

The Gypsy in the Poetry of Federico García Lorca

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Spanish poet Federico García Lorca (1898-1936) published his most renowned collection of poetry, *Gypsy Ballads* (*Romancero gitano*) in 1928¹. After its publication, he became the Spanish “gypsy poet” (“poeta gitano”), although the poet himself was not a gypsy. Lorca, in several occasions, explained that the gypsy is only one of the many themes that he developed in his poetry, and he wouldn’t like to be labeled the “gypsy poet” (De Groot 25-6). Nevertheless, his readers and critics often choose to ignore the poet’s protest, given the fact that his poetry does include evident gypsy elements.

In Lorca’s poetry, the word “gitano” (gypsy) and its variations including adjectives and nouns in masculine, feminine, singular and plural forms appear thirty-eight times (eight times of “gitana,” three of “gitanas,” one of “gitanillo,” eight of “gitano,” eighteen of “gitanos;” Pollin 884-5). Not only did these words appear in his famous *Gypsy Ballads*, but also in *Poem of the Deep Song* (*Poema del cante jondo*, written in 1921, published in 1931). A few other appearances are in his *Book of Poems* (*Libro de poemas*, written in 1918-1920, published in 1921) and the popular folksongs collected by the poet (“Las canciones populares de Federico García Lorca”). As may be noticed, *Gypsy Ballads* and *Poem of the Deep Song* are the representative works of Lorca with the presence of the gypsy. The two books will be the focus of discussion in this paper.

In his lecture in 1935 on *Gypsy Ballads*, Lorca explains the title of the book: “This book as one, though called gypsy, is the poem of Andalusia, and I call it gypsy because the gypsy is the most elevated, the most profound, most aristocratic in my country, the most representative in its way and the one that guards the ember, the blood and the alphabet of the Andalusian and universal truth” (*Prosa* 179, my translation). By observing the poet’s unique style of merging gypsy contents with

¹ The poetry was written between 1924 and 1927.

Castilian ballad form and theatrical elements, analyzing the symbolic characters in *Gypsy Ballads*, looking into the Andalusian deep song motif in *Poem of the Deep Song*, and examining Lorca's theory of the duende about the deep song, this paper intends to define and describe the gypsy as represented in Lorca's poetry, and to explore the universal meaning that lies behind the gypsy elements found in this poetry.

1. Merging of gypsy themes, Castilian ballads and theatrical elements:

1.1. The gypsy anti-heroes in Lorca's ballads

Gypsy Ballads is considered "the most important recreation of ballads in the Spanish literature of our [the twentieth] century"² (García Mateos 164, my translation). According to the famous Spanish literary critic, Menéndez Pidal, the inspiration of the themes in Lorca's *Gypsy Ballads* comes from Spanish ballads of the nineteenth century, in which marginalized characters and their tragedies of love and death are told (García Mateos 164). The traditional ballad tells the story of a hero or a historical event. Similarly, in Lorca's *Gypsy Ballads*, the poet talks about gypsy heroes and labels the last three ballads "Three Historical Ballads" ("Tres romances históricos") as indicated in the index of the first edition in 1928. The gypsy heroes in Lorca's poetry, though, are better classified as anti-heroes: men and women as victims of violence and injustice.

The ballad is a traditional Spanish form of poetry originated in the Castilian region. Traditional Spanish ballads are divided into two groups: "old ballads" (romances viejos) of the fourteenth and fifteenth century, and "new ballads" (romances nuevos) composed after the second half of the sixteenth century. The old ballads come from fragments of ancient epics transmitted orally by minstrels, and the new ballads are literary ballads entirely created by poets (Bregante 839).

² "Su *Romancero Gitano* (1928) es la más importante recreación romancística en la literatura española de nuestro siglo" (García Mateos 164).

