CHAPTER III

FEMALE FRUSTRATION IN LORCA: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

Lorca has consistently drawn frustrated females. The Mother, the Bride, Verma, Rosita— to name only a few of his leading females— are all frustrated. What impelled Lorca to return over and again to the theme of female frustration is not difficult to understand. Firstly, Lorca was not an ivory-towerist who could beat a retreat from the social and economic problems of the Spain of his day. He had a profound awareness of the oppressive social circumstances in which the woman of Spain was caught. From the very beginning he was intrigued by the abuses and injustices heaped upon the Spanish women by a closed, male-dominated society. He often heard his mother, Dona Vicenta, protest against the senseless waste of Spanish womanhood and express her wrath against men who regarded women as nothing better than slaves or at best an extension of their physical property. Lorca's sensitive and impressionable mind revolted against the age-old Spanish conventions which allowed full freedom to men but confined woman to the four walls of her house to serve her husband and rear her children.

When in 1929-30 Lorca undertook a tour of the U.S.A., female emancipation and the equality of sexes there made him all the more conscious of the social conditions of Spain. He
was shocked to compare the position of the oppressed Spanish woman with that of her emancipated counterpart of North America. Duran, calling attention to his eventful visit to the States, observes:

The position of the Spanish woman living within the confines of the traditional family must have seemed to him somewhat absurd and at times difficult and tragic.... The difference between the happy and carefree eroticism of Belisa in The Love of Don Perlimplin for Belisa in His Garden... and the tragic feminine characters in Lorca's plays written after his return from New York is a fact of enormous importance.

Significantly, after his return to Spain, Lorca's plays dealt exclusively with a single theme, viz., the suffering and frustration of the Spanish woman. Burton, too, recognizes the importance of Lorca's travels abroad and his consciousness of the brutal laws of a dehumanized society in moulding him into a playwright of female frustration:

His experiences abroad and circumstances at home sensitized him to the social realities of the Spain of his day : an archaic, hypocritical, and crippling morality; a hierarchical, even tyrannical structure, extreme social stratification and exploitation of humbler sections; and a social sexual code which privileged men at the expense of women's autonomy, participation, and self-realization."

With the depth and scope of his social dimension, Lorca, like one committed to a cause, made concerted efforts through the portrayal of frustrated women to expose and denounce the social system which gave rise to such irreconcilable contradictions and reduced woman to such a pitiable position.
In the traditional society that Lorca depicts, a woman is frustrated because her place is no better than that of a slave. The society has defined her function within the house only, as Bernarda decrees: "Needle and thread for women. Whiplash and mule for men." Juan, Yerma's husband, shares Bernarda's view of the place of a woman when he clubs together the sheep in the fold and women at home. That is why he does not allow Yerma to move about in the streets or talk to the people. He tells her categorically: "I don't like people to be pointing me out. That's why I want to see this door closed and each person in his house." Man, being woman's master in this society, governs all her actions. Since he is a provider of bread and shelter, he enjoys the prerogative to snub her, to scold her, and even to inflict physical punishment on her. Juan has assigned to his two spinster sisters the duty to keep a watch over Yerma. If they are amiss in the discharge of their duty, he reprimands them: "That woman's still not here. One of you should go out with her. That's why you are here eating at my table and drinking my wine." So long as a woman depends upon a man, she has to do his bidding and be subject to his will. Man has the legally sanctioned right to force a woman to do his will. Juan must force Yerma not to step out of the house since it may give rise to suspicion among the neighbours: "I oughtn't to say to you: 'forgive me', but force you to obey me, lock you up, because that's what I'm the husband
The dichotomy of the roles of the two sexes also extends to the institution of marriage. In this primitive society, as Bluefarb notes, "... marriage is often looked upon by the women as a fate to be endured rather than an experience to be enjoyed, and ... the woman's role is often referred to as *obligada*, with all the moral, psychological and legal duties that the word suggests." However, for a man marriage is not much of an obligation; the bonds of marriage do not bind a man as much as they bind a woman to her spouse. A woman has to look only to her husband for the gratification of her emotional urges. She is punished for any sexual infraction, however trivial, while a man enjoys the freedom of sexual promiscuity. One comes across numerous instances of this double standard in the plays of Lorca. The Mother in *Blood Wedding*, for instance, advises the bride about her destined role as a woman after the wedding: "Do you know what it is to be married, child ...? A man, some children and a wall two yards thick for everything else." La Poncia gives an account of a man's obligations after the marriage in *The House of Bernarda Alba*. To Bernarda's daughters she says: "You're not married but it is good for you to know, anyway that two weeks after the wedding a man gives up the bed for the table, then the table for the tavern, and the woman who doesn't like it can just rot weeping in a corner." A case in point is Bernarda's own husband, Antonio Maria Benavides, a profligate all his life, who had been carrying
on a clandestine affair with a maid servant. A minor character in *Yerma*, a girl who has recently married, criticizes the institution of marriage and a woman's consequent house-bound confinement: "I don't like to cook or do washing. Well, now I have to spend the whole day doing what I don't like to do... everybody's stuck inside their house doing what they don't like to do. How much better it is out in the streets."13 In this society a married woman's desire for freedom is completely smothered.

