CHAPTER II

THE FEMALE WORLD OF FEDERICO GARCIA LORCA

In consonance with the tradition of the Spanish rural drama pioneered by Angel Guimera and Jacinto Benavente, the chief role in almost every play of Federico Garcia Lorca belongs to a woman. Only two of his plays, viz., *If Five Years Pass* and *The Love of Don Perlimplin for Belisa in His Garden* give the principal roles to male characters. *Dona Rosita, the Spinster* deals with the mental agony of a jilted girl; *Mariana Pineda* describes the heroic sacrifice of a Granada girl. The light-hearted *The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife* also assigns the principal role to a sensual, shrewish woman. *Blood Wedding* focuses attention on the suffering and bereavement of three women; and *Yerma* is about the longing of a barren woman for a child. The ascendancy of the female role culminates in *The House of Bernarda Alba*, subtitled "A Drama About Women in the Villages of Spain"; here eight female characters, in spite of feeling the force of masculine presence, never share the stage with a man. Another fact of immense importance about Lorca's characters is that whereas his females compel our admiration with their feminine charm, simplicity, earthliness, courage, and endurance, his males are mostly indescribable men who hardly leave any impression on us and soon fade into oblivion.
The reason why Lorca was prompted to portray striking female figures in his plays 'over and again is not far to seek. In his childhood, little Federico suffered from an illness owing to which he was not able to speak or walk until he was about four. His inability to take part in games which children usually play forced him to isolation and the company of women in the house. Consequently, he developed an effeminate nature. This, coupled with his profound poetic sensitivity and keen aesthetic sensibility, helped him to study and understand the feminine characters closely. No wonder, his insight into the feminine character was so natural and deep.

A study of Lorca's plays reveals that although he has created a variety of feminine types, his portrayal of women is influenced neither by such modern literary forces as psychological realism nor by any one of the modern ideologies. His characters are men and women of action, seldom subjecting themselves to self-analysis. William I. Oliver finds them closer to the characters of the Greek classical tradition:

Lorca's characters are created according to the Aristotelian dichotomy of ethos and dianoia. Lorca's concept of character is something to be described in terms of desires, motion, events and speech.

His characters express their feelings through their actions and leave it to the audience to do the analysis. And when it is not possible to translate their feelings into action,
they take recourse to exclamatory speeches. However, they do so not in self-analysis but in self-expression. Yerine's impassioned monologues and the Mother's hyperboles in Blood Redding are ample evidence of this tendency.

Another important thing to bear in mind about Lorca's characters is that they are all Spanish. Lorca often said that he was a Spaniard and it was impossible for him to live beyond his geographical boundaries. In order to understand his characters, therefore, we must keep in mind that the Spaniards are a proud people with a passion for living and dying and an immense capacity for suffering and endurance. Also one must not lose sight of the fact that the place of a Spanish woman is her home where she lives life truly and intensely as a mother, wife, or fiancée. Politics, for instance, is not her forte, though she may be caught in the web of it as is Narcisa Linde. She would evoke little sympathy if she died for a political cause, but a woman laying down life for the sake of love is a veritable tradition in Spain.

Though Lorca's female characters are not alike, it might be possible to trace some common characteristics in them. Firstly, they are endowed with a passion which is too powerful to resist. This is quite natural because, as Morris Freedman observes:
Lorca is pre-eminently a playwright of passion in the modern theatre. ... Lorca's three great tragedies — Blood Wedding, Yerma, and The House of Bernarda Alba — are stripped nearly bare of the details of setting. ... Lorca entered his drama of reality all force but passion. ... The motivation and energy for plot are in passion.