Lorca's ballads follow the tradition of the new ballads, which are creations of the poet instead of being fragments from an oral tradition. Commenting on his choice of the form of the ballad, Lorca explains that he had been enchanted by this form of poetry since 1919, when the poet started his poetic creation. For him, the form of the ballad is "the glass where [his] sensibility can be best molded"³ (*Prosa* 178, my translation). Lorca used some common themes in gypsy folklore, such as the appearance of the moon and the biblical story of Tamar and Amnon. The interesting combination of the Castilian traditional ballad and themes from the gypsy folklore leads to a unique new style.

1.2. The theatricality in *Poem of the Deep Song*

Poem of the Deep Song is a collection of poems written in praise of the traditional folklore of Andalusia—the deep song ("cante jondo"), which is often sung by the gypsies in the region. Flamenco is the popularized form of the deep song. Lorca chooses to call this folklore "deep song" instead of "flamenco," because, as the name suggests, it is a more profound kind of music and lyrics, which expresses most deeply the feelings and sorrow of the Andalusians. The book is not a collection of lyrics; however, groups of poems in the book are written under the names of different kinds of melody and rhythm of the deep song. Four different kinds are in the book: siguiriya, soleá, saeta and petenera.

In his lecture on the deep song, Lorca describes the different forms of the deep song, and its descendant, flamenco:

The name deep song is given to a group of Andalusian songs whose genuine, perfect prototype is the Gypsy siguiriya. The siguiriya gave rise to other songs still sung by the people: polos, martinets, carceleras, and soleares. The songs called malagueñas, granadinas, rondeñas, peteneras, etc. must be considered mere offshoots of the songs mentioned above, for

³ "Desde el año 1919, época de mis primeros pasos poéticos, estaba yo preocupado con la forma del romance, porque me daba cuenta que era el vaso donde mejor se amoldaba mi sensibilidad" (*Prosa* 179).

they differ in both architecture and rhythm. These latter songs from the repertory of so-called flamenco. (Lorca, *In Search of Duende*, 2)

The deep song had existed before the arrival of the gypsies in Spain in the fifteenth century. However, the deep song and its later form of flamenco have become incessantly connected to the gypsy people because they have been the major performers of this ancient type of music.

Lorca's homeland, Andalusia, "received, traded with, and absorbed the influence of a surprising number of mostly Oriental cultures: the megalith builders, the Bell Beaker culture; Tartessos; traders from Egypt, Crete, Turkey, and Cyprus; the Phoenicians, the Carthaginians, the Hebrews; Celts; Greeks; Romans; Visigoths; Vandals; Arabs; Berbers; Gypsies" (Forman and Josephs 17). Christopher Maurer, in his annotated edition of Lorca's lecture "The Architecture of the Deep Song" ("Arquitectura del cante jondo"), explains that the deep song was originated in Arabic folklore and in the fifteenth century, the gypsies brought from the east its influence on this new, mixed form of music (47).

While the poet created *Poem of the Deep Song*, he must have born in mind not only the gypsy performances of the deep song, but also the notion of the theatre. Modern performances of Lorca's literature often combine different genres: poetry, drama, songs and dance. "Much of Lorca's poetry is ideally suited to the medium of Readers Theatre, which may be defined in the most general terms as the presentation of literature on the stage. His poems are filled with actual characters from Spanish life ranging from antiquity to the present—Romans, Carthaginians, Jews, saints, virgins, Gypsies, smugglers, *toreros*," observed Allen Josephs after his attendance to a performance on Lorca's works in 1987 at the University of North Carolina (Forman and Josephs 4).

In accordance with Josephs' observation that "Lorca's poetry is intentionally dramatic" (Forman and Josephs 4), there exists a certain degree of dramatic tension in *Poem of the Deep Song*. As the opening scene, the first poem "Little Ballad of the

Three Rivers” (“Baladilla de los tres ríos”)⁴ sings of the three rivers flowing through the three major Andalusian cities: Granada, Córdoba and Seville. The opening poem is considered by Rob Stone as a prologue to map out “the terrain of the mythological world of flamenco in the same way as, for example, the printed map of Middle Earth precedes the text of Tolkein’s *Lord of the Rings*” (40):

The river Guadalquivir
winds through orange and olive trees.
The two rivers of Granada
Descend from the snow to the wheat.