It is ironical that the defence of a woman's loyalty to her husband and a man's promiscuity comes from a woman herself. The Mother in *Blood Wedding* says: "One woman with one man and that's all." A woman must confine herself to one man only and should her husband die, she must lock herself up and look at the bare walls as did the Mother after her husband's death. She can never think of seeking satisfaction of her physical urges anywhere else. A man, even if he has a wife living, can explore other means of sexual gratification. The society, which punishes adultery in a woman with ostracism, does not castigate the man for extramarital relations. The Mother, who says: "One woman with one man", absolves the man from such confinement. To her son she says: "Your father used to take me. That's the way with men of good stock; good blood. Your grandfather left a son at every corner. That's what I like."11 This presents a sharp contrast with the way she views the bride's elopement with Leonardo, which infuriates her to such an extent that she incites her son to revenge.
and bloodshed. Julianne Burton sums up the contradiction as inherent in Andalusian society as portrayed by Lorca:

"A man's virility requires numerous sexual conquests whereas a woman's honour demands that she be above suspicion, that is, even free of the possibility of sexual contact with a man who is not her husband or a member of her immediate family. The female sex bears the brunt of pressure and punishment in this system of incompatible codes of honour."  

In a country like Spain where life is regulated by the immutable and rigid social code and convention, the conflict between the individual and his environment is very acute. The code being unchallengeable, a woman must live and seek happiness within its framework. Lorca's Yerma desperately longs for a child but she cannot bear any because her husband is not interested in children; he considers them encumbrances. And the code according to which she lives bars her from getting a child outside her marriage. Thus the only inevitable outcome of her maternal drive can be despair.

Similarly, gentle Doña Rosita is doomed to fade into oblivion as an unmarried woman because of her desertion by a man. Since the society makes such rejection a symbol of shame, her frustration grows deeper and more intense. Caught in that predicament, she becomes a pitiable creature, subject to the gossip of the neighbours and an outcast in all but outward appearances. Lorca has modelled her after a rose.
that lives just for a day. Lima, talking of her resemblance to the rose, holds the society responsible for her plight:

While the rose is a part of nature, living and dying according to its dictates, Rosita is only physically so. The rest of her is dominated by a stifling artificiality which is the hallmark of the society in which she exists. While the rose's life is precarious because nature so origins, Rosita has to face a double jeopardy—that imposed by the actual rules of life and that superimposed by society.13

Lorca laments the fate of women like Rosita who turn into old maids before they have enjoyed the bliss of youth:

"Dona Rosita is the cuter gentleness and inner scorching of a girl of Granada, who little by little, turns into that grotesque and moving thing—a old maid of Spain." He wonders how long Rositas will continue to suffer on account of the callousness of society: "There you have the life of my Dona Rosita, moe-, unfulfilled, aimless, vulgar.... How long will all other Rositas of Spain be like that?"14

The suffering and frustration of the five unmarried daughters of Bernarda Alba are brought about by the imposition of the rigid social conventions by their ruthless mother. Bernarda tenaciously clings to the outworn traditions and customs of society and in her fanatical desire to perpetuate the mores of her class and family, she loses sight of all considerations—moral, emotional, and psychological. After the death of her husband, she is determined to keep her daughters incarcerated and declares prolonged mourning:

"For the eight years of mourning not a breath of air will
get into this house from the street. We'll act as if we'd sealed up doors and windows with bricks. That's what happened in my father's house and in my grandfather's house."\textsuperscript{15} Not only her daughters but also her eighty-year-old mother feels suffocated in the oppressive atmosphere of the house, which has been converted into a prison. "The life of frustrated desire", as Schwarz sums up "... exhibits in the earthy wit of the old servant, La Poncia, and the mad sexual fantasies of Bernaria's eighty-year-old mother, in the hopelessness and cynicism of the older daughters and the fierce hatred of Adela's rival, Martíno."\textsuperscript{16}

One of the major and most significant causes of frustration of Lorca's feminine characters is their erotic unfulfillment. Most of them remain sexually unrequited. Some of these unfulfilled women are dissatisfied with their married state. They are caught up in a connubial relationship in which their need for love and sex is largely unsatisfied; either they are married to old men who are unable to meet their elemental demands of sex or they are bound to men who are too preoccupied with their own pursuits to spare a thought for their women. To the first category belong the youthful Shoemaker's Wife and voluptuous Helisa. The Shoemaker's Wife's frustration springs from her bland and unpromising marriage to the old Shoemaker, who is no match for her insatiable desires. She continually frets over the incongruity of her match and curses her friend who arranged it: "... remember that I'm only
eighteen years old.... Cursed be the hour when I listened to my friend Manuel." she regrets that she rejected a number of gallant young suitors and threw her lot with the insipid old man. Similarly, Belisa is married to old Perlimplin, the nonentity of a husband, who is unable to meet her demands for sexual gratification. Even in the puppet-play, The Elly-Club Puppets, the young and beautiful Rosita is forced by her parent to marry the brutal and repugnant Don Cristobal who is too old to meet her sensual demands.

To the other category belongs Yerma. Apart from her trauma of childlessness, Yerma's frustration also stems from a somewhat less obvious factor: her emotional unfulfillment. Since her marriage, she has never been sexually awakened or aroused; she is virtually alien to the conjugal bliss. She grows more and more desperate as her emotional drive remains unfulfilled in the barren marriage. As for Juan, not once does he show any desire, love or tenderness towards her. Maria Harvey, commenting on his sexual indifference, observes that:

"after five years of marriage, his coldness has intensified to the point of abstinence. Yerma ... finds her bed 'newer and shinier by the day.' Juan spends his nights in the fields; her wife spends hers alone in the house. Yet he marvels at the news of her sleepless nights, and with incredible insensitivity or naivete asks whether or not she lacks anything."
Their marriage has not been consummated even after years. Yerma’s desire for sexual fulfilment finds expression in her anguished cry: "I want to drink water and there is neither water nor a glass. I want to go up the mountain and I have no feet. I want to embroider skirts and I can’t find thread."19 Juan lacks water, a symbol of man’s virility in Lorca. No wonder, Yerma tells an old woman her husband’s coldness in the act of love-making: "...when he covers me, he’s doing his duty but I feel my waist cold as a corpse’s."20 Obviously, she does not find any sexual attraction in Juan. In her confession there exists a parallel to the life of the Bride in Blood Wedding especially with regard to the sexual dissatisfaction she exhibits in her prospective husband.

By projecting the pitiable plight of these women, Lorca seems to be criticising marriages which are not based upon love and castigating the society which creates and tolerates such suffering in women. Like Ibsen, whose heroines such as Nora, Mrs. Alving, and Hedda Gabler suffer on account of marriages to incompatible men, Lorca ridicules the traditional idea that a woman’s place is beside her husband, no matter what he is and how he treats her.

In Lorca’s drama a woman often suffers because of the attitude and selfishness of the man whom she looks up to for love, protection, fulfilment, and salvation. Such is the plight of Zona Rosa to whom her fiancé has betrayed in love.
Although he has plighted his troth to another girl, he continues to write letters to her promising to marry her on his return from Argentina. Rosita, in her gullibility, lives in illusion, believing his promises, until she finds that it is too late to retract. Yerma, too, suffers at the hands of a man, her husband, who, oblivious to her consuming desire for a child, is interested only in material advancement. He fails to visualize Yerma as a potential mother. To him she is at best a companion for sensual pleasure. Yerma knows that he wants her as "you sometimes want a pigeon to eat."

