Study Guide
for
The Love of Don Perlimplín For Belisa in His Garden
By
Federico García Lorca
Adapted By
David Zinder

Compiled By
Rachel Kann
*special thanks to Dramaturge Bonnie Blackburn for her extensive research
A Context: About This Production

The Current Cal Rep production of Federico García Lorca’s The Love of Don Perlimplín For Belisa in His Garden is a new adaptation by the director, David Zinder. Zinder has infused the original play with additional poetry, all written by the playwright, Lorca. Here’s what Zinder has to say about the production:

Known chiefly for his famous “Rural tragedies” – Blood Wedding, Yerma and The House of Bernarda Alba – Federico García Lorca also wrote a great many smaller pieces, many of them highly experimental in their style. This lesser known play has been called by one critic “...a seductive enigma, a dangerous mystery, to be revealed, unmasked, discovered.” Lorca himself subtitled the play, somewhat deviously “An erotic halleluya in four scenes”. It was his great genius that enabled him to cram into this short, deceptively simple story a breathtaking range of styles: folk tale, farce, fantasy surrealism, and, ultimately, a grotesque tragedy. To this heady, but brief mixture, I have added material from Lorca's own plays and poems in order to expand the short text – as he himself intended by never managed to do – into a full-length play. Fueled by the complexities of his own life as a homosexual in a devoutly Catholic country, in this play Lorca playfully and painfully examines the nature of masculinity and femininity, reality and fantasy, theatre and the imagination, and the characteristically Spanish intertwining of love and death. In effect he is inviting us into his very private world, but, as he wrote in one of the stage directions in the play, it is a world in which "all the perspectives are deliciously distorted".

I would like to dedicate this production to my late mentor and dear friend, William Oliver.

Let’s take a look at these two men to understand what they collectively bring to this production:

Federico García Lorca

Federico García Lorca is possibly the most important Spanish poet and dramatist of the twentieth century. García Lorca was born June 5, 1899, in Fuente Vaqueros, a small town a few miles from Granada. His father owned a farm in the fertile vega surrounding Granada and a comfortable mansion in the heart of the city. His mother, whom Lorca idolized, was a gifted pianist. After graduating from secondary school García Lorca attended Sacred Heart University where he took up law along with regular coursework. His first book, Impresiones y Viajes (1919) was inspired by a trip to Castile with his art class in 1917.
In 1919, García Lorca traveled to Madrid, where he remained for the next fifteen years. Giving up university, he devoted himself entirely to his art. He organized theatrical performances, read his poems in public, and collected old folksongs. During this period García Lorca wrote El Maleficio de la mariposa (1920), a play which caused a great scandal when it was produced. He also wrote Libro de poemas (1921), a compilation of poems based on Spanish folklore. Much of García Lorca’s work was infused with popular themes such as Flamenco and Gypsy culture. In 1922, García Lorca organized the first “Cante Jondo” festival in which Spain’s most famous “deep song” singers and guitarists participated. The deep song form permeated his poems of the early 1920s. During this period, García Lorca became part of a group of artists known as Generación del 27, which included Salvador Dalí and Luis Buñuel, who exposed the young poet to surrealism. In 1928, his book of verse, Romancero Gitano (“The Gypsy Ballads”), brought García Lorca far-reaching fame; it was reprinted seven times during his lifetime.

In 1929, García Lorca came to New York. The poet’s favorite neighborhood was Harlem; he loved African-American spirituals, which reminded him of Spain’s “deep songs.” In 1930, García Lorca returned to Spain after the proclamation of the Spanish republic and participated in the Second Ordinary Congress of the Federal Union of Hispanic Students in November of 1931. The congress decided to build a “Barraca” in central Madrid in which to produce important plays for the public. “La Barraca,” the traveling theater company that resulted, toured many Spanish towns, villages, and cities performing Spanish classics on public squares. Some of García Lorca’s own plays, including his three great tragedies Bodas de sangre (1933), Yerma (1934), and La Casa de Bernarda Alba (1936), were also produced by the company.

In 1936, García Lorca was staying at Callejones de García, his country home, at the outbreak of the Civil War. He was arrested by Franquist soldiers, and on the 17th or 18th of August, after a few days in jail, soldiers took García Lorca to visit his brother-in-law, Manuel Fernández Montesinos, the Socialist ex-mayor of Granada whom the soldiers had murdered and dragged through the streets. When they arrived at the cemetery, the soldiers forced García Lorca from the car. They struck him with the butts of their rifles and riddled his body with bullets. His books were burned in Granada’s Plaza del Carmen and were soon banned from Franco’s Spain. To this day, no one knows where the body of Federico García Lorca rests.

A Selected Bibliography

Poetry

Canciones (1927)
El poema del Cante Jondo (1932)
Impresiones y viajes (1918)
In Search of Duende (1998)
Lament for the Death of a Bullfighter and Other Poems (1937)
Libro de poemas (1921)
Llanto por Ignacio Sanchez Mejias (1935)
Poeta en Nueva York ("Poet in New York") (1940)
Romancero Gitano ("The Gypsy Ballads") (1928)
Selected Poems (1941)

Drama
Amor de Don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín (1931)
Bodas de sangre (“Blood Wedding”) (1933)
El malificio de la mariposa (1920)
La casa de Bernarda Alba (“The House of Bernarda Alba”) (1936)
La zapatera prodigiosa (“The Shoemaker’s Marvelous Wife”) (1930)
Mariana Pineda (1927)
The Comedies (1955)
Yerma (1934)

***

Federico García Lorca (1898-1936)

LINKS

Frederico García Lorca, Writer Poet Artist
http://www.marxists.org/history/spain/lorca.htm
Following a short biography and photo is a list links to other Web resources on Lorca’s life and disappearance.

The House of Bernarda Alba
http://www.cwru.edu/artsci/thtr/website/Alba.htm

Case Western Reserve University showcases its production of The House of Bernarda Alba with three pictures from the set.

Deaf West Theatre Company
http://www.deo.org/deo/theatres_plays/deaf_west/houseofbernardaalba/hba-index.html

The homepage to Deaf West Theatre Company’s production of The House of Bernarda Alba includes three reviews by local magazines.

BIOGRAPHY

Federico García Lorca (1898-1936) lived through some of the most troubling times of modern Spain. He was born in the countryside near Granada, Spain, and maintained a lifelong love of the Spanish village and country people. His father was a wealthy farmer, and his mother was a teacher who encouraged his early love of literature, art, and music. Lorca’s talents were extraordinary. A fine pianist, he counted among his friends some of Spain’s greatest musicians, including Manuel de Falla. Lorca painted throughout his life and maintained a close friendship with Salvador Dalí. His career in the university was not especially distinguished, but as a student he became famous for readings of his own poetry. He produced an early play, The Butterfly’s Evil Spell, in 1920, the year before he published his first book of poems.

His political leanings throughout his life were liberal and reformist, but his early years were spent living under a Spanish dictatorship. General elections ended Spain’s monarchy and established the Second Spanish Republic in 1931, but Fascist leaders, notably Francisco Franco, began agitating for control. Standing for a free republic and prominent as a leftist, Lorca was killed suddenly and without explanation by Franco’s forces in 1936, just two days before the start of the Spanish Civil War.
Lorca's dramatic work had developed steadily. His second play, The Girl Who Waters the Sweet Basil Flower and the Inquisitive Prince (1923), was a puppet show. Lorca, who especially enjoyed this form of drama, had bought his own puppet theater when he was fifteen. He designed the sets, and Manuel de Falla provided the music. Unfortunately, the manuscript for this play has been lost. Text for another puppet play of the same period, The Billy-Club Puppets, does exist, as do copies of some later dramatic sketches: Buster Keaton's Promenade (1926), which takes off on Buster Keaton's film character, and The Public (1933), one of several experimental surrealist plays. His first real success was Mariana Pineda (1927), produced in Granada. After suffering a personal crisis, perhaps connected to his growing awareness of his homosexuality, Lorca spent a year in New York, from which experience he wrote The Poet in New York, published—much later—in 1940.