Ay, love
that went away and never returned!⁵

(Lines 1-6, “Little Ballad of the Three Rivers,” *Poem of the Deep Song* 3)

The last two lines in their variations are repeated six times in the poem, which gives the poem the sense of lyrics meant to be sung. As in a festive play, the opening “little ballad” leads to a festival with the performance of the four types of the deep song: poems grouped into the four categories of “La Siguiriya,” “La Soleá,” “La Saeta” and “La Petenera.” After the performance of the four types of deep song appear two girls: “La Lola” and “Amparo” in the set of poems grouped under the name of “Two Girls” (“Dos Muchachas”). In Walter Dobrian’s interpretation, the girls represent the two typical kinds of Andalusian young women: the sensual and inconstant Lola and the chaste and well-behaved Amparo (124). The contrast of colors and white mark the difference between the two girls: Lola has green eyes and

⁴ All the English translation of the titles of poems and quoted lines from *Poem of the Deep Song* (*Poema del cante jondo*) is by Carlos Bauer (*Poem of the Deep Song*. San Francisco: City Lights, 1987).

⁵ “El río Guadalquivir/va entre naranjos y olivos./Los dos ríos de Granada/bajan de la nieve al trigo./¡Ay, amor/que se fue y no vino!” (*Poema del cante jondo* 1997:13)

purple voice, washing diapers in the orange grove⁶; Amparo is alone in her house dressed in white⁷. Following the “Two Girls” are two poems singing of the memorable characters Silverio Franconetti and Juan Breva, famous singers of the deep song:

Between Italian
and flamenco,
how would he sing,
that Silverio?
The thick honey of Italy,
mixed with our lemon,
traveled upon the deep wail
of this singer of *siguiriyas*.

(Lines 1-9, “Portrait of Silverio Franconetti,” *Poem of the Deep Song* 77)⁸

Juan Breva possessed
the body of a giant
and the voice of a little girl.
His trill was like nothing else.
It was that same Pain
being sung
behind a smile.⁹

(Lines 1-7, “Juan Breva,” *Poem of the Deep Song* 79)

The play then goes deeper into the darker side of human emotions:

⁶ “Bajo el naranjo lava/pañales de algodón./Tiene verdes los ojos/y violeta la voz” (“La Lola,” *Poema del cante jondo* 1997:91).

⁷ “Amparo,/iqué sola estás en tu casa/vestida de blanco!” (“Amparo,” *Poema del cante jondo* 1997:93).

⁸ “Entre italiano/y flamenco,/¿cómo cantaría/aquel Silverio?/La densa miel de Italia,/con el limón nuestro,/iba en el hondo llanto/del siguiriyero” (“Retrato de Silverio Franconetti,” *Poema del cante jondo* 1997: 97).

⁹ “Juan Breva tenía/cuerpo de gigante/y voz de niña./Nada como su trino./Era la misma/Pena cantando/detrás de una sonrisa” (“Juan Breva,” *Poema del cante jondo* 1997:99).

“Lamentation of Death” (“Lamentación de la muerte”). After this darker scene, the play goes back to the description of Andalusian cities. The description is fragmental. It is more like cinematic montage of images and scenes, which relate the motif of death, such as this poem about the death in the tavern of the city of Málaga. It’s titled “Malagueña,” a form of flamenco music named after the city:

Death
goes in and out
of the tavern.

Black horses
and sinister people
travel the deep roads
of the guitar.

And there’s a smell of salt
and of female blood
in the feverish nards
along the seacoast.

Death
goes in and out;
and out and into
the tavern
goes death.¹⁰

(“Malagueña,” *Poem of the Deep Song* 89)

¹⁰ “La muerte/entra y sale/de la taberna./Pasan caballos negros/y gente siniestra/por los hondos caminos/de la guitarra./Y hay un olor a sal/y a sangre de hembra/en los nardos febriles/de la marina./La muerte/entra y sale,/y sale y entra/la muerte/de la taberna” (“Malagueña,” *Poema del cante jondo* 1997:111).