Lorca's women as, as Edwin longitudinal puts it, "the horrors of all passion and earthy reality ... they threaten to die, the move man-made machinery of social law, which is finally, a substitution for life." 

passion affects these exceptional women in varying ways and degrees. For instance, "the passion of the mother is both personal and universal, her own particular agony enlarged to the dimensions of universal maternal passion." Throughout the play she refers to herself as a widow and bereaved mother. She has lost her husband and elder son in a violent feud with the Feliz family and the overwhelming fear that her younger son would meet the fate of the other two men continually haunts her. She is ruled by the passion of love (for her son) and the passion of hatred (for the Feliz family) with equal intensity. The very mention of the word "Feliz" evokes a strong reaction in her and she burns with hatred and growing lust for revenge. She is sad over her impotence to avenge the murders. The thought upsets her that the killers have not been suitably punished:

Can anyone bring me your father back? Or your brother? Then there's the jail. What do they mean, jail? In jail there, smoke there, play music there! My dead men choking with weeds; silent, turning to dust. Two men like two beautiful flowers. The killers in jail, carefree, looking at the mountains.
Her passions are aroused again as her son prepares to marry the Bride, who had at one time been the fiancee of Leonardo, a descendant of the Felix family. In fact, the entire action of the play revolves round the mother's passions of love, hatred, and vengeance.

Contrasted with the fulfilled and socially sanctioned passion of the Mother is the unfulfilled and socially forbidden erotic passion of the Bride who calls herself "crazy" and whose "breast rots with longing". After her abortive love affair with Leonardo, she is determined to love her betrothed and lead a settled life in conformity with the established norms of the Spanish society. Then Leonardo once again appears on the scene and arouses her dormant passion:

LEONARDO. To burn with desire and keep quiet about it is the greatest punishment we can bring on ourselves.... You think that time heals and walls hide things, but it isn't true, isn't true! When things get that deep inside you there isn't anybody can change them.

BRIDE, trembling. I can't listen to you. I can't listen to your voice. It's as though I'd drunk a bottle of anise and fallen asleep wrapped in a quilt of roses. It pulls me along, and I know I'm drowning — but I go on down.

The Bride is torn between the celebration of the socially permitted union with the Bridgegroom and the consummation of illicit amatory relationship with Leonardo. Like Shakespeare's Juliet, she knows the consequences of
following the impulse. She is aware that the rash act of following one's passion, opposed to the established customs of society, brings down the world of reason and crushes the transgressor. Initially, she tells Leonardo that she will love her prospective husband because she has her pride: "And that's why I'm getting married. I'll lock myself in with my husband and then I'll have to love him above everyone else." But her determination proves too fragile; she cannot sustain herself against the irresistible spell of Leonardo: the walls of conformity break down and all her defenses give way. Her passion forces her to take the extreme step of fleeing with Leonardo just after her marriage with the Bridegroom has been solemnized. The passion which has provided the Bride strength to break the barriers of honour is as strong as the passion of the Mother. While she is alone in the woods with Leonardo, "the Bride does not want life... from Leonardo. He is the demand for the satisfaction of passion, of self", and the object of her sensuality:

LEONARDO. Oh, it isn't my fault - the fault is the earth's - and this fragrance that you exhale from your breasts and your braids.

BRIDE. Oh, how untrue! I want from you neither bed nor food, yet there's not a minute each day that I don't want to be with you, because you drag me, and I come, then you tell me to go back and I follow you, like chaff blown on the breeze.
She is scorched by the intensity of the passion against which she finds it futile to struggle even though the danger is apparent. She longs for death when Leonardo is beside her:

It's fitting that I should die here,
with water over my feet,
and thorns upon my head.'10

After Leonardo and the Bridegroom have slain each other, the Bride comes to the Mother and justifies her blind, natural, irresistible craving for Leonardo:

You would have gone, too. I was a woman burning with desire, full of sores inside and out, and your son was a little bit of water from which I hoped for children, land, health; but the other was a dark river, choked with brush, that brought near me the undertone of its rushes and its whispered song. And I went along with your son who was like a little boy of cold water—and the other sent against me hundreds of birds who got in my way and left white frost on my wounds, my wounds of a poor withered woman, a girl caressed by fire. I didn't want to; remember that! I didn't want to. Your son was my destiny and I have not betrayed him, but the other one's arm dragged me along like the pull of the sea, like the head toss of a mule, and he would have dragged me always, always, always—even if I were an old woman and all your son's sons held me by the hair.'11