Lorca returned to Spain and produced a number of plays in the early 1930s such as The Shoemaker's Prodigious Wife (1930), The Love of Don Perlimplín with Belisa in the Garden (1933), and Doña Rosita, the Spinster (1935), the last of his plays to be produced during his lifetime. His three most important plays are generally referred to as folk tragedies: Blood Wedding (1933) and Yerma (1934) were produced in Madrid, and The House of Bernarda Alba was produced in Buenos Aires in 1945. These three plays were influenced by a great Spanish actress and producer, Margarita Xirgu, for whom the title role of Yerma was created.

Lorca's reputation flourished after the end of World War II, but because Spain's Fascist government continued until Franco's death in 1975, Lorca's work could not be produced in his native country until the 1980s. His gift was combining poetry, music, original set designs, and a sense of the language of the country people who inspired his work. He had a feel for the pagan forces that informed the country people and aimed to show their creative power in everyday life. He celebrated instinctive, primitive religious feeling, the joy of living, the sexual energy of the universe, and the fullness of life.

From http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/litlinks/drama/lorca.htm

David Zinder

A Full Professor at the Theatre Arts Department of Tel Aviv University, and an internationally acclaimed director and acting teacher, David served for many years as Head of Acting and Directing at Tel Aviv University and as the first Artistic Director of the University Theatre. In this capacity David created extensive international relations and a major international reputation for the department. At the same time David pursued a world-wide career as a director and a highly sought-after acting teacher. In 2004, after years of balancing his academic and professional careers, David...
took early retirement from Tel Aviv University in order to focus primarily on his first love: directing.

David’s professional training began at the fledgling Theatre Arts Department of Tel Aviv University, followed by a BA in Drama at Manchester University in England. In Israel David pursued a career as a professional actor for five years, working in most of Israel’s major theatre companies. Two out of these five were spent with an enormously successful English-language improvisation group based in Jerusalem, under the tutelage of Jackie Kronberg - from the famous Second City Improvisation group. This intensive training in Improvisation Technique laid the groundwork for most of his later work as a director and teacher.

In 1972 David went back to university and in 1976 he completed his PhD. at the Drama Dept. of the University of California at Berkeley (The Surrealist Connection: Towards A Surrealist Aesthetic of Theatre) That same year he joined the faculty of the Theatre Arts Department at Tel Aviv. Later David was deeply influenced by the work of Eugenio Barba and Joseph Chaikin, with both of whom he became acquainted in the late 70’s. The work he did with all of these mentors formed the basis for the development of his own unique system of actor training: ImageWork Training.

The discovery, in the early 90’s, of a deep, intuitive connection between his own independently developed ImageWork Training and the Michael Chekhov Technique, led David into a period of learning that opened up new directions for the further development of his work, giving it a broad context as well as greater depth and amplitude.

Over the years David’s workshop schedule has taken him throughout the United States, the United Kingdom and Europe (East and West) and, most recently - July-September, 2005 - to the Far East as well, when he was invited to give a semester-long Master Class at the Theater Training and Research Program (TIRP), at the Practice Performing Arts School (PPAS) in Singapore.

Since 2002 David has been directing extensively in Romania, and during that same year his book on acting training, “Body Voice Imagination: A Training for the Actor” was published by Routledge in New York.

David lives in Tel Aviv with his wife, Leah, a journalist for the English News on Israel Television, and has three children and two grandchildren, all living in Israel.

From http://www.davidzinder.com/CV.htm

The Play

The Nutshell Version:

In an eighteenth century setting the rich old man Don Perlimplin is captivated by the young Belisa singing an erotic love song on the balcony opposite his. Shy but goaded by his servant he asks for her hand in marriage. Her mother, sensing a financial opportunity, bosses her into accepting. Unable to consummate his marriage Perlimplin falls asleep on their wedding night. Belisa makes love to five men from five continents, one after the other, later that night. When he wakes the following morning he can’t rouse her from her sleep and sadly sings ‘Love, love that here lies wounded’. In the days that follow the
pathetic Perlimplin, sensing that he is not loved, writes Belisa letters as though he were a young admirer and passes her window in a huge red cape covering his face to make her believe he is someone else. He arranges in one of these letters to secretly meet her in the garden late in the evening. In grotesque despair he dances and sings 'Don Perlimplin has no Honour'. In the moonlit garden, upon the banks of the river, Belisa hears a serenade as she waits. A man appears in a red cape stumbling and wounded — a dagger stuck in his chest. Don Perlimplin, covering his face, says that he has been killed by Don Perlimplin because he knew that Belisa was loved by a young man who loved her body as he couldn't. Belisa then recognises her husband but, confused, asks where the young man is. Perlimplin dies in her arms.


The Deep Dish Version:

EL AMOR DE DON PERLIMPLIN CON BELISA EN SU JARDIN

Upon its completion on June 15, 1928, El amor de don Perlimplin was promised to Cipriano Rivas Cherif, director of the theatrical group "El Caracol." Plans were announced for a Madrid production in 1929 at the "Sala Rex." But these preparations were unsuccessful, and it was not until April 5, 1933 that the play was presented. Under Lorca's direction, the "Club Teatral de Cultura" of Madrid produced the drama at the "Teatro España." The decor was by Santiago Ontañón.

The reception accorded El amor de don Perlimplin was even more turbulent than that which greeted El maleficio de la mariposa upon its opening. Where the latter play had been subjected to public animosity, Lorca's latest play was opposed, even before its presentation, by stronger and more emphatic forces. There are two versions of why the play did not reach the stage in 1929, one by Rivas Cherif and the other by Lorca. Both, however, agree that political pressure was the unmovable obstacle.

Rivas Cherif, in an article published in 1957, explains that the play had been in rehearsal for some weeks and the premiere date decided on when he received word from the military authorities that the "Sala Rex" was to be indefinitely closed. The reason given for this apparently unfounded action was that the theatrical group had not observed the formalities of mourning for the recently deceased Queen Mother, Christina of Hapsburg-Lorraine. As flimsy as this excuse was, when taken along with Lorca's account it achieves more sinister aspects.

Garcia Lorca disclosed earlier that the play had drowned in a sea of military censure under the direct order of General Severiano Martínez Anido, who, upon learning that the role of Don Perlimplin was to be interpreted by a leading military personality of the day, threatened incarceration of the author, the officer and the director. Though the entire content of the play did not possess anything which might be considered politically or militarily objectionable, governmental contrariness was founded on the ridiculous point that the officer's participation would be degrading to the career of arms. The officer, whose name is not available, was reprimanded according to Lorca's account, and the author was forced to submit his manuscript to the official censor where it was detained without approval in spite of the changes made. It was this office that during Primo de Rivera's dictatorship ordered the closing of the venture. As a result of these pressures the entire group had to disband, forsaking its name "El Caracol."
It was perhaps the disillusionment with that production that prevented Lorca from ever expanding the one-act play into a full-length drama as he had done with La Zapatera Prodigiosa. But the intention was there, even as late as 1933 when the play was to be presented by the "Club Teatral" of Madrid:

El amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín is the sketch for a longer drama. I have placed in it only the precise words needed to draw the characters. . . . I call it 'a chamber version' because I intend later on to develop the theme more fully in all its complexity."