Toward the end of the book come two theatrical scenes: one about the Civil Guard and the other about the ghost-like character Amargo. The whole book ends with “Song of Amargo’s Mother,” which is a lamentation of the mother on the death of Amargo. The final part of the book echoes Lorca’s poems in *Gypsy Ballads*, “Ballad of the Civil Guard” (“Romance de la Guardia Civil española”) and “Ballad of the Summoned Man” (“El emplazado”), in which the Civil Guards and Amargo are the protagonists respectively.

Lorca successfully merged several elements and genres in his poetry to create a brand new poetic style: Traditional Castilian ballad form contains gypsy stories; Andalusian deep song motifs are expressed in poetry with theatrical scenes. Recurrent names and themes which exist in both *Gypsy Ballads* and *Poem of the Deep Song* show the continuity between these two major works by Lorca.

2. What’s in a name?: the gypsies in Lorca’s poetry and their symbolic names:

“Without symbolism there can be no literature; indeed, not even language” (Symons 1). This is a strong statement from Arthur Symons, an advocate of the symbolist movement. Another famous poet, Robert Frost, elaborates on the symbolism in poetry: “There are many other things I have found myself saying about poetry, but the chiefest of these is that it is metaphor, saying one thing and meaning another, saying one thing in terms of another, the pleasure of ulteriority. Poetry is simply made of metaphor” (Frost xvi).

Symbolism is everywhere, and it’s the reader’s pleasure to read the “one thing” in a poem as it is and to find “another,” where the hidden meaning lies. While a poet hides the true meaning by using metaphors, the same poet would have to leave clues for the reader to possibly reach the hidden meaning. Metaphors can be obscure, but they cannot be completely in the dark. Names of Lorca’s gypsy characters in his poetry are some of his most evident clues for the reader to find the meanings behind symbols.

2.1. Antonio el Camborio

Many of Lorca's gypsy characters are nameless: the two men in "Fight" ("Reyerta"), the young man and his *compadre* in "Somnambular Ballad" ("Romance sonámbulo"), the man and the unfaithful wife in "The Unfaithful Wife" ("La casada infiel"), just to mention some. In contrast to all those characters without names, Antoñito el Camborio stands out as one of the few characters who have a surname, and the only one whose life and death are covered in a set of two poems in *Gypsy Ballads*: "Arrest of Antoñito Camborio on the Road to Seville" ("Prendimiento de Antoñito el Camborio en el camino de Sevilla") and "Death of Antoñito Camborio" ("Muerte de Antoñito el Camborio"):

Antonio Torres Heredia,
son and grandson of Camborios,
wicker swagger cane in hand,
heads for bullfights in Seville.
Dark with an olive moonglow
he struts slow and jaunty,¹¹

(Lines 1-6, "Arrest of Antoñito Camborio on the Road to Seville," *Gypsy Ballads*, 83)

Interestingly, Antonio's family name is Torres Heredia, but he is the son and grandson of the Camborios.

Jan Yoors, a Belgium artist who spent his youth traveling with the gypsies known as the Rom as part of the gypsy family, recounts in his autobiographical book, *The Gypsies*, about how the gypsy people, due to practical reasons, adopt surnames which do not belong to their real family. They sometimes even change their names during long migrations. Only the gypsies know who their real parents are (Yoors 51-2). It makes sense to the reader then, looking at the poem in this light, that

¹¹ "Antonio Torres Heredia,/hijo y nieto de Camborios,/con una vara de mimbre/va a Sevilla a ver los toros./Moreno de verde luna,/anda despacio y garboso" (*Romancero gitano* 1998:79).

Antonio is in fact the son of the Camborio family, though he is registered as the son of the Torres Heredia family. This detail in Lorca's poem demonstrates the poet's realistic observation of the gypsy society. The name of Antonio symbolizes the flexibility and capability for change of the gypsy people, who assume various identities to adapt to their often changing surroundings.