Bearing close resemblance to the Bride is the oversexe heroine of The House of Bernarda Alba, Adela, young and beautiful, who is also endowed with a passion which possesses her completely.' The ruthless mother, Bernarda Alba, keeps the passions of all her daughters locked up, but this effort to impose conformity to social customs and norms evokes revolt from Adela. "The fatal opposition originates in Adela's
passion, which gives her authority at least momentarily equal to Bernarda's," observes Alfred Schwarz. With the strength of her passion, she challenges the despotic rule of her mother. She spurns every warning and advice which stands in the way of her desire for erotic consummation; she declares: "I'll do whatever I want to with my body.... My body will be for whomever I choose." In vain does La Foncia, who acts like Cassandra, predicting doom in the play, advise her not to break "God's law" but to bide her time and wait until her sickly, narrow-waisted sister Angustias died in childbirth. This advice only meets with contemptuous rejection: "Save your advice. It's already too late. For I'd leap not over you, just a servant, but over my mother to put out this fire I feel in my legs and my mouth." The savage and hypocritical conventions of the society only strengthen Adela's conviction that her submission to passion is right. Pepc's magic spell on her is so great that she is ready to make any sacrifice to maintain her sexual relationship with him. Honour, social position, and family ties — all lose their significance in the face of her desire for sexual gratification. She is ready even to assume the most despised position of the mistress of a married man: "Everybody in the village against me, burning me with their fiery fingers; pursued by those who claim they're decent, and I'll wear, before them all, the crown of thorns that belongs
to the mistress of a married man."15 The consummation of amatory urges with Pepe makes her even bolder. She tells her sisters that she had grown strong enough to force a wild horse to his knees with just the strength of her little finger.

Inevitably, she comes into clash with her puritanical mother. In a fit, symbolic of her rebellion — fired, of course, by her erotic passion — she breaks Bernarda's come into two.

Now it is not her mother who commands her, "But Pepe commands me. Know that.... He'll be the master in this house."16

The Bride and Adela act in contravention of the rules of the community in the fond hope that their passions will bring them release from the hopelessness and despair of their existence. According to Julianne Burton:

Both young women view their illicit lovers as saviours, who will, by the warmth of their bodies and the strength of their passions, transform an unendurable existence.... The growth of such desperate passion out of alienation, fear, and stifling powerlessness renders its tremendous grip understandable. The ambivalence which the elements of the society feel towards this surrender to passion and consequent rejection of public morality is relayed through the chorus-like exchange between the Woodcutters, who argue that Leonardo and the Bride have done right to flee.... They conclude that it is better to bleed to death than to live with your blood rotting inside you. 17

Yerma's passion is different from the passion of the Mother or the passion of the Bride and Adela. Hers is a near maniacal passion for maternity or, more precisely, for fertility
The very act of becoming a mother seems to be enough to fulfil her function as a woman. Throughout the play, one hears of her craving for a child. Her barrenness contrasts sharply with the fertility that surrounds her in nature: in other women, in fields and in animals:

For I'm hurt, hurt and humiliated beyond endurance, seeing the wheat ripening, the fountains never ceasing to give water, the sheep bearing hundreds of lambs, the she-dogs; until it seems that the whole countryside rises to show me its tender sleeping young, while I feel two hammer-blows here, instead of the mouth of my child.18

Apart from the passion for maternity, there is Yerma's erotic passion though she does not feel it with the same degree of intensity as do the Bride and Adela. She longs for consummation of her desire for sex, but her husband, Juan, lacks the vitality to rouse himself to the pitch of the passion that Yerma requires. This is clear from Yerma's perception: "I who've always hated passionate women, would like to be at that instant a mountain of fire."19 Interestingly, while Yerma expresses her dislike for ardently passionate women, she admits that she would like to be a "mountain of fire" to take away some of Juan's coldness and fill him with desire. Yerma, to whom other means of sexual gratification are barred, desperately seeks warmth and fulfilment from her husband: "I'm looking for you. I'm looking for you. It's you I look for day and night without finding a shade where to draw breath. It's
your blood and help I want.  