The single act is divided into four scenes wherein the six characters—Don Perlimplín, Belisa, Marcolfa, Madre and two sprites (Duendes) -- create an atmosphere intermixing realism and surrealism. Where the first touches of this technique appeared inadequately in El maleficio de la mariposa, were experimentally handled and excused in the puppet plays, and showed themselves faintly through La Zapatera's daydreams, it is in this play that surrealistic tendencies become important. Not that they are fully developed or integrated into the action, but they are well-handled as will be seen in the discussion of the text.

Having overlapped each other in the writing, El amor de don Perlimplín and La Zapatera Prodigiosa are very similar. They complement one another in the development of the basic plot: the old man married to the young wife. But where the previous play relies heavily on folk traditions and dialogue, on a simple approach to the marital quarrels, on a more physical level of activity, in Don Perlimplín Lorca prefers to treat more poetic sides of the basic plot.

To the student of "pure" theatre nothing would be more rewarding than a close study of this play of changing moods and identities as a man of fifty, married to a voluptuous girl, invents a lover for her and kills himself for her, in order to teach her the meaning of love.

Thus, this play takes an entirely different route from that traveled in La Zapatera Prodigiosa. Perlimplín's unselfishness contrasts with the self-interest that prevails in the characters of La Zapatera and her husband; furthermore, Belisa's final recognition of Perlimplín's sacrifice lifts her well above La Zapatera whose last words show that she has not changed. The similarity between the two men lies in that both are resigned, towards the end of each respective play, to the situations which confront them; but their solutions are vastly different: El Zapatero merely returns to his shop and accepts his wife's taunts philosophically, while Perlimplín, less stoically but more poetically, kills himself so that Belisa may understand love and live a worthwhile life in that knowledge. Belisa and La Zapatera also have a basic premise that unites them: both are young, earthy and contemptuous. But as their respective husbands differ so, too, do they.

Where La Zapatera rejects all advances of her many suitors, Belisa accepts all of them joyfully. She is the exaggeration of physical love while La Zapatera represents the extreme of ideal or romantic love. Belisa cannot love, during the pre-climax moments of the play, except in sensual terms; her love being narcissistic, centered on her own body and the pleasures it can give her, Belisa can find satisfaction only in physical love. She rejects the lovers whose attitudes are more poetic, but characteristically falls in love with an unknown admirer whose letters reveal his intense love of her body. The secretiveness of this suitor, who is the disguised Don Perlimplín, mixed with his passionate understanding
of her, make Belisa rise a little above her usual interest. This rise continues as the play reaches a climax in the garden scene where Don Perlimplin is revealed to her as the secret lover. In these final moments Belisa's passion turns to love and the climax is sustained to the last moment of the play.

Perlimplin and Belisa are the principal characters, but Marcolfa--Perlimplin's housekeeper--plays an important part as the instrument through which the action is sparked. In her, Lorca has placed many of the qualities of Harlequin, the sometimes too--bright servant in the commedia dell'arte. Thus, it is at Marcolfa's suggestion and prodding that Perlimplin arranges to marry Belisa; the idea of marriage had not seriously presented itself in all of his fifty years. Again, the resemblance of incident to El Zapatero's plight. The joint scheming of Belisa's mother and Marcolfa has the planned result. Like the ancient Arlecchino, Marcolfa is always present when plans are being made but is conspicuously missing at moments when her presence could prevent a crisis. Her derivation is also celestinesque.

The "Prologo" takes place in Perlimplin's house where he and Marcolfa are having a conversation on marriage: she, trying to convince him that his old age makes it imperative that he have someone to look after him; he, resisting this suggestion weakly. As a defense of his single state, Perlimplin interjects:

"When I was a child, a woman strangled her husband. He was a shoemaker. I can't forget it. I have always intended not to get married."

His words refer back to La Zapatera Prodigiosa, recalling the days when he was a child, possibly El Niño who had befriended La Zapatera. In a sense, then, this revelation of relationship to those characters could provide the real ending for the previous play.

But in spite of his protests, Marcolfa continues to woo his interest for the revolutionary proposal. Her cause is aided unexpectedly by Belisa's sweet voice coming from the balcony across the way.

"Love, love.
The sun swims like a fish
enclosed within my thighs.
Warm water among the rushes,
love.
Rooster, the night is going!
Don't let it depart, no!"

Sensing the advantage she has gained as Perlimplin listens raptly to the sensuous song, Marcolfa declares that Belisa is the one best suited to be his wife. Perlimplin can hardly argue before he is pushed to his balcony and instructed to call her name. Hardly the master of his fate, he complies with Marcolfa's command. When the lovely and young Belisa appears at her balcony, voluptuously dressed, Marcolfa hides behind the drapes. Perlimplin, trembling and weak, faces Belisa and after much hesitation, during which he has to be prompted, succeeds in declaring his intention of marrying her. Shocked by the sudden and almost indecent overture, Belisa calls her mother. La Madre appears and Marcolfa, who is enjoying the turn of events, grins happily. Belisa announces Perlimplin's intentions. La Madre becomes very complimentary to the old man who stands before her once again nervously committing himself to the formalities of the proposal. While he
and Marcolfa converse out of sight of La Madre, Belisa listens to her mother's arguments in favor of the marriage:

"Don Perlimplin has much land. On the land there are geese and sheep. The sheep are taken to market. At the market they are bought with money. Money gives beauty. And beauty is coveted by other men."

The mother has the eye of a money-changer and sees the advantageous side of the marriage. Her objections overcome by the prospect of wealth through which pleasure would later follow, Belisa retires while her shrewd mother converses with Perlimplin over the wedding arrangements.

But Perlimplin does not realize the gravity of the discussion until after she re-enters her house. Frightened by the idea, he looks at Marcolfa:

"Ay, Marcolfa, Marcolfa! What kind of a world are you getting me into?"

His words are echoes of the misguided Zapatero who had heeded the advice of his sister under similar circumstances. But as Marcolfa whispers in his ear, his eyes grow brighter. Belisa re-appears on her balcony singing her song. Perlimplin begins to look at her differently and Marcolfa's words inspire his growing admiration as the "Prologo" closes.

The business of the marriage ceremony has been accomplished as the first scene opens upon Don Perlimplin's bedroom. It is a large room. At its center is a magnificent bed with a feathery canopy; its walls are interrupted by six doors, five of which lead to balconies. The sixth leads into the house proper. It is this last door that Marcolfa closes as she bids her master goodnight. Alone in the bedroom while Belisa prepares herself for bed, Perlimplin seems nervous. He exits after first peeking through the door where Belisa is undressing:

"Belisa, with all your lace you seem like a wave and you frighten me as the sea did when I was a child."

Belisa then enters in a flowing nightgown, her hair loose, complaining of Marcolfa's ineptitude in following her orders for the room's decoration. But Belisa's feelings arise from a restlessness which soft guitar music enhances:

"Ay! Whoever looks for me with passion will find me. My thirst is never quenched."

