo con las últimas
banderillas de tiniebla!

Pero ya duerme sin fin.
Ya los musgos y la hierba
abren con dedos seguros
la flor de su calavera.
Y su sangre ya viene cantando:
cantando por marismas y praderas,
resbalando por cuernos ateridos,
vacilando sin alma por la niebla,
tropezando con miles de pezuñas
como una larga, oscura, triste lengua,
para formar un charco de agonía
junto al Guadalquivir de las estrellas.
¡Oh blanco muro de España!
¡Oh negro toro de pena!
¡Oh sangre dura de Ignacio!
¡Oh ruisenor de sus venas!
No.
¡Que no quiero verla!
Que no hay cáñiz que la contenga,
que no hay golondrinas que se la beban,
no hay escarcha de luz que la enfrie,
no hay canto ni diluvio de azucenas,
no hay cristal que la cubra de plata.
No.
¡Yo no quiero verla!!
3. Cuerpo presente

La piedra es una frente donde los sueños gimen sin tener agua curva ni cipreses helados.  
La piedra es una espalda para llevar al tiempo con árboles de lágrimas y cintas y planetas.  
Yo he visto lluvias grises correr hacia las olas levantando sus tiernos brazos acribillados, para no ser cazadas por la piedra tendida que desata sus miembros sin empapar la sangre.  
Porque la piedra coge simientes y nublados, esqueletos de alondras y lobos de penumbra; pero no da sonidos, ni cristales, ni fuego, sino plazas y plazas y otras plazas sin muros.

Ya está sobre la piedra Ignacio el bien nacido.  
Ya se acabó; ¿qué pasa? Contemplad su figura: la muerte le ha cubierto de pálidos azufres y le ha puesto cabeza de oscuro minotauro.  
Ya se acabó. La lluvia penetra por su boca.  
El aire como loco deja su pecho hundido, y el Amor, empapado con lágrimas de nieve, se calienta en la cumbre de las ganaderías.  
¿Qué dicen? Un silencio con hedores reposa.  
Estamos con un cuerpo presente que se esfuma, con una forma clara que tuvo ruiseñores y la vemos llenarse de agujeros sin fondo.  
¿Quién arruga el sudario? ¡No es verdad lo que dice! Aquí no canta nadie, ni llora en el rincón, ni pica las espuelas, ni espanta la serpiente: aquí no quiero más que los ojos redondos para ver ese cuerpo sin posible descanso.  
Yo quiero ver aquí los hombres de voz dura.  
Los que doman caballos y dominan los ríos: los hombres que les suena el esqueleto y cantan con una boca llena de sol y pedernales.
Aquí quiero yo verlos. Delante de la piedra.
Delante de este cuerpo con las riendas quebradas.
Yo quiero que me enseñen dónde está la salida
para este capitán atado por la muerte.

Yo quiero que me enseñen un llanto como un río
que tenga dulces nieblas y profundas orillas,
para llevar el cuerpo de Ignacio y que se pierda
sin escuchar el doble resuello de los toros.

Que se pierda en la plaza redonda de la luna
que finge cuando niña doliente res inmóvil;
que se pierda en la noche sin canto de los peces
y en la maleza blanca del humo congelado.

No quiero que le tapen la cara con pañuelos
para que se acostumbré con la muerte que lleva.
Vete, Ignacio: No sientas el caliente bramido.
Duerme, vuela, reposa: ¡También se muere el mar!
4. Alma, ausente

No te conoce el toro ni la higuera, ni caballos ni hormigas de tu casa.
No te conoce el niño ni la tarde, porque te has muerto para siempre.

No te conoce el lomo de la piedra, ni el raso negro donde te destrozas.
No te conoce tu recuerdo mudo porque te has muerto para siempre.

El ootoño vendrá con caracolas, uva de niebla y montes agrupados, pero nadie querrá mirar tus ojos porque te has muerto para siempre.

Porque te has muerto para siempre, como todos los muertos de la Tierra, como todos los muertos que se olvidan en un montón de perros apagados.

No te conoce nadie. No. Pero yo te canto. Yo canto para luego tu perfil y tu gracia. La madurez insigne de tu conocimiento. Tu apetencia de muerte y el gusto de su boca. La tristeza que tuvo tu valiente alegría.

Tardará mucho tiempo en nacer, si es que nace, un andaluz tan claro, tan rico de aventura. Yo canto su elegancia con palabras que gimen y recuerdo una brisa triste por los olivos.