The heroic Mariana finds the fate of Dona Rosita. Like Rosita, she, too, has been abandoned by her selfish, cowardly sweet-heart, Pedro Letomayor, for whom she embroiders a flag and puts her own life in danger. Pointing to the villainy of her lover, Greenfield observes, "the world of Loca's Mariana is... contaminated by the machinations and failings of a tumultuous masculine world which does not appreciate the 'true' values of sentimental and virtuous life. Nature men of the world are villains of the piece:... Pedro and the imperfect lover who abandons the heroine."21 Leaving her to die on the scaffold, he flees to another country for safety where he can conveniently ignore Mariana's call for help:

Pedro, mount your horse or ride upon the day, but quickly! For they come to take my life away.22

Thus, we find that these Lorcan women of deep loyalty and great dignity are associated with one another as victims of man's selfishness.
Since marriage and motherhood grant status to a woman in the Spanish society, inability to procreate brings about frustration and mental agony. In this society, as Correa observes, "to be childless constitutes a kind of ostracism which has no remedy. Not only is it a private tragedy but social too – that is, imposed from without by society, as evidenced by the remarks of the laundresses, who consider Verma a most unfortunate woman." Verma, who has been married for years, is still without a child. She is obsessed with the thought of her sterility and keeps yearning for a child from her own womb:

"But you must come, sweet love, my baby, because water gives salt, the earth fruit, and our wombs guard tender infants just as a cloud is sweet with rain."

Verma thinks that a woman without children is useless and dishonour to her clan: "A ferm woman who bears no children is useless – like a handful of thorns – and even bad – even though I may be part of this wasteland abandoned by the hand of God." The single feeling of Verma's frustration over her sterility runs through the entire play. Verma fears that if she remained childless, her blood would turn into poison: "Every woman has blood for four or five children and when she doesn't have them it turns to poison... as it will in me." She fondles the children of other women with instinctive grace and tenderness, she would gladly undergo the troubles and vexations which accompany motherhood, but all her efforts to
overcome her sterility come to naught. Her dried up womb never fertilizes. She is like the fig tree in the Bible which came under the curse of the Lord because it bore no fruit. Yerma, too, is under the spell of a curse:

OLD WOMAN: Just see what a curse has fallen on your lovely breasts.

YERMA: A curse. A puddle of poison on the wheat heads."27

Frustration, stemming from sterility, is also symbolized in The House of Bernarda Alba: "by a virility grown old and mummified, the eighty-year old grandmother, Maria Josefa, who having no baby of her own to nurse, is now forced — in her senility — to make believe that the lamb she carries in her arms is her baby."28

A minor character, a wiseacre, in whom Yerma confides her dilemma, says: "there is no force in the world like desire."29 The espousal of desire can be blocked by the society but it cannot be silenced completely. Desire repressed or desire denied its proper release redounds to the individual and destroys him. A number of Lorca feminine characters are frustrated because they are victims of suppressed desires. Maria Josefa, Bernarda's deranged mother, is the most repressed of all women. In her first appearance we see her decked with flowers as if she were a bride and her erased monologue epitomizes what goes on in the minds of the five daughters:

I ran away because I want to marry,
I want to get married to a beautiful manly man from the shores of the sea.
Because here the men run away from women....
I don't want to see these single women,
longing for marriage, turning their hearts
to dust; I want to go to my home-town.
Bernarda, I want a man to get married to and
be happy with.33

The five daughters of Bernarda are terribly repressed
and struggle for release. Through the action of the play
Lorca manifests the sexual repression of the girls. Even the
nurs of the rescuers, which is outside the action of the play
heightens the sexual imprisonment and frustration that exists
in the house. Besides, as Corrigan observes, "The stallion in
Bernard's corral is used primarily to heighten the atmosphere
of frustration. The stallion is also used ironically, for
Bernarda is immediately aware of what must be done to satisfy
the horse's needs, but she is totally blind to the desires of
her daughters."34 The girls can never move out of the house
nor can they see a male except from a distance. They merely
sit imprisoned in their house, embroider their hope-chest
linens, and seethe with longing. Even the oldest of them,
Anastasia, who is betrothed to Pepe, can meet her fiancé
briefly across the barred windows. The old grandmother, the
greatest prisoner of the house, represents what these girls
will become. Like Cassandra, she prophesies:

I don't like fields. I like houses, but open
houses and the neighbour women asleep in their
beds with their little tiny tots, and the men
sitting outside in their chairs. Pepe el Romano
is a giant. All of you love him. But he's going
to devour you because you're grains of wheat.
No, not grains of wheat. Frogs with no tongues.35
Martirio, who reveals Adela's clandestine affair with Pepe, voices the repression of the other girls also: "A thousand times happy she, who had him."33