As it started, suddenly, so the music ends. In its place are heard five different whistles. Belisa, recognizing them as the calls of her lovers, tingles with the delight of expectation. Before she can answer them, however, Perlimplin re-enters. Almost a mockery to her anxiety, he declares his love for her, seriously retelling of the moment when he discovered this new feeling:

"I married you for whatever the reason, but I didn't love you. I couldn't have imagined your body until I saw it through the keyhole while you dressed for the bridal night. It was then that I felt love."

He confesses that she is the first woman in his romantic life and Belisa is astonished at the revelation. The whistling is again heard but Belisa tells Perlimplin that it is the clock. He accepts her explanation and turns out the light. The whistling continues, growing stronger each time. As Perlimplin and Belisa approach the bed, two sprites, Duendes, enter from opposite sides of the stage pulling grey curtains that hide the room from view. Lorca says
these two figures should be children. As they perform their task, they speak somewhat shrewdly of the reason for their action:

Duende 2: "... It's always nice to cover the faults of others."

Duende 1: "The audience can uncover them later."

Duende 2: "Because if things are not covered with all kinds of precautions..."

Duende 1: "They can never be discovered."

The night passes quickly during their conversation and upon feeling the chill of morning entering through the curtains, the sprites prepare to allow the spectators to view the scene once more. As they draw back the curtain, Perlimplin is sitting on the bed. Two large gilded horns decorate his head. Belisa lies beside him, feigning sleep, while the five open doors that lead to balconies inspire suspicions in her husband. Awakening her, he demands to know why they are open. When he discovers five ladders and five hats, one at each balcony, Perlimplin becomes furious. But Belisa explains away his suspicions by telling him that such is the custom in her mother's town, and that the hats belong to: "... the little drunkards who come and go, darling Perlimplin." Totally seduced by her beauty, Perlimplin believes every lie she tells him:

"You explain everything so well. I'm satisfied. Why shouldn't it be as you say?"

His doubts return, but they are momentary only as Belisa reassures him that he alone has kissed her during the night. But Belisa's active night with her five lovers has depleted her energies. She returns to bed and falls asleep immediately. Perlimplin is left alone with the dawn, murmuring the sad words:

"Love, love
which is wounded.
Wounded by fleeting love;
wounded,
dying with love.
Tell everyone it was
the nightingale."

The curtain closes on the first scene as Perlimplin tenderly covers Belisa's sleeping figure. But the question remains, advanced further by his closing words: did Perlimplin know of his wife's night of infidelity?

The story is old, lewd and rather savage: that of the old man married to a lusty young wife, one of the standard situations of neoclassic farce. But Lorca, without losing sight of the farce, lifts it to poetry also, and poetry of power and freshness.

The second scene, a few days later, gives the answer to the question. Not only Perlimplin but also Marcolfa saw the night-time visitations of Belisa's lovers. Marcolfa tearfully describes the event:

"On the wedding night five persons came in through the balconies. Five! Representatives of the five races of the earth. The European, with his beard; the Indian,
the Negro, the Oriental, the North-American. . . . Imagine, yesterday I saw her with another."

But Perlimplin seems undisturbed by her words, commenting happily:

"But I'm happy, Marcolfa. . . . You have no idea how happy. I have learned many things, and, above all, I can imagine them."

These are keys to the transformed character of Don Perlimplin. He has changed almost completely from the ignorant and suspicious old man of the first scene into a man who has learned to love. But more importantly, as he says, he has learned to use his imagination. All this has been achieved through Belisa, though she is not aware of the deep effect she has had on him. So, there are no more serious accusations of infidelity even though Perlimplin is fully aware of her deceptions. Puzzled by her master's attitude, Marcolfa exits with exasperation on her face as Belisa approaches from the garden. Perlimplin himself hides in a solitary corner from which he can observe Belisa secretly.

The lovely but unfaithful wife shows her concern over a new lover whom she has not been able to meet. She soliloquizes:

"I haven't even seen him. On my walk through the park, they all followed me except him. He must have dark skin and his kisses must perfume and burn like saffron and clove. Sometimes, he passes underneath my balcony and waves his hand in a greeting that makes my breasts tremble."

When Perlimplin interrupts her with a feigned cough, Belisa turns irritatedly. But her husband does not reproach her. Instead, he teases her by withholding a note that has been thrown through the window. The anxious Belisa implores him to give her the letter. In an unexpected gallantry he entrusts the paper to her:

"I give you this piece of paper which means so much to you because I understand your state of mind. I'm aware of things. And although they wound me profoundly, I know that you're living in a drama. . . . I know everything! I was aware of it immediately. You're young and I am old."

His new outlook surprises her, but she does not doubt his sincerity. She speaks freely of the young man whom she has never seen except in the shadows beneath her balcony and who writes passionate letters:

"The letters I've received from other men . . . spoke of ideal countries, of dreams, and of wounded hearts; but these letters from him . . . speak of me, of my body."

In her excitement she shows the letters to Perlimplin who grins knowingly as he scans them.

"Belisa, it isn't your soul which I desire, but your soft and white trembling body!"

Her new admirer knows that the things which please her are sensuous things. Knowing that her body is the most important thing to her because it gives her pleasure, he dedicates his love to it. This understanding of her assures Belisa: "There's no doubt that he loves me as I want to be loved." Perlimplin listens contentedly to these confessions but he teases Belisa further by saying that he knows the young lover. Then, as he looks out the
window, he claims to have seen him in the garden. But when Belisa looks for him the garden is empty. Perlimplin enigmatically proclaiming:

"Since I am old, I want to sacrifice myself for you... What I am doing, no one else has done. But I am already beyond the world and the ridiculous morality of people. Goodbye."

His exit marks the end of the second scene. It is a grandiose movement during which he tells Belisa that she will know everything later.

The final scene frames a garden with large cypress and orange trees. Perlimplin and Marcolfa are again in deep discussion. Don Perlimplin's change is again accentuated in his conversation; his exuberance is communicated to Marcolfa in a touching speech which expands on the topic first seen in the second scene:

"It seems as if a hundred years had passed. Before, I was unable to think on the extraordinary things of the world. I stayed at the doorways... But now! Belisa's love has given me a precious treasure of which I had been ignorant... You see? Now I can close my eyes and see what I want to see."

Marcolfa, however, is preoccupied with plans her master has confided to her. Between sobs, she reports that Belisa has been informed, as he requested, that the secret lover would meet her that night, at ten, in the garden. Marcolfa describes Belisa's reception of the news:

"She became as fiery as a geranium, grasped her heart with her hands and passionately kissed her beautiful tresses... She only sighed. But what sighs!"

Marcolfa's puzzlement grows as Perlimplin receives the report happily. His explanation shows the dedication of his careful plan to a change in Belisa's outlook on love:

"I want her to love that young man more than her own body. And there's no doubt she loves him."

Perlimplin knows that she cannot love him as he is, so in his plan he has created the unknown lover. The meeting in the garden will be the climax of his involved episode, the moment when Belisa will be converted. But his voice still has the ring of mystery, hinting that there is more to his plan than seems evident. To Marcolfa's protests, he replies:

"Don Perlimplin has no honor and wants only to amuse himself... What should I do but sing? Tomorrow you'll be free as a bird."

She exits, this time offended by his lack of honor, to do his bidding. Evening turns night as Perlimplin hides himself in the cover of some rose-bushes to await Belisa's appearance for the tryst. A sweet serenade accompanies his vigil at first, but it gives way to a group of voices singing of Belisa in erotic stanzas:

"On the shores of the river
night is becoming moist.
And on the breasts of Belisa
branches are dying of love."
"The night is singing naked
over the bridges of March,
Belisa is washing her body
with water of brine and spikenards.