Juan, however, cannot respond to her physical and emotional needs. Yerma, then, curses the warm blood in her veins that clamours for fulfilment: "Cursed be my father who left me his blood of a father of a hundred sons. Cursed be my blood that searches for them, knocking against wall."  

Bernarda Alba epitomizes a passion that is quite different from that of any other feminine character drawn by Lorca; hers is a passion that has gone too far in smothering normal, emotional passion. In its extremity, it has become anti-passion. Morris Freedman gives an appraisal of her passion:  

Bernarda Alba did bear five children, but we are to gather that this was in the cause of social honour, that whatever passion she might have begun with has attenuated into nothingness, been distorted into self-hatred. She hates her daughters. Bernarda Alba's passion is exercised in the extinguishing of passion: the sadist can have definition through the masochist, his diametrically opposite.  

Her passion for sadism drives her to subject her daughters to the worst type of incarceration leading to the physical death of one and the spiritual death of the rest.  

Passion is a ruling force not only in the female protagonists of Lorca's famous folk tragedies but also in the heroines of his other plays. Mariana Pineda, a legendary historical character, is transfigured by Lorca as a girl fired
by the passion of love, liberty, and heroism. He writes:

I put Mariana Pineda among the characters created by the authors of the Golden Age. At that time I read the Golden Age dramatists with the greatest emotion and Mariana Pineda was for me a character out of one of their plays impelled by a heroic passion.  

Mariana is deeply in love with Pedro Sotomayor, a man of destiny, fighting for liberty. Reminiscent of the Bride's passion for Leonardo in Blood Wedding, she articulates her feelings for Pedro:

My victory lies in this — having you here! Watching your eyes when you look somewhere else. With you beside me, I forget my fear; and I feel in love with all the world.

...Pedro, loving
We seem to be outside of time -
there is no night or day, just you and I.  

Besides her love for Pedro, Mariana is in love with liberty for the attainment of which Pedro has pledged his life. Pedro, too, loves Mariana, but his love for liberty is far greater than his love for her. As Enrique Díez Canedo points out, "... only when she understands that in the soul of her beloved the love for freedom is greater than the love for herself, does she become transfigured... into a symbol of that very liberty." She puts her life in danger and embroiders a flag for Pedro, but Pedro un gallantly forsakes her to face the consequences. Still she does not blame him. Going to the gallows heroically, she identifies herself with freedom of which Pedro was so fond:
My name is freedom, for love willed it so 
Pedro, that freedom for which you left me. 
I am that very freedom men have wounded! 
Love, love, love and eternal solitude.26

Lorca's lesser known heroines of his comic plays, 
the Shoemaker's Wife and Belisa, are also passionate women. 
Both are young, earthy, and sensuous, and both are married to 
men who are too old to meet their sexual needs. But whereas 
the Shoemaker's Wife's passion is purely for the romantic 
and the ideal, Belisa's is an exaggeration of sensuality. 
The Shoemaker's wife is pursued and wooed by a number of 
suitors, but she keeps all of them at bay. On the other hand, 
Belisa accepts all of them joyfully. Her mother also hints at 
the sexual delights which she (Belisa) can give. Her passion 
and thirst for sex is manifest in the erotic song she sings: 

Ah love, ah love. 
Tight in my thighs imprisoned 
There swims like a fish the sun. 
Warm water in the rushes.27

She is ready to offer her body to any man to slake her thirst: 

Ah! whoever seeks me ardently will find me. 
My thirst is never quenched, just as the thirst 
of the gargoyles who spurt water in the 
fountains is never quenched. 28

