

Letras Hispanas

Volume 20.1, 2024

TITLE: *Baroque Lorca: An Archaist Playwright for the New Stage*

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PUBLISHER: Routledge

YEAR: 2021

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Many scholars have studied, analyzed, hypothesized, and philosophized about the life, literary works, motivations, and aspirations of Spanish writer, Federico García Lorca, so much so that the concept of Lorca, the writer, has reached mythic proportions. It is hard to determine what is myth and what is reality in terms of the life and literary creations of Lorca because of the mystery that surrounds him and his works, both finished and unfinished, and his untimely death by assassination at the young age of thirty-eight in 1936. In his book, *Baroque Lorca: An Archaist Playwright for the New Stage*, author Andrés Pérez-Simón meticulously unravels some of these mysteries, and his attention to detail in his analyses is phenomenal. Pérez-Simón carefully peels away the layers of the stories surrounding Lorca and his theatrical works, and in revealing each layer, the reader gains a better understanding of not only the theater of Lorca and Lorquian scholarship, but of the world of Lorca as a whole. Pérez-Simón delves into Lorquian criticism and does a fantastic job of shedding light on critics that are essential to the study of Lorca, as well as those he does not agree with, thus, displaying the depth of his research into the history of this famous author and his writings. We see a thorough discussion of the scholarship and a multi-dimensional description of Lorca, not only as a writer, but also a theater director and producer, struggling with the theatrical industry and striving to find an appreciative audience.

This book is divided into five chapters,

and Pérez-Simón states that he has three distinct goals he endeavors to achieve in his work. His first goal is to open the readers' eyes to a more diverse selection of Lorca's theatrical works since much of the critical focus has been on Lorca's agrarian dramas *Blood Wedding*, *Yerma*, and *The House of Bernarda Alba*. His second goal is to analyze the multifaceted aspects of Lorca's involvement with the theater industry as he attempts to incorporate new ideas into dramatic works while also dealing with fickle audiences and critics. His final goal is to show the readers that Lorca is, in fact, an archaist dramatist and director, whose strong connection to the Baroque tradition of Spanish theater is evident in the themes and structures of his modern theatrical works (4-5).

Andrés Pérez-Simón's first chapter focuses on *The Butterfly's Evil Spell* and *Mariana Pineda* as Lorca's first two theatrical works which were staged in theaters. The critics and audiences reacted negatively to the symbolic nature of *The Butterfly's Evil Spell* which led to Lorca's rejection of his own dramatic work. During the play's premiere, tensions ran so high that those in the audience who supported Lorca and the more conservative spectators came to fistcuffs over the differing reactions and interpretations of this play (23). As a reaction to this polarizing play, Lorca wrote *Mariana Pineda* which was received in a more positive light than his previous work, but it was still criticized; thus Pérez-Simón demonstrates that Lorca was not fully embraced by the commercial theater industry at this time. Lorca did not desire political

interpretations of this play; however, he encouraged the use of José Ortega y Gasset's theory to help the audience understand his work.

Chapter two analyzes Lorca's experimentation with puppet theater and use of puppets as characters in his plays *The Billy-Club Puppets* and *In the Frame of Don Cristóbal*. Pérez-Simón draws parallels to the characteristics of Baroque drama, specifically discussing the short plays of Cervantes who mixed actors and puppets in his work and used similar themes and structures in his drama.

In chapter three, the focus is Lorca's dramatic work, *The Public*, as an example of what the playwright called his "impossible theater" which he knew would not be accepted by the audience of his time, due to the obvious symbolic references to homosexuality and Lorca's desire to reflect the audience's true nature. This would be too painful for the audience to bear, thus provoking spectators to immediately and vehemently reject the dramatic work. Pérez-Simón insightfully compares *The Public* to the *auto sacramental* and medieval liturgical drama in terms of structure and traditional ritual imagery (80).

Chapter four is dedicated to the play *The Dream of Life*, Lorca's most political and violent play which contains a shocking, bloody scene where a factory worker who denies God's existence is shot by a spectator. Therefore, the focus is the external force of socialist politics, rather than unease created by internal anxieties about sexual identity as seen in *The Public* (89). Pérez-Simón connects this theatrical work with Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Calderón's allegorical religious drama *The Great Theater of the World*.

Pérez-Simón examines Lorca's most famous plays *Blood Wedding*, *Yerma*, and *The House of Bernarda Alba* in his fifth and final chapter. Lorca wrote *Blood Wedding* and *Yerma* in order to gain praise, commercial recognition, and acceptance. *The House of Bernarda Alba* was released as an independent work in June 1936 after the first two rural dramas and immediately before Lorca's execution, and therefore was staged posthumously.

Pérez-Simón links the rural trilogy in terms of themes and techniques but does not agree with critics who argue that these three tragedies are the "climax of Lorca's artistic progression" (115) and, thus, persuasively urges readers to devote more attention to Lorca's lesser-known dramatic works which are written with great skill and ingenuity. Pérez-Simón compares the agrarian dramas to the style and structure of baroque honor plays and the work of Calderón.

Pérez-Simón deftly paints a detailed and colorful portrait of Lorca as a modernist innovator of modern drama, but he also draws an intriguing parallel between the works of Lorca and traditional themes and styles of Spanish Baroque theatrical works, most notably with the works of Cervantes and Calderón. Therefore, Pérez-Simón portrays Lorca as a ground-breaking playwright who used new and modern techniques in his writing but was heavily influenced by classic Golden Age Spanish theater. Devices, such as using metatheater and "the symbolic and allegorical construction of characters, and the intersection of ritual and theater refer back to the Spanish tradition of the *auto sacramental*, epitomized by Pedro Calderón de la Barca" (5). Pérez-Simón also shows how Lorca's farcical dramatic works, which include both actors and puppets, drew from the style of Miguel de Cervantes and the seventeenth-century playwright's propensity to create interludes with puppets as main characters in his works. Thus, through several concrete examples, Pérez-Simón deftly demonstrates that Lorca is at once a modernist and an archaist dramatist of the "new" stage (22).

Baroque Lorca: An Archaist Playwright for the New Stage sheds new light on a great variety of Lorca's theatrical works with interesting interpretations, historical contexts, and intriguing parallels to the Spanish Baroque tradition, and therefore is an important addition to Lorquian scholarship.