"The night of anise and silver
is gleaming over the roofs.
Silver from brooks and from mirrors,
anise from your thighs of white."

Each stanza is concluded by Perlimplin's chant of love: "The branches are dying of love!" Perlimplin is a branch on the tree which is Belisa. While she grows from the generous earth, he draws life from her; but her self-love is killing him, the branch, because its nourishment is withheld for herself. Only in the sharing of the nourishment, love, with another will the tree sustain the branch. The metaphor is implied in Perlimplin's anguished chant. Content to be loved by Belisa in this bizarre manner of transference, Perlimplin waits patiently.

The moon guides Belisa to the appointed place as the real farce begins. The rosebush where Perlimplin is hiding trembles as a figure in a red cape emerges suddenly. Belisa rushes to her lover but he crosses quickly, indicating he will return. Belisa sighs with anticipation. Perlimplin enters, then, from the same place where the figure had disappeared. Eager to tell him of this new sensation--love--Belisa seems like a different person in her radiance:

"The scent of his flesh passes through his clothing. I love him! Perlimplin, I love him! I seem to be another woman!"

It is a sensual love, but nonetheless it achieves the purpose which Perlimplin had intended. In his eyes, her love for another person is a great accomplishment: "That is my triumph . . . The triumph of my imagination." Belisa does not grasp the meaning of his triumph. She understands even less the words that follow:

". . . Now I will help you to mourn him. . . . Since you love him so much, I don't want him to leave you. And so that he can be yours completely, it has occurred to me that the best thing is to stick this dagger into his gallant heart."

At that moment, Belisa feels true love for the unknown lover whose death sentence Don Perlimplin has pronounced while brandishing a large dagger. She pleads for his life, but Perlimplin remains resolute:

"He'll love you with the infinite love of the dead and I'll be free of the dark nightmare of your magnificent body . . . Your body! . . . Which I've never been able to fathom! ! !"

He runs out quickly, tearing away from Belisa's hold. Frightened, Belisa calls for Marcolfa to bring her a sword to kill Perlimplin. But the servant does not answer.

The shrubbery again parts and the red-caped figure stumbles into the garden with the dagger centered in his chest. His features are completely hidden by the huge cape. Belisa takes him in her arms and only then does the man reveal his face to her. It is Don Perlimplin who lies dying within the crescent of her arms. The revelatory scene recalls Cyrano de Bergerac's death sequence in Edmond Rostand's famous play.
The fantastic affair holds Belisa in a tight grip, tearing into her comprehension. Perlimplin, no longer speaking as the old man but as her lover, explains the fantasy:

"Your husband has just killed me with this dagger of emeralds. . . . He ran through the field and you'll never see him again. He killed me because he knew I loved you like no one else. As he killed me he shouted: 'Now Belisa has a soul!'"

Belisa cannot grasp immediately what he is saying, though she begins to recognize aspects of his completed plan. Perlimplin draws her closer to him as his life ebbs away:

"I am my soul and you are your body. . . . Since you have loved me so much, let me die embracing it in this last moment."

Belisa finally realizes the truth, but Perlimplin has died in her arms. To Marcolfa, who has entered after Perlimplin's farewell, Belisa cries out: "I would never have thought that he was so complex!" In her changed personality, strongly shadowed by what Lorca calls "a magical light," Belisa expresses her love for Don Perlimplin:

"Yes, yes, Marcolfa, I love him, I love him with all the strength of my flesh and soul."

Belisa's voice reveals the sense of real loss Perlimplin's sacrificial death has caused. She no longer sees him as the quaint old man who had first been the naive husband and later the fatherly confidant. Perlimplin has now become the fictitious young lover. Wishing him back to express her new-found love, Belisa speaks her final words in desperation: "But where is the young man in the red cape? . . . My God, where is he?" Marcolfa's words to the body of Don Perlimplin indicate that the metamorphosis is complete: "Sleep peacefully, Don Perlimplin . . . Do you hear her?" Distant churchbells accompany the closing curtain, mixing with Belisa's cries in a symphony of laments. Yet, the note of triumph is ever present through Marcolfa's words, echoes of Perlimplin's victory over Belisa's narcissistic love.

It is this achievement which makes Perlimplin's act of self-extinction much more than merely a poetic "tour de force" or a ridiculous undertaking. His is the greatest sacrifice which human love can make. It is an act completely free from selfishness. Devoted to the redemption of a human spirit and apart from any taint as it transcends the normal values of everyday life, it reaches the heights of magnificence. Through his charade and subsequent death, Perlimplin turns the vain and wanton Belisa into a woman capable of truly loving someone other than herself. Through his tragic act he gives her real life. But it is more than this renewal that Perlimplin accomplishes, as his dying words attest: "I am my soul and you are your body." His greatest gift to Belisa is a soul—his own. Theirs is now the perfect union. So, in that sense, Perlimplin reaches the only plateau he could have inhabited once his love for Belisa was kindled, and she attains a stature she could never have reached alone.

El amor de don Perlimplin is the culmination of a particular set of dramatic and poetic values especially expressed in the earlier puppet plays and La Zapatera Prodigiosa. These ideas, which simply consist in the integration of the lyric and the grotesque within a farcical framework, are here endowed most completely. The grotesque character of Lorca's Don Cristobal is now refined, poetically imbued with an ideal, and transferred into the soul of Don Perlimplin. There, it grows through love and emerges as a miniature tragic figure once the selected sacrificial act is consummated and the recognition scene is
The lyric element, though always on an equal plane with the grotesque, is subtle and haunting. It wends its way through Belisa's distorted view of love as well as through Perlimplin's fanatical complexity, and is movingly fused with the grotesque in the final sequence, causing the dramatic eruption.

El amor de don Perlimplin, derived generally from the traditional Spanish Aleluyas (eighteenth century colored sheets which contained brief stories in caricature and poetry), is admittedly "a sketch" for a longer play. It contains the most advanced ideas on a subject-matter briefly explored in El retablillo de don Cristobal, Tragicomedia de don Cristobal y la señora Rosita, and La Zapatera Prodigiosa. It is a climactic point in García Lorca's theatre for this reason, though it does not divert from the larger pattern which unites all his plays in content, outlook and expression.


The Duende: Theory and Divertissement
by Federico García Lorca

Whoever inhabits that bull's hide stretched between the Jucar, the Guadetete, the Sil or the Pisuerga - no need to mention the streams joining those lion-coloured waves churned up by the Plata - has heard it said with a certain frequency: "Now that has real duende!" It was in this spirit that Manuel Torres, the great artist of the Andalusian people, once remarked to a singer: "You have a voice, you know all the styles, but you'll never bring it off because you have no duende."

In all Andalusia, from the rock of Jaen to the shell of Cádiz, people constantly speak of the duende and find it in everything that springs out of energetic instinct. That marvelous singer, "El Librijano," originator of the Debla, observed, "Whenever I am singing with duende, no one can come up to me"; and one day the old gypsy dancer, "La Malena," exclaimed while listening to Bajowski play a fragment of Bach: "Olé! That has duende!" - and remained bored by Gluck and Brahms and Darius Milhaud. And Manuel Torres, to my mind a man of exemplary blood culture, once uttered this splendid phrase while listening to Falla himself play his "Nocturno del Generalife": "Whatever has black sounds has duende." There is no greater truth.

These black sounds are the mystery, the roots that probe through the mire that we all know of, and do not understand, but which furnishes us with whatever is sustaining in art. Black sounds: so said the celebrated Spaniard, thereby concurring with Goethe, who, in effect, defined the duende when he said, speaking of Paganini: "A mysterious power that all may feel and no philosophy can explain."