2.2. Soledad Montoya

Soledad Montoya in "Ballad of the Black Pain" has a full name, but no history is told about her. She is the incarnation of Black Pain ("pena negra"):

"Soledad, what pain you bear!
A pain that is heartrending!
Your tears are the juice of lemon,
sour on lips, sour on longing!
"Such a terrible pain! I roam
my house like a woman crazed,
my two plaits trailing the floor
from my kitchen to my bedroom.
What pain is mine! My skin
turns jet black like my clothes."¹²

(Lines 23-32, "Ballad of the Black Pain," *Gypsy Ballads* 65).

Commenting on the characters in Lorca's poetry and plays, C. Brian Morris says, "the characters whom he [Lorca] invariably animated are women isolated by their problems, for example, Soledad Montoya, Yerma, the Novia, Doña Rosita, and the nun sowing in 'La monja gitana'" (47). Like their male counterparts, the gypsy women in *Gypsy Ballads* are defenseless and disadvantaged.

"Soledad" means solitude. It is a common female name in Spain, and Lorca's

¹² "¡Soledad, qué pena tienes!/¡Qué pena tan lastimosa!/Lloras zumo de limón/agrio de espera y de boca./¡Qué pena tan grande!/Corro mi casa como una loca,/mis dos trenzas por el suelo/de la cocina a la alcoba./¡Qué pena! Me estoy poniendo de azabache, carne y ropa" (*Romancero gitano* 1998:52-3).

choice of name here indicates the prevailing of black sorrow in the land where the gypsies wonder and reside.

2.3. Anunciación de los Reyes

Lorca connects the three saints with their respective patron city: Saint Michael represents Granada, Saint Raphael represents Córdoba, and Saint Gabriel represents Seville. Among the three poems, “Saint Gabriel” is the most obviously related to the world of the gypsies. Lorca addresses to Saint Gabriel in the poem, “Don’t forget the suit you wear/was given you by the gypsies” (*Gypsy Ballads* 77). In the same poem, the gypsy woman Anunciación de los Reyes represents Virgen Mary. The poem expresses the religious aspect of the gypsy people in Spain. Settled down in Andalusia, the Spanish *gitanos* adopted the religion of Catholicism. Their religious devotion is famous and most evidently expressed in the pilgrimage of El Rocío in Huelva.

Anunciación de los Reyes is also a highly symbolical name. The first name “Anunciación” means annunciation—the archangel’s annunciation of the birth of Jesus Christ. The last name “de los Reyes” means “of the Kings.” The full name thus means “The Annunciation of the Kings.” While this name is obviously Christian, it in fact mixes in an evident element of the gypsies—“de los Reyes” being a common family name among the gypsies in Spain.

2.4. Amargo and Preciosa

Preciosa, the protagonist of “Preciosa and the Wind,” means “precious” or “beautiful.” The young woman named Preciosa stands for any innocent, young, cheerful gypsy woman (“Preciosa comes strumming/her parchment moon” *Gypsy Ballads* 45) falling victim of ill will (the wind as satyr chasing Preciosa).

In contrast to the cheerful Preciosa, Amargo, a male character that appears both in *Gypsy Ballads* (“Ballad of the Summoned Man”) and *Poem of the Deep Song* (“Dialogue of Amargo”), symbolizes bitterness, as his name suggests. He is doomed to die in the poem, as are all human beings. His name suggests the pessimistic

outlook of life and the inevitable end of life—the death.

Unlike in the traditional ballads, where heroes are praised and stories of their feats are told in details, Lorca's ballads do not often reveal details on the characters' lives. Fragments of the stories may be told in details in Lorca's ballads, but the lack of individuality in terms of the characters' identity gives a flavor of generalization and universality in his ballads. Thus, it is more obvious that their appearances are symbolic.