The force of erotic passion is observed even in Lorca's 
puppet play, The Billy-Club Puppets, in which Rosita is a 
passionate young thing, full of erotic ardour, whose mother 
extols her sexual attraction.
Although Lorca's plays have female protagonists, the world depiction is one dominated by menfolk and determined by the values created by the male. No wonder, his females are obsessed with the male sex. Though these women suffer because the society proffers all privileges and prerogatives to men, they are unable to take their thoughts off the menfolk. The only plausible explanation of this obsession can be that they expect that their liberation will ultimately come through the world of men. Even Bernarda, despite all her insistence on malelessness in her house, evinces a great deal of interest in the affairs of men. This is apparent in the first act where she insists on Poncia to tell her what the men were talking about at her husband's funeral, no matter how obscene and ribald it was. Her daughter, Martirio, whom Bluefark describes as a "kind of major domo of repression, a paler second itself of Bernarda"\(^{29}\), despite her hatred for men, is deeply attracted to Pepe.

It is also curious to note that the Lorcan women, like companions in captivity, help one another endure their suffering and misery. But that is only so long as a man has not interfered in their relationships. Once a man has come between them, they behave differently. Blood ties are severed and strong bonds of kinship are sundered. La Poncia is aware of the psychology of women. She, therefore, forecasts about Bernarda's emotionally-starved daughters: "They're women
without men, that's all. And in such matters even blood is forgotten." The confrontation between Martirio and Adela towards the close of the play proves her correct. Martirio is aware of Adela's illicit sexual relationship with Pepe el Romano, whom she herself loves secretly. She confesses her love for Pepe and tries to prevail upon Adela to forget him:

MARTIRIO, dramatically. Yes! Let me say it without hiding my head. Yes! My breast's bitter, bursting like a pomegranate. I love him!

ADELA, impulsively, hugging her. Martirio, Martirio, I'm not to blame!

MARTIRIO. Don't put your arms around me! Don't try to smooth it over. My blood's no longer yours, and even though I try to think of you as a sister, I see you just another woman.

It is perhaps on account of the same obsession with the male sex that a woman considers herself incomplete unless she has given birth to a male child. Yerma's monologues clearly reveal that it is a son she longs for. The Mother in Blood Wedding considers herself to be very poor after her son has been slain:

MOTHER. I must be calm.... Because the other women will come and I don't want them to see me so poor. So poor! A woman without even one son to hold to her lips.

The desire to renew life is another distinguishing feature of a Lorca heroine because it is only through procreation that she can hope to continue her family line. The Mother in Blood Wedding, who represents eternal motherhood,
hopes for a number of children who will not only enrich the land but also fulfill her desire for continuity of the family. In the time of her own fertility she looked to her husband and in the present she lives only in her son and the hope of renewal in his fertility. Even "half of the Bride's nature descends from the same drive towards fertility", observes Simbardo. "Her father, like the Bridal groom's mother, urges the communion of nature and looks to the renewal of life in his daughter."33

MOTHER. My son will cover her well. He's of good seed. His father could have had many sons with me.

FATHER. What I'd like is to have all this happen in a day. So that right away they'd have two or three boys.... you must have hope. My daughter is wide-hipped and your son is strong.34

The anxiety of the mother and the Bride's Father for grandchildren makes greater sense if we bear in mind that the Spanish society, with its powerful force of tradition, assigns every woman a duty, a mission before everything else she has to become a mother. According to Correa, a Spanish woman

...not only wants to have a child, but several, lots of them. She knows that this is the only way she can accomplish her mission in the world... the children... are the great continuation of her being; in them she contemplates herself; without them her whole life would collapse into a state of despair. Her children constitute her own future social group, and they are her greatest pride, and her principal, her only reason for living.35
It is precisely in conformity with the expectations of society that Yerma longs for a child from her own womb. Day in and day out she is obsessed with the thought of begetting a child. She keeps calling in her lullabies: "When, boy, when will you come to me?" She is ready to undergo any amount of pain and suffering for a child. "Having a child is no bouquet of roses. We must suffer to see them grow. I sometimes think half of our blood must go. But that's good, healthy, beautiful." But, despite all her longing, she remains childless in a sterile marriage.