The duende, then, is a power and not a construct, is a struggle and not a concept. I have heard an old guitarist, a true virtuoso, remark, "The duende is not in the throat, the duende comes up from inside, up from the very soles of the feet." That is to say, it is not a question of aptitude, but of a true and viable style - of blood, in other words; of what is oldest in culture: of creation made act.

This "mysterious power that all may feel and no philosophy can explain," is, in sum, the earth-force, the same duende that fired the heart of Nietzsche, who sought it in its external forms on the Rialto Bridge, or in the music of Bizet, without ever finding it, or
understanding that the duende he pursued had rebounded from the mystery-minded Greeks to the Dancers of Cádiz or the gored, Dionysian cry of Silverio's siguiriya.

So much for the duende; but I would not have you confuse the duende with the theological demon of doubt at whom Luther, on a Bacchic impulse, hurled an inkwell in Nuremberg, or with the Catholic devil, destructive, but short on intelligence, who disguised himself as a bitch to enter the convents, or with the talking monkey that Cervantes' mountebank carried in the comedy about jealousy and the forests of Andalusia.

No. The duende that I speak of, shadowy, palpitating, is a descendant of that benignant demon of Socrates, he of marble and salt, who scratched the master angrily the day he drank the hemlock; and of that melancholy imp of Descartes, little as an unripe almond, who, glutted with circles and lines, went out on the canals to hear the drunken sailors singing.

Any man - any artist, as Nietzsche would say - climbs the stairway in the tower of his perfection at the cost of a struggle with a duende - not with an angel, as some have maintained, or with his muse. This fundamental distinction must be kept in mind if the root of a work of art is to be grasped.

The angel guides and endows, like Saint Raphael, or prohibits and avoids like Saint Michael, or foretells, like Saint Gabriel.

The Angel dazzles; but he flies over men's heads and remains in mid-air, shedding his grace; and the man, without any effort whatever, realizes his work, or his fellow-feeling, or his dance. The angel on the road to Damascus, and he who entered the crevice of the little balcony of Assisi, or that other angel who followed in the footsteps of Heinrich Suso, commanded - and there was no resisting his radiance, for he waved his wings of steel in an atmosphere of predestination.

The Muse dictates and, in certain cases, prompts. There is relatively little she can do, for she keeps aloof and is so full of lassitude (I have seen her twice) that I myself have had to put half a heart of marble in her. The Poets of the Muse hear voices and do not know where they come from; but surely they are from the Muse, who encourages and at times devours them entirely. Such, for example, was the case of Apollinaire, that great poet ravaged by the horrid Muse with whom the divinely angelic Rousseau painted him. The Muse arouses the intellect, bearing landscapes of columns and the false taste of laurel; but intellect is oftentimes the foe of poetry because it imitates too much, it elevates the poet to a throne of acute angles and makes him forget that in time the ants can devour him, too, or that a great arsenical locust can fall on his head, against which the Muses who live inside monocles or the lukewarm lacquer roses of insignificant salons, are helpless.

Angel and Muse approach from without; the Angel sheds light and the Muse gives form (Hesiod learned of them). Gold leaf or chiton-folds: the poet finds his models in his laurel coppice. But the Duende, on the other hand, must come to life in the nethermost recesses of the blood.

And repel the Angel, too - kick out the Muse and conquer his awe of the fragrance of violets that breathe from the poetry of the eighteenth century, or of the great telescope in whose lenses the Muse dozes off, sick of limits.
The true struggle is with the Duende.

The paths leading to God are well known, from the barbaric way of the hemmit, to the subtler modes of the mystic. With a tower, then, like Saint Theresa, or with three roads, like St. John of the Cross. And even if we must cry out in Isaiah's voice: "Truly, thou art the hidden God!" at the end at last, God sends to each seeker his first fiery thorns.

To seek out the Duende, however, neither map nor discipline is required. Enough to know that he kindles the blood like an irritant, that he exhausts, that he repulses, all the bland, geometrical assurances, that he makes of a Goya, master of the grays, the silvers, the roses of the great English painters, a man painting with his knees and his fists in bituminous blacks; that he bares a Mosen Cinto Verdaguer to the cold of the Pyrenees or induces a Jorge Manrique to sweat out his death on the crags of Ocaña, or invests the delicate body of Rimbaud in the green domino of the saltimbancue, or fixes the dead fish-eyes on the Comte de Lautréamont in the early hours of the boulevard.

The great artists of southern Spain, both gypsies and flamenco, whether singing or dancing or playing their instruments, know that no emotion is possible without the mediation of the Duende. They may hoodwink the people, they may give the illusion of duende without really having it, just as writers and painters and literary fashion-mongers without duende cheat you daily; but it needs only a little care and the will to resist one's own indifference, to discover the imposture and put it and its crude artifice to flight.

Once the Andalusian singer, Pastora Pavon, "The Girl with the Combs," a sombre Hispanic genius whose capacity for fantasy equals Goya's or Raphael el Gallo's, was singing in a little tavern in Cádiz. She sparred with her voice - now shadowy, now like molten tin, now covered with moss; she tangled her voice in her long hair or drenched it in sherry or lost it in the darkest and furthestmost bramble bushes. But nothing happened - useless, all of it! The hearers remained silent.

There stood Ignacio Espeleta, handsome as a Roman turtle, who was asked once why he never worked, and replied with a smile worthy of Argantonio: "How am I to work if I come from Cádiz?"

There, too, stood Héloise, the fiery aristocrat, whore of Seville, direct descendant of Soledad Vargas, who in the thirties refused to marry a Rothschild because he was not of equal blood. There were the Floridas, whom some people call butchers, but who are really millennial priests sacrificing bulls constantly to Geryon; and in a comer stood that imposing breeder of bulls, Don Pablo Murabe, with the air of a Cretan mask. Pastora Pavon finished singing in the midst of total silence. There was only a little man, one of those dancing mannikins who leap suddenly out of brandy bottles, who observed sarcastically in a very low voice: "Viva Paris!" As if to say: We are not interested in aptitude or techniques or virtuosity here. We are interested in something else.

Then the "Girl with the Combs" got up like a woman possessed, her face blasted like a medieval weeper, tossed off a great glass of Cazalla at a single draught, like a potion of fire, and settled down to singing - without a voice, without breath, without nuance, throat aflame - but with duende! She had contrived to annihilate all that was nonessential in song and make way for an angry and incandescent Duende, friend of sand-laden winds, so that everyone listening tore at his clothing almost in the same
rhythm with which the West Indian negroes in their rites rend away their clothes, huddled in heaps before the image of Saint Barbara.

The “Girl with the Combs” had to mangle her voice because she knew there were discriminating folk about who asked not for form, but for the marrow of form - pure music spare enough to keep itself in the air. She had to deny her faculties and her security; that is to say, to turn out her Muse and keep vulnerable, so that her Duende might come and vouchsafe the hand-to-hand struggle. And then how she sang! Her voice feinted no longer; it jetted up like blood, ennobled by sorrow and sincerity, it opened up like ten fingers of a hand around the nailed feet of a Christ by Juan de Juni - tempestuous!

The arrival of the Duende always presupposes a radical change in all the forms as they existed on the old plane. It gives a sense of refreshment unknown until then, together with that quality of the just-opening rose, of the miraculous, which comes and instils an almost religious transport.