In the primitive society that Lorca portrays, men are prone to violent action and it is often women who have to suffer the pain and anguish of the aftermath. The impassioned monologue of the Mother, who has lost her husband and son in an old feud with the Felix family, are eloquent testimony to the pain of the past loss and her frustration:

It hurts me to the tip of my veins. On the forehead of all of them I see only the hand with which they killed what was mine. Can you really see me? Don't I seem mad to you? Well, it is the madness of not having shrieked out all my breast needs to. Always in my breast there's a shriek standing tip-toe that I've to beat down and hold in under my shawls. But the dead are carried off and one has to keep still.34

In the end her fears of renewed bereavement are realized and her only surviving son is cut off in the prime of his youth in a violent duel with yet another Felix, Leonardo. Thus, violent action by the menfolk has turned the Mother into an embodiment of eternally frustrated motherhood. The death of her last surviving son has frustrated her desire for the continuity of the family blood line. Her fond hope of grandchildren will remain ever unrealized. The same story of man's violence has dried up the springs of happiness in the
lives of the Bride and Leonardo's wife. In the end, the Bride symbolizes frustrated potentiality, doomed to remain unfulfilled for ever, even as Leonardo's wife represents frustrations of widowhood.

To sum up, Lorca's personal experiences and his response to the irreconcilable stratification of the Spanish society impelled him to the theme of female frustration. The single most important factor which gives rise to frustration in women is the total differentiation and consequent alienation between the two sexes. More often than not, it is the men who are responsible for their pathos and suffering. If in certain instances it is men's selfishness, in others it is their impetuosity and proneness to violence, which brings about frustration in women. In any case, frustration remains the inevitable destiny of the Lorcan women, irrespective of the fact whether their lives are dominated by traditional morality or controlled by consuming desires and unsatisfied instinctive passion. Hutman, commenting on the suffering of the Lorcan heroines, observes, "In the larger context of Lorca's three major tragedies, as indeed in all his work, whether one opts for instinct or for tradition, fate is not mocked. Lorca's women are left unfulfilled. Their heritage is frustration." 35

The frustration of Lorca's principal female characters leads to different consequences according to their peculiar circumstances and situations. One of the most common
and recurring consequences of their frustration is their tendency to retire to a world of fantasy because it is in dreams and fantasies that they can find some solace from the stark and sordid realities of their anguished existence.

Lorca's Mariana Pineda, while in confinement of the blackguard Pedrosa, imagines how her sweet-heart, Pedro, will come to rescue her from her captors. Her narration has the simplicity of a child's fantasy:

Don Pedro will race here on his horse
like one gone crazy when he knows
I'm being kept a prisoner...

He will come when the day begins to break,
Through the cool breeze of day, to me. 36

Later, she tells the nuns of the convent in a crazed tone:

"He must be tired, but he'll come up at once." The Shoemaker's Wife, sick of the mediocrity of her present state, constantly lives in the world of her fancy. Lorca has conceived her as "a primary creature and a myth of our pure unsatisfied illusion. She lives in a world of her own where each idea and object has a meaning mysterious for her. She has lived—and had sweet-hearts only there, on that farther bank, which she can never reach." 37 Her recourse to the world of fantasy is an example of the spirit's ability to create a world imaginatively to replace a real one which is unsatisfactory. When her husband, having grown sick of her nagging, leaves her in disgust, she conjures up an image of him such as he never was—handsome, dashing, riding a white mare. She says to the Boy: "When I
met him I was washing clothes in the little brook. Through half a yard of water the pebbles on the bottom could be seen laughing — laughing with little tremblings. He wore a tight black suit, a red tie of the finest silk, and four gold rings that shone like four suns."

Similarly, Belisa, discontented with the reality of her situation, retreats to the world of imagination. She reconstructs the vision of the ideal, gallant young lover whom she has never seen: "... I have failed to see him. In my walk through the park they were all behind me except him. His skin must be dark and his kisses must perfume and burn at the same time — the saffron and cloves. Sometimes he passes underneath my balconies and moves his hand slowly in a greeting that makes my breasts tremble."  

Yeume, even in the opening scene of the play, daydreams of a chile and sings cradle songs:

From where do you come, my love, my baby? 
"From the mountains of ice cold."

