Framing the Action: A Director Constructs the Opening of García Lorca's *Bodas de sangre*

Isaac Benabu
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Benabu@mail.huji.ac.il

ABSTRACT
The article begins by examining the complexities of theatrical writing as background to the challenges posed when constructing the staging of Federico García Lorca's play, *Bodas de sangre*. First, plays are composed in a theatrical key, making use of words that fulfil a function similar to that of notation in a musical text. In the score a composer's notes communicate the *limits* of interpretation, both to the musician and to the conductor. In the case of the word in a dramatic text the written sign has to cover more than what its pure lexical identity may communicate. For the simple reason that in theatrical writing the words also have to contain a large part of the information necessary for their performance on stage, since the playwright devises them for that purpose. Words in a dramatic text, and not just stage directions, must convey to the actor expression, both vocal and facial, as well as the physical movements that must accompany them. Secondly, reference is made to the concept of "mood" or the atmosphere created on stage, to point out an analytical parameter that measures the progress of the action as it develops, as well as the effect it produces on a spectator. Elaborating on this idea, it could be said that the tense atmosphere of the opening in *Bodas*, for example, evokes a certain emotion in the spectator that the reader could easily ignore.

KEYWORDS
theatrical writing, characterization, mood, words performed, from the end to the beginning

RESUMEN
El artículo comienza examinando las complejidades de la escritura teatral como trasfondo de los desafíos planteados a la hora de construir la puesta en escena de la obra de Federico García Lorca, *Bodas de sangre*. Primero, las obras se componen en clave teatral, haciendo uso de palabras que cumplen una función similar a la de la notación en un texto musical. En la partitura las notas de un compositor comunican los *límites* de la interpretación, tanto al músico como al

director. En el caso de la palabra en un texto dramático el signo escrito tiene que cubrir más de lo que su pura identidad léxica pueda comunicar. Por la simple razón de que en la escritura teatral las palabras también tienen que contener gran parte de la información necesaria para su representación sobre las tablas, ya que el dramaturgo las idea para tal fin. Las palabras en un texto dramático, y no solo las acotaciones, deben transmitir al actor la expresión, tanto vocal como facial, así como los movimientos físicos que deben acompañarlos. En segundo lugar, se hace referencia al concepto de «estado de ánimo» [mood] o el ambiente creado en el escenario, para señalar un parámetro analítico que mide el progreso de la acción a medida que va desarrollándose, así como el efecto que produce en el espectador. Ampliando esta idea, se podría decir que el ambiente tenso de la apertura en *Bodas*, por ejemplo, evoca una cierta emoción en el espectador que el lector podría fácilmente hacer caso omiso.

PALABRAS CLAVES
escritura teatral, caracterización, estado de ánimo, palabras interpretadas, leer desde el final hasta el principio

I begin with a commonplace: it is essential to approach the dramatic text as a text directed at performance, not, as frequently witnessed in many studies on theatre, as a purely literary text. In other words, when approaching the dramatic text, scholars have often applied strategies elaborated for the study of the novel. To all extents words in a novel are, among other features, the tools given to the reader for unraveling the psychological analysis of the characters. Jonas Barish (1985) has called our attention as to just how theatrical texts differ from literary texts and how the way a dramatic text may be approached differs considerably from, say, the way a literary critic approaches the novel, not least because the novel is addressed to a reader in the privacy of the "confessional" (9).

Since the birth of commercial theatre in the sixteenth century, the written text is principally an aid for the actor to memorize the words uttered on stage. In the first instance, the playtext is addressed to a professional experienced in adapting page to stage, to a director or actor who have the know-how to deconstruct (in its original meaning) the text and give the written word its value when expressed verbally by the actor; marrying the word to the gestures and movements which accompany speech, thus interpreting from the playtext the dramatic action that defines theatre.

When staging a play, a director's role appears to the writer to be that of being the middle person between the playwright and the actor. The obligation falls, therefore, on the director to follow (so long as what is being staged is not a

director's adaptation of another's work) the action traceable through the playtext. I realize that many contemporary directors will object fiercely to this definition of their role.[1] Nevertheless, this is the line pursued here in tracing García Lorca's instructions for the opening of *Bodas de sangre*.

To focus on a central point in this article, the study of character in theatre combines development of character and advancement of plot in one, for both are intricately interwoven: action moulds character and character determines action. The separation between action and character for the purposes of theatrical criticism often proves to be more of a hindrance than a help. When considering characterization,[2] therefore, one must be aware that there is a kind of shorthand operating between playwright and director/actor, based on factors that remain silent in the text: a process of which the printed page may only evidence a final, sometimes polished proof. Thus, when the performed, rather than the written, text is aimed at staging, the actor/director may be left to piece out characterization from a written text addressed primarily to them, not to the audience; by deciphering the many stage-acts, manifest and silent, that present the audience with a consummate impression of character. These thoughts are echoed by John Russell Brown (1996) in relation to Shakespeare's playtexts:

> to quote what the characters say to each other is not sufficient basis for discussion of any issue in these dramas, even though many books of criticism and scholarship seem to assume as much. Every speech has its meaning or effectiveness according to the circumstances in which it is spoken, how it is instigated, how heard or not heard, and whether it satisfies or frustrates the expectations that Shakespeare has raised by the plotting of his story. (126)

