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“¡Habr  sangre en Gran ...!”

The demonstrations that took place in Granada in February 1919 against the *cacique* Juan Ram n La Chica Mingo claimed the lives of three people; the drunk who staggered through the streets shouting “ Habr  sangre en Gran ...!” could never have foreseen how much blood would be shed in that city in 1936, nor that one of its victims would be Federico Garc a Lorca. He could not have known either that the young poet, although he locked himself in his house during the disturbances, listened to the reports shouted toward his balcony by his friend Manuel Angeles Ortiz. Violence is a powerful current in Lorca’s work, yet the fascination it exercised on him was as oblique and indirect as absorbing from inside his house the bulletins of Angeles Ortiz, who recalled unequivocally that “ l particip  y sigui  los sucesos con inter s.”¹ Lorca rarely sets an act of violence directly before us; it usually precedes the poem or takes place offstage. Literature, particularly of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is full of brutal fantasies, and John Fraser is right to designate as “a species of violator... of the body’s sanctity” the artist who drew *Los Desastres de la Guerra* and the novelist who in *Germinal* narrated the wrenching-off of a dead man’s genitals.² Photographs of the rudimentary film sequence Lorca devised in 1918 under the title *La historia del tesoro* show that he reserved for himself the role of heroic guardian of the treasure, who, prostrate on the ground with a dagger on his chest, anticipates the valiant end of the similarly outnumbered Anto nito el Camborio.³ Although he states in *Poema del cante jondo* that “Por todas partes / yo / veo el pu al en el coraz n” and recounts starkly

Que muerto se qued  en la calle
que con un pu al en el pecho
y que no lo conoc a nadie,

we never see that dagger entering the heart. Perlimpl n shows Belisa “el pu al clavado en el pecho,” but he had rushed offstage in order to plunge it into his breast. In his playacting, the *zapatero* threatens boastfully to administer “diez pu aladas certeras” at targets specified with waggish care (“cuatro en la regi n lumbar, / una en la tetilla izquierda...”) while offstage the quarrel between two rivals for his wife’s favors provokes “un grito angustiado y fortismo,” whose source we are not allowed to see; it is the appropriately dressed Vecina Negra who looks through a window and informs us that “ Se est n cosiendo a pu aladas por culpa de esa mujer!” In the same way, we have to visualize the action that makes Amargo cry “ Ay yayayay!” at the end of ‘Di logo del Amargo’, the gesture that accompanies the emphatic reply “ As !” in ‘Asesinato’ (from *Poeta en Nueva York*), and the thrusts that elicit “dos largos gritos

desgarrados” offstage in *Bodas de sangre*.

Visually too, Lorca sidesteps the direct description of violence; he so dazzles us with the sunlight flashing on the blades in ‘Reyerta’ (from *Romancero gitano*) that he never shows the knife penetrating the victim’s flesh, and blood has already congealed as “una granada en las sienes” in the same way as it coagulates into “Trescientas rosas morenas” on the shirtfront of the dying protagonist in ‘Romance sonámbulo’. Violence is as unavoidable in Lorca’s works as it is in real life, and his refusal to savor what Lautréamont called “les délices de la cruauté” sets him outside a vigorous literary fashion sustained in France by Louis Aragon and Benjamin Péret and in Spain by Vicente Aleixandre and Agustín Espinosa; that refusal makes his accounts of murder and mutilation into singularly sober documents of the instinctive savagery that, displayed by the Civil Guard in his ‘Romance de la guardia civil española,’ was to leave Rosa la de los Camborios groaning at her door “con sus dos pechos cortados / puestos en una bandeja.” John Fraser’s contention that “To involve oneself with violence can indeed compel one into thought about oneself and man and society” is painfully relevant to Lorca, whose constant recording of brutal or lethal acts in poems and in plays establish him as a witness — and ultimately a victim — of the murderous impulses that respect no frontiers and recognize no distinctions of class or talent.⁴

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¹ See Antonina Rodrigo, *Memoria de Granada: Manuel Angeles Ortiz. Federico García Lorca* (Barcelona: Plaza & Janes Editores, 1984), pp. 153-57.

² John Fraser, *Violence in the Arts*, Illustrated paperback edition (Cambridge: University Press, 1974), p. 112.

³ Antonina Rodrigo, *Memoria de Granada*, pp. 189-90; the photographs are inserted between pages 192 and 193.

⁴ Fraser, *Violence in the Arts*, p. 110.