Paradoxically, though the Lorcan heroines attach such a great significance to maternity, yet, wittingly or unwittingly, they stifle life out of their children. It is a pattern consistently observable in all maternal figures of his three tragedies. Having lost her husband and her elder son in a violent feud, the Mother's sole concern is for the well-being of her only surviving son, the Bridegroom. She would do anything to see him happily settled in life. Precisely for this reason she acquiesces in his choice of the Bride though at heart she is opposed to the match because the Bride was at one time the sweet-heart of Leonardo Felix, a descendant of the same murderous, death-dealing stock that has already robbed her of her most valuable possessions. She cheerfully undertakes preparations for the
wedding and advises her son how he should take care of his wife. The Bride's elopement with Leonardo, however, brings about a change in her attitude. Instead of her son's well-being, it is the defense of family honour which occupies her thoughts now. Despite a premonition of the impending disaster, she incites the Bridegroom to wreak vengeance on the fleeing lovers: "Shake the dust from your heels!... Out of here! On all roads. The hour of blood has come again.... After them! After them!" The son falls trying to defend the pride and honour of the family.

Bernarda Alba, though a father-surrogate like the Mother, has no male child but five aging daughters. She is faced with the predicament of finding suitable matches for them and setting them up in life. Her problem, by no means simple in the primitive society in which she lives, warps her character and turns her into an incarnation of evil. Lacking maternal affection and solicitude of the Mother and excessively fastidious about social stratification, she incarcerates her daughters to such an extent that they cannot come into contact, much less communicate, with any male in the village. A counterpart to old Cacot in O'Neill's Desire Under the Elms "for her unconcern about human life and bigoted attitude", she forces the girls to the dark pit of emotional emptiness. Finally, her unreasonable preoccupation...
with the social conventions of her milieu and immoderate enforcement of the inherited laws aggravate the tension to the point of disaster: the youngest daughter, Adela, commits suicide and the remaining four lose every hope of salvation which signifies their spiritual death.

Yerma, the third maternal figure of the trilogy, represents potential motherhood of a woman trying to overcome her sterility. She finds herself married to a phlegmatic man in whom the milk of life force has dried up or curdled. Since her honour shall not allow her to have recourse to any dishonourable solution to her problem, she strangles her husband in desperation, placing herself beyond the possibility of fulfilment of her emotional urge. The murder of her husband, in fact, signifies the murder of the child she might have got from him at some time in the future. She cries in anguish, "I've killed my own son." 40

Thus, ironically, in one way or the other, the Lorcan maternal figures end up in destroying their children whose creation and well-being they undertake to fulfil and protect. Like Saturn, they devour their own children.

The Spaniards have always insisted on applying the principle of "honour" among all social classes; the passion and the pride of the Spanish people are inseparable from it. Even in the Golden Age of the Spanish drama, Lope de Vega
dramatized it in a number of plays including the famous *Fuente Ovejuna*, and Calderon de la Barca followed it up in the peasant plays like *The Alcalde of Zalamea*. True to the Spanish tradition, the female protagonists of Lorca adhere to a stern code of honour which is more important to them and their families than life. Honour for them is a manifestation of virtue which is worth living and dying for and since honour is of paramount importance, all human desires and motivations are subordinated to it. Obviously, the individuals have to impose some kind of discipline upon themselves and fit their actions to the expectations of the community in which they live.

To uphold and preserve family honour is one of the obsessions of Lorca's heroines. The Mother in *Blood Wedding* is a case in point. She has already suffered crushing bereavement when the play opens: her husband and son have been done to death in an old feud. Understandably, then, her primary concern is for her only surviving son. But when she learns that the bride has eloped with Leonardo, she rallies and prepares "to kill quickly and well." She has a foreboding that her son will not survive and so the fear of renewed bereavement haunts her. But after a moment's hesitation she tells her son to pursue the lovers: the honour of the family must be maintained even if it would mean the extinction of the family line. She is strong and unwavering,
ready to meet death in the race. The son dies defending the family honour and when the Bride comes to share the Mother's grief, she asks her "Where's his good name?" The Mother represents the Spaniards' peculiar sense of honour. Her husband and sons have been wiped out and she has been left all alone. Yet her main concern is with the honour of the family.