What do you lack, sweet love, my baby? 
"The woven warmth in your dress."

...  
What want you, boy, from so far away? 
"The mountain white upon your chest."  

When she has exhausted every means of seeking salvation, she begins to talk to her own body:

Oh, breasts, blind beneath my clothes! 
Oh, doves with neither eyes nor whiteness!
Adela, too, fantasizes that her lover will carry her to the rushes along the river bank where there would be all bliss and no suffering.

Secondly, the frustration of almost all Lorca heroines provides them an excuse, if not impetus, to circumvent convention in minor ways before they break away with it completely. For instance, the bride in Blood Wedding declines to look at her wedding gifts and hurls away her bridal wreath ominously. Contrary to her maid's advice, she appears before Leonardo indecorously in a petticoat. Unable to control her seething passion, she finally violate convention by eloping with Leonardo. As for Yerma, she trifles with convention when she spends one night all by herself at the threshold of her house and again when she sneaks away to Dolores's house to find a cure to her sterility. Her fatal journey to the mountains to participate in the heathen ritual of fertility constitutes still another infringement of the established social mores. However, of all heroines, it is Adela who treats convention most flippantly. In spite of the period of mourning, decreed by her mother, she insists on wearing a bright green dress and going out in the streets. She feels so suffocated by established social behaviour that she comes out openly in condemnation of it. The incongruity of Angustias' match with Pepe provokes her fury. Eventually,
her frustration and pent-up passion incite her to rebel against and transgress the social code. "Her rebellion is hard and relentless, conditioned by the harshness of her mother's authority and by the harshness of the society at large. She is driven by an erotic energy whose only object happens to be ... el amor..."42 Adela clashes with her mother who is symbolic of convention and when she breaks Bernarda's cane, she irrevocably breaks convention.

Contrary to the expectations of the society which believes in smothering truths it cannot accommodate, some of Lorca's women persist in verbalizing their sufferings and frustrations. The Mother and Yerma are singular in their articulateness. The Mother is advised by her son to keep her private suffering to herself, but that is the last thing she can do. Day and night she talks of nothing but her dead men: "If I lived to be a hundred I'd talk of nothing else. First your father, to me he smelled like a carnation.... Then your brother.... No, I'll never be quiet. The months pass and the hopelessness of it stings in my eyes and even to the roots of my hair."43 As for Yerma, she realizes that her sterility is both destined and irremediable, but she wishes to raise her voice against a hostile world: "At least let my voice go free, now that I'm entering the dark part of the pit."44 Everyone in the village — her friends, neighbours, and even laundresses — knows about her dilemma so much so that she becomes a common subject of gossip among the womenfolk. It is
evident in the scene where laundresses discuss Yerma's barrenness:

FIRST LAUNDRESS. It's all his fault; his. When a man doesn't give children, he's got to take care of his wife.

FOURTH LAUNDRESS. It's her fault - because she's got a tongue hard as flint.45

The only heroine to suffer in quiet is Doña P. Síntez, who shows remarkable dignity. Her frustrations are her own burden and no one else's. Although she knows about the deceit her fiance has been playing upon her, she does not trouble her uncle and aunt with the truth. Only towards the end does she make the startling disclosure: "I knew he had married; some kind soul took care to tell me that.... If people had not talked; if you had not learned it; if no one but I had known of it; his letters and his lie would have fed my illusion like the first year of his absence.46 Finally, true to her character, she retreats within her shell of deep agony, refusing the pitying words and caresses of her aunt and the housekeeper.

Further, the anguish and frustration of Lorca's feminine characters often lead to violence, death and consequent bereavement. Yerma, in violent desperation, strangles her husband, whom she considers responsible for her physical and emotional barrenness. She is, thus, doomed to utter desolation without any possibility of fulfilling her elemental
and most consuming desire of mother who d: "Don't come near me, because I've killed my son. I myself have killed my son." The bride's unslaked thirst for emotional gratification brings about the death of her lover and her husband. Ironically, she succeeds in destroying what she most ardently needs. Virgin still, there can be no fulfillment of her desire. Her own tragedy apart, she brings disaster upon the mother and Leonardo's wife, who are also left without men. The Mother's most precious possession has been cut off. She is now "eternally frustrated maternity. Rachel mourning for her children, the barren earth but also earth mother who has been— of the bride will never be — impregnated and yet who comes to as sterile an end as the desire-driven virgin." The future holds no promise for her; there is only the prospect of a solitary existence before her. To quote Zimbardo:

The future is bleak for Leonardo's wife, too, as it is for all widows in that society. Her mother advises her on her destined role:

you, back to your house
brave and alone in your house
To grow old and to weep
but behind closed doors.
Then there is impetuous Adela, who, like Strindberg's Miss Julie, commits suicide as a result of her frustration in a socially unacceptable love-affair. With her death is also destroyed any vestige of hope that her sisters might entertain for the future.

