

The life, times, and poetry of federico garcia lorca

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English 272 7 March 2012 The Life, Times, and Poetry of Federico Garcia Lorca

It would be safe to say that Federico Garcia Lorca was one of Spain's most highly touted authors. His poetry is marked by brilliance, originality, and dramatic flair; and his plays are among the best examples of twentieth century poetic drama. Lorca, the preferred name of Federico, was born in Fuente Vaqueros, a village near Granada, on June 5, 1898. His parents were Don Federico Garcia, a respected and prosperous landowner, and Vicenta Lorca.

Lorca claims he received his intelligence and artistic inclinations from his mother, who was very influential in his secular upbringing. Lorca and his family moved to Granada in 1909, and this is where Lorca attended school and eventually graduated from in 1914 (Bourgoin and Byers). Lorca attended the University of Granada for a time, and then traveled to Madrid in 1919 to enter the famous Residencia de Estudiantes to continue his university work. The Residencia, or living quarters, was a center of liberal activity in generally conservative Spain.

The metropolitan Madrid suited the young Lorca more so than provincial Granada, and he soon joined radical young groups of students. These groups of young students explored novel ideas and spent much of their time in the cafes of Madrid. In 1921, Lorca met Salvador Dali, also a student at the time and the two formed a personal and artistic attachment to one another. He stayed in the Residencia, except for his summers, until 1928, without ever choosing a course of study (Bourgoin and Byers).

Lorca's first published work, *Impresiones y paisajes* (Impressions and Landscapes), published in 1918, describes an Andalusian trip taken earlier

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that year. In the early 1920s, Lorca began writing poems for what would be his first important book, *Canciones* (Songs), which was published in 1927. *Canciones* reveals two strong influences on Lorca's poetic formation: the traditional and the vanguard, called ultraism in Spain. He utilized the ballad, Andalusian themes, and other popular forms from the traditional style.

From the vanguard, he developed the tendency toward novel and surprising metaphors, and he developed a syntax without normal connecting and relating words. In 1928, in intense personal crisis and feverish literary activity, he published *Romancero Gitano* (Gypsy Ballads), which gained him his international reputation. He then moved to New York in 1929 because he was suffering from serious emotional problems due to his advances on Dali were rejected. He settled into a dormitory at Columbia University where he wrote *Poeta en Nueva York* (Poet in New York), a book of poems so revolutionary he did not dare publish them during his lifetime.

Along with his poetry, he penned many plays during his short life. In 1936, at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, Lorca went home to Granada. While in Granada, he was taken into custody by the nationalist forces controlling the town, perhaps because of his personal connections, or because of his known sympathies for the Republican cause. Lorca was executed by firing squad, on the morning of August 9, 1936, ending a life of brilliance (Bourgoin, Byers). *Poet in New York* is one of Lorca's most notable works.

Poet in New York was written during Lorca's ten month stent in New York City, which was supposed to be spent studying English at Columbia University. *Poet in New York* is divided into ten sections which correspond with five alternative moments of spiritual experiences. In section one, "<https://assignbuster.com/the-life-times-and-poetry-of-federico-garcia-lorca/>

Poems of Solitude at Columbia University," Lorca is expressing his loneliness as he is lost in a strange world. In sections two and three, "The Negroes" and "Streets and Dreams" respectively, pain, spiritual vacuity and primitive passion are emanated.

In sections four and five form a sort of pastoral pair and chronologically do not correspond to the actual experiences of Lorca. In section six, a becalmed tone persists, but death is introduced through many subdued allusions. In section seven he refers to New York City and denounces the senseless massacre of a civilization that has destroyed life with its materialism. In section eight, Lorca expresses how there has been a betrayal of Christianity and mixes it with a prophetic vision of human slavery and war. The final two sections simply address the end of his voyage and his bright awakening.

Poet in New York is full of emotion, new adventures, and awakening (Rio). Lorca penned works in what was the Modernist era and later in New York, he was slightly influenced by America's Harlem Renaissance. It can be said that Lorca's Modernism is somewhat different from other author's because Lorca never traveled to Paris where many modernist authors congregated. During the 1920s, literature changed drastically after the end of World War One. Lorca rooted much of his poetry in a dreamlike state which was retained in Poet in New York (Rogow).

A loss of innocence was experienced in most poems penned by Lorca during this time and specifically in Poet in New York. Angel de Rio states, "One should not forget that Poet in New York is above all lyrical poetry of high order—poetry made, perhaps, of a different stuff from that most commonly found in the rest of Lorca's work" (Rio). Also attesting to this loss of

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innocence is Virginia Higginbotham who states, " Poet in New York is the other of Lorca's major lyric works that does not express his comic spirit" (Higginbotham).

Signs of the Harlem Renaissance in his work " The Negroes," which is a poem inside Poet in New York. In an essay by Edward Hirsch, the author states, " Lorca was deeply empathetic with the black life and announced that he ' wanted to write the poem of the black race in North America'" (Hirsch). Poet in New York remains relevant to Lorca's era throughout his and his era's changes. Lorca, even throughout his travels abroad, always returned to his native land for poetical strength, inspiration, and setting. Even though he did not return in person most times, he did return in imagination, memory, and dreams.

However, a 1936 return to Granada, the place he loved the most, would ultimately cause his death. Roy Campbell states in an essay about Lorca, " The cities of Granada, Cordoba, and Sevilla, the three capital cities of Andalusia, always recur in that order in the Poems of Lorca" (Campbell). Occurring most frequently in his works is Grenada, followed by Cordoba and then Sevilla. Granada and Cordoba share a sort of nostalgic, melancholy, and shadowy feel to which Lorca was greatly attracted. The majority of his poems and plays are set in one of the three towns from above.

In Impressions and Landscapes, Lorca falls back on memories of an earlier trip through the Andalusian countryside. Lorca also had an obsession with death, which is apparent in most of his poems and plays. Talking of Lorca's early works, Book of Poems and Gypsy Ballads, John Petrakis states, " These early poems reflected Lorca's inherent love of nature, along with his lifelong

obsession with death. For him, gypsies were tragic if romantic figures doomed to die young as a result of their free spirits" (Pettrakis).

These gypsies is especially ironic since Lorca's gypsies died young as he did, making it seem as if he paralleled his gypsies with himself. This excerpt from Blood Wedding, called " Lullaby," exemplifies his obsession with death in later works. " Down he went to the river, Oh, down he went down! And his blood was running. Oh, more than the water. " Most of Lorca's works were not totally morbid throughout the work but almost always ended with the death of the speaker or the subject of the poem or play. Works Cited

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