3. Lorca's gypsy myth:

Gypsy Ballads (Romancero gitano), in its first edition, was also titled *Primer romancero gitano*, meaning "First gypsy ballads." There may be two different interpretations of the title: (1) It's the first collection of ballads written about the gypsies; (2) it's the first collection of ballads written by the poet about the gypsies. In the former interpretation, the poet had the ambition of creating the first collection ever of poetry about the gypsies. In the latter interpretation, the poet had the intention of writing more poems about the gypsies after this first collection. Which interpretation is correct, there is no way for the reader to find out. However, it is clear that the poet intended to start something that had not existed before: the first literary collection about the gypsy world written in the form of the traditional Spanish ballad.

It is also clear that the poet intended to create the gypsy myth in this collection of poetry, as acclaimed by the poet in his lecture on *Gypsy Ballads*, "Conferencia-recital del *Romancero gitano*," given in Barcelona in 1935: The first two ballads of the book, "Ballad of the Moon, Moon" and "Preciosa and the Wind,"¹³ contain two gypsy myths created by him: the myth of the moon as goddess, and the myth of the wind as satyr (*Prosa* 181):

¹³ The titles of the poems in Spanish are "Romance de la luna, luna" and "Preciosa y el aire." All the English translation of the titles of poems and quoted lines from *Gypsy Ballads (Romancero gitano)* is by Robert G. Harvard (*Gypsy Ballads*, Oxford: Oxbow, 1995).

How the tawny owl can hoot,
oh, how she hoots on the branch!
Through the sky goes the moon
taking a boy by the hand.

Inside the smithy they wail,
loud are the sobs of the gypsies.
The breeze wraps her in a veil.
It wraps and wraps her does the breeze.¹⁴

(Lines 29-36, "Ballad of the Moon, Moon," *Gypsy Ballads* 43)

Run, run, Preciosa, run,
lest the dirty wind catch you!
Watch out! Here he comes,
a satyr of low strung stars
and a flashing of tongues.¹⁵

(Lines 37-42, "Preciosa and the Wind," *Gypsy Ballads* 47)

These two myths created by the poet do not yet fully develop in the beginning two poems of *Gypsy Ballads*. They are but the opening scene of a display of other mythical figures, their stories and their interactions, as will be discussed in the following passage.

3.1. Mythical figures

The most symbolic character in the book is probably the moon, described as female, and sometimes as goddess watching over and interfering with the happenings on earth. Moon plays an important role in this collection of ballads:

¹⁴ "Cómo canta la zumaya,/¡ay, cómo canta en el árbol!/Por el cielo va la luna/con un niño de la mano./Dentro de la fragua lloran,/dando gritos, los gitanos./El aire la vela, vela./El aire la está velando." (*Romancero gitano* 1998:11)

¹⁵ "¡Preciosa, corre, Preciosa,/que te coge el viento verde!/¡Preciosa, corre, Preciosa!/¡Míralo por dónde viene!/Sátiro de estrellas bajas/con sus lenguas relucientes." (*Romancero gitano* 1998:18)

“The majority of the ballads have a nocturnal setting and the moon’s metallic, silver sheen thus often lies menacingly on both objects and humans” (Harvard 6). The first ballad is titled “Ballad of the Moon, Moon” (“Romance de la luna, luna”). There are three illustrations by the poet in the first edition of *Gypsy Ballads* in 1928: the portrait of Saint Raphael before the ballad “Saint Raphael,” the portrait of Antoñito Camborio before the two ballads about Antoñito, and the moon before the first poem of the book. The moon is illustrated as a crescent moon with an eye on it. It may be considered as the portrait of the character, the Moon.

With the word “the moon” (“la luna”) begins the whole book. The moon is described as a possessive and jealous goddess, who takes away a gypsy child with her and flies back to the sky. After this ballad, the moon appears several times in other ballads in the book. The moon is afterwards described as “the gypsy moon” (“la luna gitana”) in “Somnambular Ballad”:

Green how I want you green.