After the turbulence of catastrophe, Lorca's tragic heroines resign peacefully to their lot. Verena undergoes a traumatic experience as a barren woman. Ironically, the permanent loss of her hope brings release from suffering:

"Barren, barren, but sure. Now I really know it for sure. And alone.... Now I'll sleep without startling myself awake, anxious to see if I feel in my blood another new blood. My body dry for ever." 51 The Mother has known so much suffering that she becomes oblivious to the presence of the people who surround her. She fails to recognize the Bride, who comes to share her grief after the great tragedy:

NEIGHBOUR. with rage, seeing the Bride. Where are you going?
BRIDE. I'm coming here.
MOTHER. to the Neighbour. Who is it?
NEIGHBOUR. Don't you recognize her?
MOTHER. That's why I asked who it was. 52

Her tragedy reaches its climax when nothing, not even death, can move her. She doesn't want to wreak vengeance on the Bride, who is the cause of her great misfortune. She reminds one of Synge's Maurya in "Riders to the Sea". After Maurya has lost her youngest son, Bartley, to the sea, she gains
ironic release from pain and resigns herself to fate: "They're all gone now and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me... I won't care what way the sea is when the other women will be keenin..." As with Maria, we see the tragedy of Mother's resignation when the tale of her loss reaches its furthest limit.

Mother. I want to be here. Here. In peace.
They're all dead now; and at mid-night, I'll sleep, sleep, without terror of guns or knives.
Other mothers will go to their windows, lashed by rain, to watch for their sons' faces. But not I.

Thus the theatre of Lorca suggests a uniform destiny for the principal female figures: they are doomed to failure, despair and frustration. As soon as a Lorcan play opens, we become conscious of the fact that tragic consequences await them, no matter how hard they endeavour to escape. Anderson describes them: "as tragic victims... as those who suffer acutely from the turbulence and contradictions of a time when principles and emotions produce the opposite of that which they envisioned or intended." However, like Chekhov's women, they do not surrender to their defeat or accept their failure meekly. Rather, they try to transcend the narrow confines of the society in which they are caught. Convinced of the brutality of social conventions, they often break with them irrevocably under the impulse of their passion and face the terrible consequences. The bride, for instance, is widowed on the very
night of her wedding and Adela ends her life. Bereavement and widowhood, in fact, is the common lot of the Lorcan heroines. But suffering is not all bleak. When it reaches its climax, it provides supreme relief from the pain of existence.
Notes


4. Ibid., p. 130.

5. Ibid., p. 128.

6. Ibid., p. 131.


9. Ibid., p. 190.

10. Ibid., pp. 115-16.

11. Ibid., pp. 115-16.


18 Maria Luisa Alvarez Harvey, "Lorca's Yerma: Frigid... or Mismatched," College Language Association Journal, 23, No. 4 (June 1980), 468-69.
19 Three Tragedies, p. 130.
20 Ibid., p. 140
24 Three Tragedies, p. 131.
25 Ibid., p. 132.
27 Ibid., p. 150.
28 Sam Bluefarb, "Life and Death in Lorca's The House of Bernarda Alba", Drama Survey, IV (1966), 109-120.
29 Three Tragedies, p. 136
30 Ibid., pp 175-76.
32 Three Tragedies, p. 205
33 Ibid., p. 211.
34 Ibid., p. 69.
36 Mariana Pineda, p. 63.
38 Five Plays, p. 87
39 Ibid., p. 123.
40 Three Tragedies, p.105.
41 Ibid., p.131.
43 Three Tragedies, p.35.
44 Ibid., p.143.
46 Five Plays, p.155.
48 Hutman, p.334.
50 Three Tragedies, p.92.
51 Ibid., p.153.
52 Ibid., p.95.
54 Three Tragedies, p.90.
56 Andersen, p.100.