By the standards of the same code of honour, an unmarried woman must keep her virginity unviolated and a married woman must seek emotional fulfilment only from her husband, because the society has assigned every woman a fixed and immutable relationship with the male sex. The Bride in Blood Wedding is conscious of the guilt that she has committed by running off with her former lover under the force of impulse. She has acted in contravention of the moral laws of society. She has failed to respect her vow of fidelity to the Bridegroom; and she has denied him the right to fecundate her. Though she has acted intemperately, she has not allowed her lover to violate her chastity. In the final scene she appears before the Mother and tries to convince her of her inviolate state: "I want her [the Mother] to know I'm clean, that I may be crazy, but that they can bury without a single man having seen the whiteness of my breasts." Her statements are pledges that her chastity has not been sullied. Her obsession to prove her virginity
assumes rather unreasonable proportions. She is ready to undergo the ordeal of a fire-test to prove the truth of her claim: "Clean, clean as a new born little girl. And strong enough to prove it to you. Light the fire. Let's stick our hands in: you for your son, I, for my body. You will draw yours out first."\textsuperscript{44} Everything seems to have been lost for her for ever: her husband and her lover are both dead and nothing that she may do can ever mitigate the extent of her guilt, but she seeks consolation from the fact that she has observed the law of honour. Incidentally, of all unmarried women in Lorca's plays, it is only Ànita who transgresses the code of honour under the impulse of her imperious erotic passion and pays the price with her own life.

As mentioned, the law of honour binds a woman to the observance of the matrimonial vows. Juan, Yerma's husband, has failed to fecundate her. The choice before Yerma is very clear and simple: life with Juan with the prospect of eternal frustrated motherhood or unsanctioned gratification outside her marriage. But she is a Spanish woman who can make no compromise with her honour: "They think I like another man. They don't know that even if I should like another man, to those of my kind, honour comes first."\textsuperscript{45} Being a woman of intrinsic quality, the code of honour for her is as unrelenting and immutable as the laws of nature. She reacts violently to the depraved suggestion of the old woman who tries to coax her to seek salvation with her son:
Do you imagine I could know another man? Where would that leave my honour? Water can't run uphill, nor does the full moon rise at noonday.... Look at me, so you'll know me and never speak to me again. I'm not looking for anyone.40

Thus, ultimately, Yerma opts for a life of renunciation in preference to defiling her honour. Similarly, Mariana Pineda, whom her fiance has left exposed and unprotected to the tyrannical powers, observes the law of honour in the face of dire tribulations. She steadfastly preserves her feminine purity, opposing amorous overtures from the wicked and dastardly Pedrosa, who reveals his evil designs to her:

I want you to be mine. You hear me? Either mine or dead.47

The choice before Mariana is not an easy one; either she must give her body to that blackguard or die on the gallows. Fleeing away from Pedrosa's embrace, she refuses his warped terms:

Never! First I'd rather give my blood
And let this cost me pain, but still with honour.
Get out of here.48

Anxiety and disillusionment are evidently in store for her, for Pedro, her sweet-heart, who, she hopes, would rescue her from her captors, cherishes safety more than her love. But the heroic woman's virtue cannot be tainted. She goes to the scaffold in triumphant exaltation, preferring death to dishonour.
The law of honour is adhered to by the Shoemaker's wife also, who, though flirtatious by nature, does not succumb to the lechers who make amorous advances to her after her husband's desertion. She keeps her honour unsoiled by remaining loyal to her man. She believes God has ordained that a married woman shall be decent:

"My husband has been gone four months, but I'll never give in to anybody-never! Because a married woman should keep her place as God commands.... Decent I was and decent I will be. I gave my word to my husband. Well, until death."

She spurns the alluring offer of a mansion with a beautiful garden made by the sinister Mayor. Nothing can obscure her devotion to her husband on the strength of which she can face the whole village: "A person like me who is sustained by love and honour never surrenders. I'm able to hold out here until all my hair turns white."