In all Arabian music, in the dances, songs, elegies of Arabia, the coming of the Duende is greeted by fervent outcries of Allah! Allah! God! God!, so close to the Olé! Olé! of our bull rings that who is to say they are not actually the same; and in all the songs of southern Spain the appearance of the Duende is followed by heartfelt exclamations of God alive! - profound, human tender, the cry of communion with God through the medium of the five senses and the grace of the Duende that stirs the voice and the body of the dancer - a flight from this world, both real and poetic, pure as Pedro de Roja’s over the seven gardens (that most curious poet of the seventeenth century), or Juan Calimacho’s on the tremulous ladder of tears.

Naturally, when flight is achieved, all feel its effects: the initiate coming to see at last how style triumphs over inferior matter, and the unenlightened, through the I-don’t-know-what of an authentic emotion. Some years ago, in a dancing contest at Jerez de la Frontera, an old lady of eighty, competing against beautiful women and young girls with waists as supple as water, carried off the prize merely by the act of raising her arms, throwing back her head, and stamping the little platform with a blow of her feet; but in the conclave of muses and angels foregathered there - beauties of form and beauties of smile - the dying duende triumphed as it had to, trailing the rusted knife blades of its wings along the ground.

All the arts are capable of duende, but it naturally achieves its widest play in the fields of music, dance and the spoken poem, since those require a living presence to interpret them, because they are forms which grow and decline perpetually and raise their contours on the precise present.

Often the Duende of the musician passes over into the Duende of the interpreter, and at other times, when the musician and poet are not matched, the Duende of the interpreter - this is interesting - creates a new marvel that retains the appearance - and the appearance only - of the originating form. Such was the case with the duende-ridden Duse who deliberately sought out failures in order to turn them into triumphs, thanks to her capacity for invention; or with Paganini who, as Goethe explained, could make one hear profoundest melody in out-and-out vulgarity; or with a delectable young lady from the port of Santa María whom I saw singing and dancing the horrendous Italian ditty, “O Marie!” with such rhythms, such pauses, and such conviction that she transformed an Italian geegaw into a hard serpent of raised gold. What happened, in
effect, was that each in his own way found something new, something never before encountered, which put lifeblood and art into bodies void of expression.

In every country, death comes as a finality. It comes, and the curtain comes down. But not in Spain! In Spain the curtain goes up. Many people live out their lives between walls until the day they die and are brought out into the sun. In Spain, the dead are more alive than the dead of any other country of the world: their profile wounds like the edge of a barber's razor. The quip about death and the silent contemplation of it are familiar to the Spanish. From the "Dream of the Skulls" of Quevedo, to the "Putrescent Bishop" of Valdés Leal; from La Marbella of the seventeenth century who, dying in childbirth on the highway, says:

The blood of my entrails
Covers the horse.
And the horse's hooves
Strike fire from the pitch

to a recent young man from Salamanca, killed by a bull who exclaimed:

My friends, I am dying,
My friends, it goes badly.
I've three handkerchiefs inside me,
And this I apply now makes four.

there is a balustrade of flowering nitre where hordes peer out, contemplating death, with verses from Jeremiah for the grimmer side or sweet-smelling cypress for the more lyrical - but in any case, a country where all that is most important has its final metallic valuation in death.

The knife and the cart wheel and the razor and the singing beard-points of the shepherds, the shorn moon and the fly, the damp lockers, the ruins and the lace-covered saints, the quicklime and the cutting line of eaves and balconies: in Spain, all bear little grass-blades of death, allusions and voices perceptible to the spiritually alert, that call to our memory with the corpse-cold air of our own passing. It is no accident that all Spanish art is bound to our soil, so full of thistles and definitive stone; the lamentations of Pleberio or the dances of the master Josef Maria de Valdivielso are not isolated instances, nor is it by chance that from all the balladry of Europe the Spanish inamorata disengages herself in this fashion:

"If you are my fine friend,
Tell me - why won't you look at me?"
"The eyes with which I look at you
I gave up to the shadow."
"If you are my fine friend
Tell me - why don't you kiss me?"
"The lips with which I kissed you
I gave up to the clay."
"If you are my fine friend
Tell me - why won't you embrace me?"
"The arms that embrace you
I have covered up with worms."
Nor is it strange to find that in the dawn of our lyricism, the following note is sounded:

Inside the garden
I shall surely die.
Inside the rosebush
They will kill me.
Mother, Mother,
I went out
Gathering roses,
But surely death will find me
In the Garden.
Mother, Mother,
I went out
Cutting roses,
But surely death will find me
In the rosebush.
Inside the garden
I shall surely die.
Inside the rosebush
They will kill me.

Those heads frozen by the moon that Zurbarán painted, the butter-yellows and the lightening-yellows of El Greco, the narrative of Father Sigüenza, all the work of Goya, the presbytery of the Church of the Escorial, all polychrome sculpture, the crypt of the ducal house of Osuna, the death with the guitar in the chapel of the Benavente in Medina de Rio Seco - all equal, on the plane of cultivated art, the pilgrimages of San Andrés de Teixido where the dead have their place in the procession; they are one with the songs for the dead that the women of Asturias intone with flame-filled lamps in the November night, one with the song and dance of the Sibyl in the cathedrals of Mallorca and Toledo, with the obscure "In Recort" of Tortosa, and the innumerable rites of Good Friday that, with the arcane fiesta of the Bulls, epitomize the popular triumph of Spanish death. In all the world, Mexico alone can go hand-in-hand with my country.

When the Muse sees death on the way, she closes the door, or raises a plinth, or promenades an urn and inscribes an epitaph with a waxen hand, but in time she tears down her laurels again in a silence that wavers between two breezes. Under the truncated arch of the Ode, she joins with funereal meaning the exact flowers that the Italians of the fifteenth century depicted, with the identical cock of Lucretius, to frighten off an unforeseen darkness.

When the Angel sees death on the way, he flies in slow circles and weaves with tears of narcissus and ice the elegy we see trembling in the hands of Keats and Villasandino and Herrera and Becquer and Juan Ramón Jiménez. But imagine the terror of the Angel, should it feel a spider - even the tiniest - on its tender and roseate flesh!

The Duende, on the other hand, will not approach at all if he does not see the possibility of death, if he is not convinced he will circle death's house, if there is not every assurance he can rustle the branches borne aloft by us all, that neither have, nor may ever have, the power to console.

With idea, with sound, or with gesture, the Duende chooses the brim of the well for his open struggle with the creator. Angel and Muse escape in the violin or in musical
measure, but the Duende draws blood, and in the healing of the wound that never quite closes, all that is unprecedented and invented in a man's work has its origin.

The magical virtue of poetry lies in the fact that it is always empowered with duende to baptize in dark water all those who behold it, because with duende, loving and understanding are simpler, there is always the certainty of being loved and being understood; and this struggle for expression and for the communication of expression acquires at times, in poetry, finite characters.

Recall the case of that paragon of the flamenco and daemonic way, Saint Teresa - flamenca not for her prowess in stopping an angry bull with three significant passes - though she did so - nor for her presumption in esteeming herself beautiful in the presence of Fray Juan de Miseria, nor for slapping the face of a papal nuncio; but rather for the simple circumstance that she was one of the rare ones whose Duende (not her Angel - the Angels never attack) pierced her with an arrow, hoping thereby to destroy her for having deprived him of his ultimate secret: the subtle bridge that links the five senses with the very center, the living flesh, living cloud, living sea, of Love emancipated from Time.