Under the gypsy moon

things are staring at her,

things she cannot see.¹⁶

(Lines 9-12, *Gypsy Ballads* 53)

Black Pain, as the Moon, is a highly symbolic figure. Pain (“la pena”) is a recurrent theme in the Andalusian deep song (“cante jondo”) sung mostly by the gypsies and popularized as flamenco. Lorca in his lecture “Conferencia-recital del *Romancero gitano*” in 1935 talks about pain in the gypsy sense. Pain, according to the poet, does not have to have a cause, though the deepest form of pain actually comes from the fear of death. In pain, the gypsies are able to smile. There is no way to end this pain except by death (*Prosa* 179). It’s with this idea that the “Ballad of Black Pain” was written. Black Pain (“La Pena Negra”) becomes a character in this

¹⁶ “Verde que te quiero verde./Bajo la luna gitana,/las cosas la están mirando/y ella no puede mirarlas” (*Romancero gitano* 1998:29).

poem, incarnated by the woman named Soledad Montoya.

Pain is a human emotion, which should not be categorized as a gypsy emotion. However, being passionate and expressive people, the gypsies are able to express their sorrow in an extreme and sincere way. The evidence of their expression makes the emotion unique. The gypsy pain is formed in its expression, not only in its nature. It's not the kind of pain that matters, but the way of expressing it.

Among the characters in *Gypsy Ballads*, there exists an interesting interrelation of the mythical, religious, Andalusian and gypsy elements. Out of the eighteen poems, four are titled with names of saints: "Saint Michael" ("San Miguel"), "Saint Raphael" ("San Rafael"), "Saint Gabriel" ("San Gabriel"), and "The Martyrdom of Saint Olalla" ("Martirio de Santa Olalla"). The last poem of the book is about a story from the Bible, "Tamar and Amnon" ("Thamár y Amnón").

"The Martyrdom of Saint Olalla" relates the story of Saint Olalla in Mérida. Now Mérida belongs to the Community of Extremadura in Spain, but in the fifth century, it was part of Andalusia. For this reason, Lorca includes the story of Saint Olalla in the Andalusian myth.

"Tamar and Amnon" tells the tale from the Bible. Lorca connects the story to the gypsies, because in gypsy folklore, the story is a recurrent theme, with variations of the name of Thamár such as Altas Mares and Tamare, which has become a popular female name in southern Spain (*Prosa* 185).

The wide variety of mythical characters, with their stories and their interactions, enriches the content of Lorca's ballads. The poet's imagination and clever use of existing gypsy and religious stories, while confined in the traditional ballad form, create a special mystic atmosphere—a combination of the archaic and the modern. Lorca's Andalusian myth, as expressed in his ballads, is not a systematic explanation of either the nature or the supernatural world. It is experimental poetry, in which a mystic world is told in scenes with gaps in between, suggesting a possibility of a full-length, completed epic.

3.2. Deep Song and Duende

Among Lorca's mythical figures, a major character is hidden behind the poet's words—the duende. In 1933, Lorca gave a speech on the topic of “Play and Theory of the Duende” (“Juego y teoría del duende”). This lecture on the deep song can serve as the theory behind his literary creation. The idea of duende in Spain is quite different from the idea of muse in Greek mythology. They are both the source of inspiration for artists and writers, while their faces are quite different—Muse is described as an elegant goddess and duende as an ugly and mischievous spirit. The spirit of duende is playful. Spontaneity in the performances of the deep song comes in tune with this playful spirit of duende. Edward F. Stanton explains the origin of the word “duende”:

The most common opinion is that this word derives from the Latin *domitus*: domestic or familiar spirit. Its basic meaning is “inspiration” in the root sense, yet no foreign word can hope to convey the wealth of connotations produced by the two syllables in Spanish. (*The Tragic Myth* 10)

According to Stanton, “*duende* is usually related to death in one way or another” (11), for Lorca says, “The duende does not come at all unless he sees that death is possible” (Lorca, “Play and Theory of the Duende,” 58). Stanton illustrates Lorca's ideas:

All the arts can express *duende*, but it reveals itself most readily in music, dance, and spoken poetry. For the same reason, it finds a wide field in bullfighting. Like the sea and sky in a storm, *duende* cannot repeat itself. It depends on an actual present, being a perpetual baptism of the moment.” (12)

In Lorca's theory, whether a performance has “duende” or not does not lie only

on the performance itself, but greatly on the reaction of the audience. The impact of the performance on the audience and the interaction between the performer and the audience play an essential role in the making of art. This interaction has its tradition in the festive evenings of the gypsy people, as recounted by George Borrow in his book written in 1843, *The Zincali: An Account of the Gypsies of Spain*: “This was generally the time of mirth and festival, and the Gitanos, male and female, danced and sang in the Gypsy fashion beneath the smile of the moon” (35). Night is the time when the duende releases its magical power.

