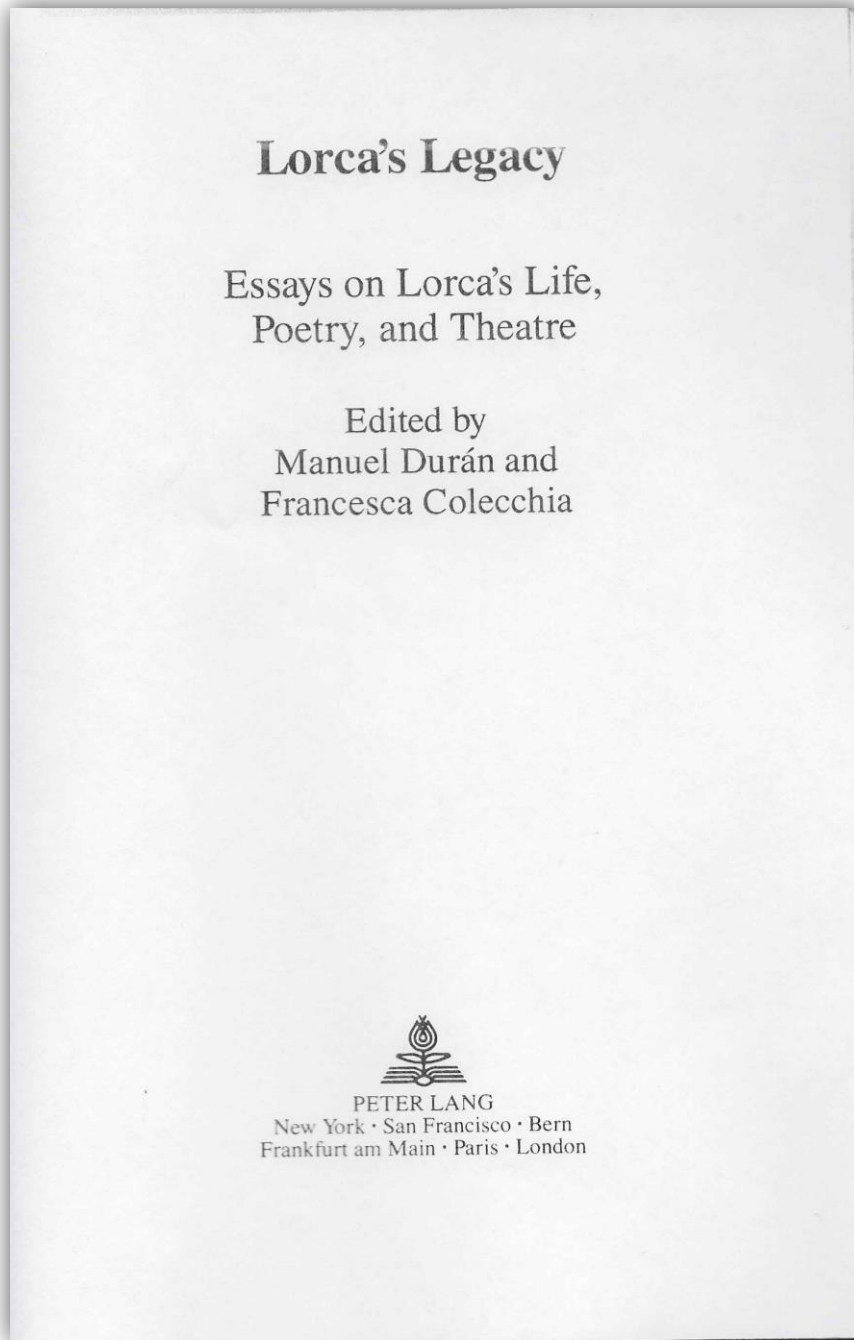


HANDOUT

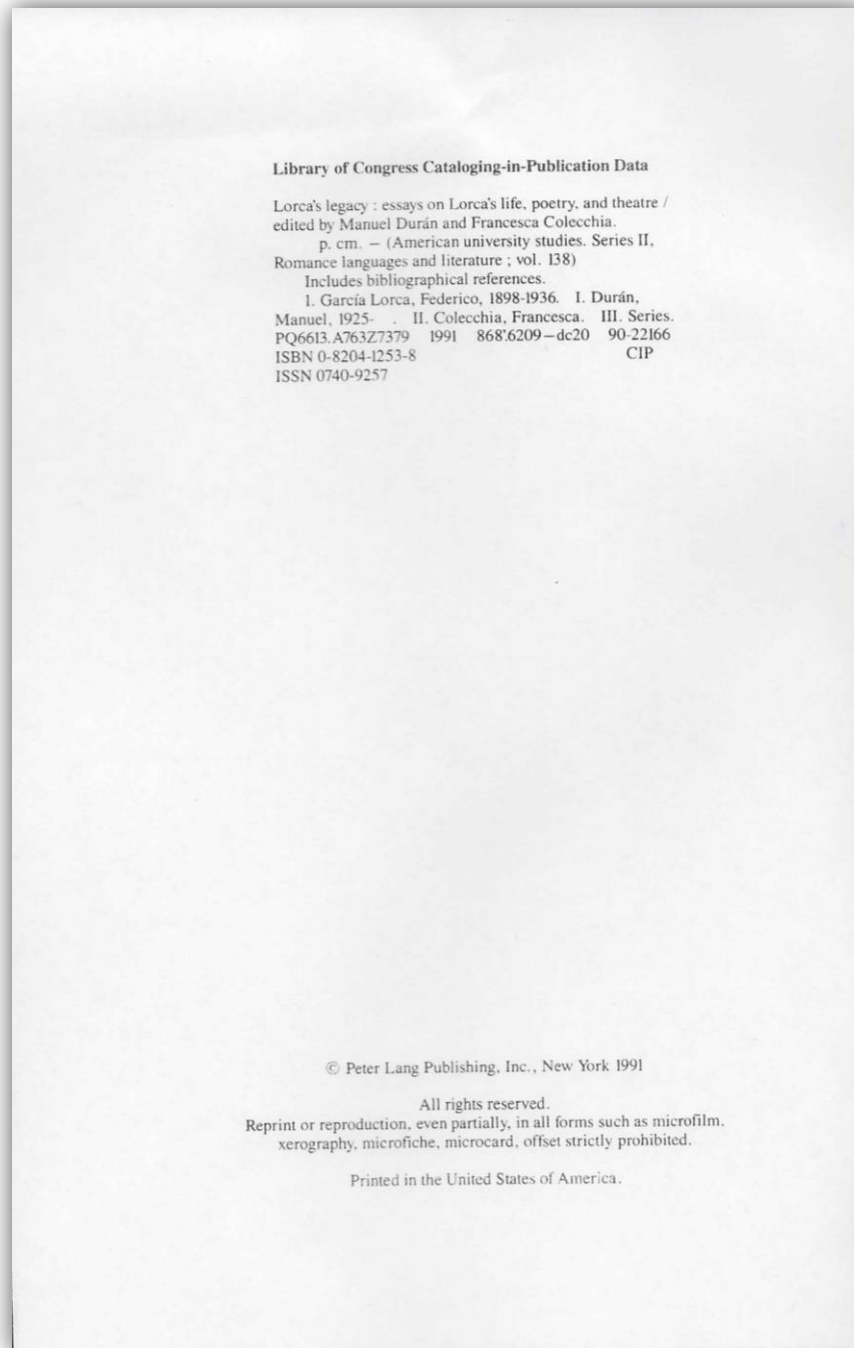
## Source (*Fuente*) 2

Title page of the volume:



## Source (*Fuente*) 2

Copyright page of the volume:



## Source (*Fuente*) 2

Table of contents of the volume:

### Table of Contents

*Preface* ix

#### I. INTIMATIONS OF GLORY

*The Father Against the Son: Lorca's Christian Vision.* Javier Herrero. 1

*Lorca and the Afflicted Monk.* Howard T. Young. 21

*Poetry and Painting: García Lorca's Dual Manifestation of Symbol and Metaphor.* Rei Berroa with Sarah E. Morgan. 31