Most redoubtable conqueress of the Duende - and how utterly unlike the case of Philip of Austria who, longing to discover the Muse and the Angel in theology, found himself imprisoned by the Duende of cold ardors in that masterwork of the Escorial, where geometry abuts with a dream and the Duende wears the mask of the Muse for the eternal chastisement of the great king.

We have said that the Duende loves ledges and wounds, that he enters only those areas where form dissolves in a passion transcending any of its visible expressions.

In Spain (as in all Oriental countries where dance is a form of religious expression) the Duende has unlimited play in the bodies of the dancers of Cádiz, eulogized by Martial, in the breasts of the singers, eulogized by Juvenal, and in all the liturgy of the bulls - that authentic religious drama where, in the manner of the Mass, adoration and sacrifice are rendered a God.

It would seem that all the duende of the classical world is crowded into this matchless festival, epitomizing the culture and the noble sensibility of a people who discover in man his greatest rages, his greatest melancholies, his greatest lamentations. No one, I think, is amused by the dances or the bulls in Spain; the Duende has taken it on himself to make them suffer through the medium of drama, in living forms, and prepares the ladders for flight from encompassing reality.

The Duende works on the body of the dancer like the wind works on sand. With magical force, it converts a young girl into a lunar paralytic; or fills with adolescent blushes a ragged old man begging handouts in the wineshops; or suddenly discovers the smell of nocturnal ports in a head of hair, and moment for moment, works on the arms with an expressiveness which is the mother of the dance of all ages.

But it is impossible for him ever to repeat himself - this is interesting and must be underscored. The Duende never repeats himself, any more than the forms of the sea repeat themselves in a storm.
In the bullfight, the Duende achieves his most impressive advantage, for he must fight then with death who can destroy him, on one hand, and with geometry, with measure, the fundamental basis of the bullfight, on the other.

The Bull has his orbit, and the bullfighter has his, and between orbit and orbit is the point of risk where falls the vertex of the temible byplay.

It is possible to hold a Muse with a muletta and an Angel with banderillas, and pass for a good bullfighter; but for the faena de capa, with the bull still unscarred by a wound, the help of the Duende is necessary at the moment of the kill, to drive home the blow of artistic truth.

The bullfighter who moves the public to terror in the plaza by his audacity does not fight the bull - that would be ludicrous in such a case - but, within the reach of each man, puts his life at stake; on the contrary, the fighter bitten by the Duende gives a lesson in Pythagorian music and induces all to forget how he constantly hurls his heart against the horns.

Lagartigo with his Roman duende, J ose lito with his Jewish duende, Belmonte with his baroque duende, and Cagancho with his gypsy duende, from the twilight of the ring, teach poets, painters, and musicians four great ways of the Spanish tradition.

Spain is the only country where death is the national spectacle, where death blows long fanfares at the coming of each Spring, and its art is always governed by a shrewd duende that has given it its distinctive character and its quality of invention.

The Duende that, for the first time in sculpture, fills the cheeks of the saints of the master Mateo de Compostela with blood, is the same spirit that evokes the lamentations of St. John of the Cross or burns naked nymphs on the religious sonnets of Lope.

The Duende who raises the tower of Sahagun or tesselates hot brick in Calatayud or Teruel, is the same spirit that breaks open the clouds of El Greco and sends the constables of Quevedo and the chimaeras of Goya sprawling with a kick.

When it rains, he secretly brings out a duende-minded Velasquez, behind his monarchical grays; when it snows he sends Herrera out naked to prove that cold need not kill; when it burns, he casts Berruguette into the flames and lets him invent a new space for sculpture.

The music of Góngora and the Angel of Garcilaso must yield up the laurel wreath when the Duende of St. John of the Cross passes by, when

The wounded stag peers over the hill.

The Muse of Góngora de Berceo and the Angel of the Archpriest of Hita must give way to the approaching Jorge Manrique when he comes, wounded to death, to the gates of the Castle of Belmonte. The Muse of Gregorio Hernandez and the Angel of José de Mora must retire, so that the Duende weeping blood-tears of Mena, and the Duende of Matinez Montañes with a head like an Assyrian bull's, may pass over, just as the melancholy Muse of Cataluña and the humid Angel of Galicia must watch, with loving
terror, the Duende of Castile, far from the hot bread and the cow grazing mildly among forms of swept sky and parched earth.

The Duende of Quevedo and the Duende of Cervantes, one bearing phosphorescent green anemones and the other the plaster flowers of Ruidera, crown the alter-piece of the Duende of Spain.

Each art has, by nature, its distinctive Duende of style and form, but all roots join at the point where the black sounds of Manuel Torres issue forth - the ultimate stuff and the common basis, uncontrollable and tremulous, of wood and sound and canvas and word.

Black sounds: behind which there abide, in tenderest intimacy, the volcanoes, the ants, the zephyrs, and the enormous night straining its waist against the Milky Way.

Ladies and gentlemen: I have raised three arches, and with clumsy hand I have placed in them the Muse, the Angel and the Duende.

The Muse keeps silent; she may wear the tunic of little folds, or great cow-eyes gazing towards Pompeii, or the monstrous, four-featured nose with which her great painter, Picasso, has painted her. The Angel may be stirring the hair of Antonello da Messina, the tunic of Lippi, and the violin of Masolino or Rousseau.

But the Duende - where is the Duende? Through the empty arch enters a mental air blowing insistently over the heads of the dead, seeking new landscapes and unfamiliar accents; an air bearing the odor of child’s spittle, crushed grass, and the veil of Medusa announcing the unending baptism of all newly-created things.

**Federico Garcia Lorca © 1930**

**Definitions:**

**Cuckold:**
1. the husband of an unfaithful wife.
2. to make a cuckold of (a husband).

**Duende:**
1. a goblin; demon; spirit.
2. charm; magnetism.

**Realism:**
1. interest in or concern for the actual or real, as distinguished from the abstract, speculative, etc.
2. the tendency to view or represent things as they really are.
3. Fine Arts.
   a. treatment of forms, colors, space, etc., in such a manner as to emphasize their correspondence to actuality or to ordinary visual experience. Compare idealism (def. 4), naturalism (def. 2).
   b. (usually initial capital letter) a style of painting and sculpture developed about the mid-19th century in which figures and scenes are depicted as they are experienced or might be experienced in everyday life.
4. Literature.
SUGGESTED ESSAY PROMPTS:

1. As noted by Director David Zinder, “Lorca himself subtitled the play, somewhat deviously ‘An erotic halleluya in four scenes’”. What is erotic? What is “a halleluya”? (Or “Aleluya” from Robert Lima’s essay – please consider this.) What then, is “an erotic halleluya”? Do you think the playwright labeled the play effectively? Why?

2. The Duendes play a huge part of telling the story. What is your impression of a Duende? Why do you think Lorca used them in the play? What purpose do they serve?

3. What is poetry? Which parts of this play strike you as poetic? How do you think poetic language served or distracted from the play?

4. Why do you think this play was produced at this time? Why did Cal Rep choose to do it? Why did David Zinder choose to direct it? Do you think this play matters?

5. This play explores the themes of love and death and their intersection. Do you resonate with this perspective? Did the story reflect any personal truth back to you?

6. As stated by Robert Lima, “The single act [the entire play is comprised of said single act] is divided into four scenes wherein the...characters--Don Perlimplin, Belisa, Marcolfa, Madre and...sprites (Duendes) -- create an atmosphere intermixing realism and surrealism.” Which parts of the play were surreal? Do you think they worked?