Bernarda Alba, the domineering matriarch of Lorca's last play, is fanatically pre-occupied with preserving family honour. Conscious of her superior economic status, she looks upon the villagers with disdain and does not consider anyone "for a hundred miles around" worthy of marrying her daughters. To her, honour is far more important than the emotional life of her frustrated girls. La Poncia, aware of the goings on in the house, tells her that no one can see inside a man's heart. Ignoring the importance of the warning, she contemptuously retorts: "I don't pry into anyone's heart, but I want to put up a good front and have family harmony". This, then, in Brie Bentley's words, is Bernarda's concept of...
honour: "What goes on in a person's heart does not matter—honour has reference only to what is on the outside, what enters the social realm." Adela's suicide shakes her initially, but soon she is in command of the situation again. The family honour has to be preserved from taint. Lest the villagers should know that Adela committed suicide as a result of an unsavouring love-affair, she tells everyone present not to breathe a word about it:

Cut her down! My daughter died a virgin.
Take her to another room and dress her as though she were a virgin. No one will say anything about this! She died a virgin. Tell them, so that at dawn, the bells will ring twice.

There are thus two disparate standards of honour in the feminine characters of Lorca. In Yerma, Mariana Pineda, and the Bride, we witness a conflict between principle and feeling, a conflict in which these women try to fit their actions to the expectations of the community in which they live. Since principle for them is synonymous with virtue, it enables them to get over their feelings and instinct. They finally accomplish that which is in consonance with their honour and dictates of their community. Needless to say, they suffer agony and anguish, but they have a sense of achievement in painful reconciliation to their ideals. However, in Bernarda Alba one does not witness any conflict between principle and feeling. Honour for her is tantamount to the keeping up of appearances: her notions
of honour are artificial and hypocritical. All she is interested in is a clean facade and preservation of an appearance of decency in her house.

To sum up, then, though Lorca's plays are set in the male-dominated Spanish society, the principal role in most of them belongs to a woman. Showing deep psychological insight into the female psyche, Lorca invests her heroines with attributes, virtues, and weaknesses that the flesh is heir to. However, in portraying them real and true to life, he makes them capable of good as well as of evil. Following the tradition of the Spanish playwrights, like Lope de Vega and Calderon de La Barca, Lorca endues his women with an imperious passion and a strong sense of honour, the two attributes which give rise to both dramatic tension and their tragedy. Besides, with his awareness of the native soil and tradition, he invests them with a strong instinct for motherhood. His women regard marriage as a social obligation and procreation a sacred mission. But, paradoxically, though they crave for children, they become a cause for their destruction.
NOTES


3 Federico Garcia Lorca (Norfolk Conn.: New Directions, 1947).

4 Morris Freedman, p.99.


6 Ibid., p.60.

7 Ibid., p.60.


9 Three Tragedies, pp.87-88

10 Ibid., p.89.

11 Ibid., p.96.


13 Three Tragedies, p.131.

14 Ibid., pp.192-93

15 Ibid., p.208.

16 Ibid., pp.209-10


18 Three Tragedies, p.132.

19 Ibid., p.140.

20 Ibid., p.142.
21 Ibid., p.143
22 Morris Freedman, p.96
26 Mariana Pineda, p.75
28 Ibid., p.116.
30 Three Tragedies, p.204.
31 Ibid., p.208.
32 Ibid., p.95.
33 Zimbardo, p.367.
34 Three Tragedies, pp.69-70.
36 Three Tragedies, p.106
37 Ibid., p.108.
38 Ibid., p.78
40 Three Tragedies, p.153
41 Ibid., p.77
42 Ibid., p.96
43 Ibid., p.96
44 Ibid., p.97
45 Ibid., p.133
46 Ibid., p.151
47 Marianna Finizza, p. 57
48 Ibid., p. 57
49 Fine Flaws, pp. 85-86
50 Ibid., p. 104
51 Three Tragedies, p. 199
53 Three Tragedies, p. 211.