*Catoblepas and Putrefactos in Antofagasta, or Lorca and a Case of "Serio Ludere".* K. M. Sibbald. 51

*Lorca: the Man, the Poet, the Dramatist, As Seen Through His Lectures, Letters, and Interviews.* Moraima Donahue. 71

#### II. TOWARDS THE MAIN SUBJECTS: NATURE, LOVE, DEATH

*Nature and Symbol in the Poetry of Federico García Lorca.* Gustavo Correa. 85

*"Don Perlimplín": Lorca's amante-para-la-muerte.* Allen Josephs. 95

*Bach and Bodas de sangre.* Christopher Maurer. 103

*Towards the Dionysiac: Pagan Elements and Rites in Yerma.* Robert Lima. 115

*García Lorca's Yerma: A Woman's Mystery.* Bettina L. Knapp. 135

*The Role of Spanish Society in Yerma.* Arturo Jiménez-Vera. 147

#### III. LORCA'S ENDURING IMPACT

*The Poet and the City: Lorca in New York.* Dionisio Cañas. 159

## Source (*Fuente*) 2

First page of the cited essay:

BETTINA L. KNAPP  
*Hunter College*

### García Lorca's *Yerma*: A Woman's Mystery

García Lorca's *Yerma* (1934) is a modern reworking of an ancient mystery which might have been enacted at Eleusis, Samothrace, Venusberg, or any other sacred shrine. It involves the dramatization of secret doctrines and initiation rituals, of verbal and gestural symbols.

In that *Yerma*, a three act tragedy, deals with a woman's barrenness, the numinous happenings focus on fertility. Originally part of agrarian family cults, fertility rituals, and this is implicit in *Yerma*, include protective or entombing ceremonies (I, i; II, ii), purification rituals (II, i), and a lysis (III, i, ii): sacred sequences when the mystai thrashes out the religious experience directly. Because such exteriorizations of primordial encounters have lived in the cultures and psyches of peoples through history, they can be said to be of mythic proportions. *Yerma* is no exception.

Because *Yerma* is a myth (from the word *muthos*, meaning "fable" and *logos*, "discourse" or "reason"), the happenings in *Yerma* transcend linear time; they live in a kind of eternity. Nor are the events dramatized to be considered necessarily personal; they are also collective; not something invented for the sake of entertainment, though it may be also that, but rather a living and burning reality that exists in the Spanish culture and psyche as a whole and in Lorca's own vision. *Yerma*, then, is to be approached as both an individual and collective happening, with emphasis focused on woman, on Mariolatry in particular and its inherent polarities (saint/sinner); and on the victimization of son/husband by a would-be Mother.

In that *Yerma* is a mystery and mythic in quality, its protagonists are not to be looked upon as flesh and blood human beings, but rather as archetypes. The collective and eternal powers peopling Lorca's stage, live on the most primitive of levels and act in keeping with their own inherited and biological patterns of behavior. *Yerma*, the protagonist of Lorca's tragedy, makes us privy to the agony of the barren woman: she has been married for two years when the play begins and seven years pass between Act I and II, and still she remains sterile. The archetype of the infertile woman is not unique, as attested to in the Bible. Not only did some women long after the child-bearing age give birth to children, but several of them were even visited by angels before the birth: Sarah had Isaac; Rebecca, twins, Esau and Jacob; Hannah, Samuel; Manoah's wife bore Samson after the event was announced to her by an angel; the same was true for Elisabeth, John's mother, for Anne who conceived Mary immaculately, and for Mary who was told that she was "highly favored" and "blessed" among women before giving birth to Jesus.<sup>1</sup> Nor are such births requiring the help of divine intervention unknown in ancient times: Isis bore Horus through the intercession of the Holy Spirit, Kamutef.<sup>2</sup>



## Source (*Fuente*) 2

Second page of the cited essay:

136 • BETTINA L. KNAPP

That Yerma's desire for a child is her sole *raison d'être* is understandable. Though it is intimated that Victor, the shepherd, had been the object of her desire, as an obedient daughter she agreed to a loveless marriage to Juan. Nor does her wanting to become a mother violate the dictates of her culture. On the contrary, it would have enhanced her stature in the community: she would have been exactly like the others and not differed from them. Her inability to become pregnant sets her apart, and she suffers the excoriating torments of one who is not like the others — a pariah of sorts. Yerma's personality also distinguishes her from the typical young, jovial, loveable and natural girl. She is a woman corroded with religious and sexual problems: she is psychologically empty. Her attitude toward her husband is cold, distant, perfunctory. He is there to fertilize her: to function as a stud. Such a relationship can yield no fruit since no *feeling of fire* exists between them. Because the dichotomy between the two is unbreachable, Yerma's fantasy world takes over. It alone, at least at the outset, allows her a modicum of happiness.

That the play opens with a dream vision — or a *visitation* — is not surprising in that we are dealing here with a mystery. It is spring: early in the morning and she and her husband are asleep. The stage is bathed in a strange light, that of atemporal happenings. "A Shepherd enters on tiptoe looking fixedly at Yerma. He leads by the hand a Child dressed in white." Not only do the dream figures reveal a compensatory image for the void Yerma experiences in her life, but they also lend an eerie and *irrational* quality to the proceedings.

Who is this Shepherd about whom Yerma is dreaming? Certainly a reference to the strong and powerful Victor, the keeper of the flock; the Abel of Lorca's mythic proceedings. While Juan, thin and pale, is, like Cain, a tiller of the soil. He works so hard inseminating the earth, that he has not time to do the same for Yerma: or if he does, he does so ineffectively. That Victor leads a Child dressed in white, suggests the arrival of the "Son of Man": the pure, resplendent hope of her future — that element that gives her life purpose and love. If the child archetype is considered as a conjunction of opposites, it indicates a fluid relationship between the unconscious and consciousness: a condition able to pave the way for a spiritual and psychological change in the individual dreaming about such an image.

The shock of reality intrudes when Yerma awakens. The disparity between her dream (an unconscious compensatory urge) and the actual situation takes effect and arouses anger. She projects her trauma onto her husband and castigates him for his wanness and feebleness. Still hopeful of remedying the situation, she offers him a glass of milk. It will make him more robust: "Your body is not strong enough for it," referring to the sexual act.

That she offers him milk is in keeping with her desire to strengthen him: it is also associated with the mystery revolving around the Virgin Mary. Lactation was the only biological function she was allowed outside of the asexual act of weeping.<sup>3</sup> Yerma's gift of milk to Juan, then, is to be identified with the joy of a nursing mother in general: it is she who passes on her nourishing power to



## Source (*Fuente*) 2

Last page of the cited essay:

146 • BETTINA L. KNAPP

### NOTES

1. Marion Woodman, *The Pregnant Virgin*. Toronto: Inner City Book, 1985, p. 81.
2. Marie Louise von Franz, *Apuleius' Golden Ass*. New York: Spring Publications, 1970, 2, xi.
3. Marina Werner, *Alone of all her Sex*. New York: L. Alfred A. Knopf, 1976, p. 251.
4. Edward Edinger, "An Outline of Analytical Psychology," unpublished, p. 9.
5. C.G. Jung, *Complete Works*. New York: Pantheon, 1956, p. 101.
6. Lyn Cowan, *Masochism. A Jungian View*. Thalwil, Switzerland: Spring Publications, 1982, p. 24.
7. Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1955, p. 99.
8. Liliane Frey-Rohn, "Evil from the Psychological Point of View," *Evil*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967, p. 156.

---

### BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SOURCES

- García Lorca, *Tragedies*. New York: A New Directions Book. Translated by James Graham-Luján and Richard L. O'Connell.
- Rupert C. Allen, *Psyche and Symbol in the Theater of Federico García Lorca*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1974.
- Lorca. A Collection of Critical Essays*. Edited by Manuel Duran. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc. 1962.
- Felicia Hardison Londre, *Federico García Lorca*. New York: Frederic Ungar Pub. Co., 1984.