“The duende, then, is a power, not a work. It is a struggle, not a thought.” For Lorca, “it is not a question of ability, but of true living style, of blood, of the most ancient culture, of spontaneous creation” (Lorca, “Play and Theory of the Duende,” 49). Lorca, in his lecture, compares duende with other forms of artistic inspiration: the muse and the angel: “The muse and angel come from outside us: the angel gives lights, and the muse gives forms... But one must awaken the duende in the remotest mansions of the blood... The true fight is with the duende” (Lorca, “Play and Theory of the Duende,” 51).

Forman and Josephs in *Only Mystery* interprets duende as “the spiritual force behind the bull rituals, behind *flamenco*, and behind the whole sense of popular culture that pervades many religious spectacles in Spain even today” (13). A deep song *cantaor* lives in the present. There is no past or future. It is this spirit of living the now that makes any art performance a piece with the existence of the duende. In the mythical world of the gypsies, the duende is the reigning power.

4. Conclusion

After examining the two important poetic works by Lorca about the gypsies: *Gypsy Ballads* and *Poem of the Deep Song*, and Lorca’s theory of the duende, some conclusions may be drawn on the gypsy elements in Lorca’s poetry. Lorca successfully merged the gypsy elements in traditional ballad form in *Gypsy Ballads*. Equally successfully, he merged the three genres—poetry, drama and the gypsy deep

song—in his *Poem of the Deep Song*. Content-wide, there are basically two levels of the gypsy in his poetry: the gypsy people and the gypsy supernatural.

The gypsy people are described as marginalized people, victims of violence and the authority represented by the Spanish Civil Guard. The gypsy people are defenseless as described in Lorca's poetry. They express their sorrow by crying and singing the deep song. Through songs and dance, the gypsy people live the present moment. By performing art through spontaneity, the gypsy people complete their quest in life.

The reality of the gypsy people as represented in the poetry is dream-like. They live in a mythical world where the nature scenes, saints and martyrs are merged. The supernatural world of the gypsies is full of mythical figures such as the moon, the black pain, death, saints and martyrs, and the ultimate ruler of this mythical world is the duende—the artistic inspiration of the gypsies that only appears when death is present.

Critics of Lorca's poetry tend to categorize his poetry according to different phases of his life: (1) Early poetry collected in his books titled *Book of Poems* and *Songs*, which are short, lyrical poems corresponding to the idea of "pure poetry" ("poesía pura") of Juan Ramón Jiménez. (2) Andalusian poems on the gypsy themes in his books *Gypsy Ballads* and *Poem of the Deep Song*. (3) Poems inspired by Lorca's trip to New York and Cuba, with the influence of surrealism, collected in *Poet in New York*. (4) Late poetry including sonnets and poems with flavors of Galician and Arabic poetry.

Though Lorca has tried writing poetry in different forms and topics, there exists a certain degree of continuity and recurrent themes among his poetry. Using the gypsy material, Lorca depicted a world that is more profound than the possible stereotype of the gypsies that may have ingrained in the reader's mind. The sympathy with the marginalized, the weak, the artistic people shown in his gypsy poetry is once again reflected in the poetry from *Poet in New York*, in which Lorca wrote in a similar tone, though in different style, about the African people in the Americas. As Stanton puts it, "Lorca's gypsies might stand for dispossessed and

marginal human groups anywhere in the world” (82). By writing about the gypsies, Lorca formed a gypsy spirit of his own as demonstrated in his poetry: out of a sense of destiny and the expectation of the inevitable death comes the compassion for the weak and the passion for living the present.

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