It seems plausible, therefore, that theatrical reading in preparation for staging may be, by its very nature, disordered: constructing an opening, for example, necessarily requires an understanding of how a play ends and how that ending is

[1] On this point I refer to a debate organized by Spain's Ministry of Culture, and specifically to the words of Moisés Pérez Coterillo (1985): "Se puede decir que el teatro de los últimos veinte años, y no sólo en España sino también fuera, se caracteriza por el rapto de la autoría teatral, entendida como iniciativa del proceso de creación por parte de los directores de escena y en contra de lo escritores de textos dramáticos. . . . En consecuencia, el escritor teatral, por más que conste su disconformidad, se ha recluido en su laboratorio doméstico" (15–16).

[2] The point that characterization in a playtext is less textually explicit than in, say, the plays of Shakespeare, was expressed by Alexander Parker (1959) in a seminal study in which he outlined, as one of the five principles for approaching Spanish Golden-Age drama, the importance of action over character in *comedia* poetics. The argument seems to be based on evidence drawn from the printed text of the plays only, not from any consideration of the playtext as a manual for performance. For a different view, see Benabu (2003, 34–35; see also Introduction, 1–8).

reached. As has already been suggested, the text of a play is none other than a manual for performance.

At the outset, I allude to some theoretical considerations that point to what is specific to a theatrical approach in the study of character. Through them, André Helbo et al. (1991), for example, have alerted us to what distinguishes the theatrical from the literary character; as well as to a tendency we have to look for psychological clues in preference to questioning what effect the performed text will have on the audience:

> One of the features of the stage-character is to be in some way indeterminate: otherwise s/he could not be impersonated by a potentially unlimited number of actors. Furthermore, the ambiguity of the character's status derives from the fact that a reading habit inculcated mainly at school turns the character into substitute for a real person. . . . And so, the habit is formed of searching the *didascalia* and the dialogue for all the details that enable the student to reconstruct the character's personality and the story of his/her life. (145)

Consequently, the procedure by which stage character is constructed should be exactly the reverse:

> one ought not to be looking, in the dialogue particularly, for a supply of information that will allow one to decipher the character's personality, but rather, given the discourse/actions attributed to the character, with all his/her indeterminacy, look for whatever may elucidate his/her discourse, in other words, *the conditions that govern the character's speech*. (145, emphasis mine)

Studies of Lorca's *Bodas de* sangre, like Cyril Brian Morris' (1980) monograph, have often consisted, among other things, of a search for the play's themes. Consider, too, Gwynne Edwards' (1980) approach that is focused on finding a theme:

> The opening sequence, in its powerful presentation of Madre, announces clearly *a characteristic Lorca theme.* Failing to escape the force of the feelings that oppress her, she anticipates already all the other characters—Novio, Novia, Leonardo—who become progressively the victims of their passions. (133–34, emphasis mine)

However, this type of critical approach, that of looking for a play's meaning by attempting to weed out themes, was discredited many years ago by Richard Levin

(1980):

> [The thematic approach] will tend to operate at a considerable distance from our actual dramatic experience, from what actually affects us. . . in these plays; for surely, when we say that a tragedy is deeply moving, we are referring to the fate of its characters and not to the outcome of some conflict of ideas. . . . We usually find that the more [critics] focus upon the theme, the farther they get from our experience of the play. (54)[3]

And with regard to *Bodas*, Ricardo Doménech (2008) has a pertinent reminder about the relevance of looking for thematic unity in a play or trying to locate the action in a specific Andalusian context:

> *Bodas de sangre* se inspira en un hecho real ocurrido en Almería. Pero ese modelo de la realidad está completamente trascendido, y ninguna de las dos tragedias (*Bodas* y *Yerma*) responde a una localización geográfica precisa. (66)

Concerning Lorca’s use of theatrical conventions, Luis Fernández Cifuentes (1986) has drawn attention to the challenge aimed at a spectator’s expectations as witnessed by Lorca’s own inversion of conventional situations:

> García Lorca traía a la escena palabras, imágenes y episodios que no contaban para casi nada con el modelo de sus predecesores, los maestros. Antes de poder decidir sobre la calidad del nuevo objeto, los espectadores debían aceptar una transgresión que les comprometía y, con el tiempo, les obligó a alterar sus jerarquías, sus previsiones. (11)

Recently, Andrés Pérez Simón (2020) has reminded us of the widely acknowledged influence of Classical Greek Drama on Lorca’s dramaturgy, for Lorca’s concept of tragedy owes much to the tradition in which the individual is subject to the dictates of a world governed by fate. However, no hostile gods appear in Lorca’s tragedies: instead fate is invisible, an external force unseen by the characters until it strikes. Pérez Simón has also drawn attention to the influence of Spanish seventeenth-century drama on Lorca, as much in his work as a director as in the artistic works he composed. Lorca himself admitted that the model for him as a playwright was the theatre of Spain’s Golden Age: “La raíz de

[3] Victor Dixon (1994) has also endorsed Levin’s view: “It was Richard Levin . . . who would most effectively and amusingly attack, along with the ironical and historical approaches to English Renaissance drama, the thematic approach that interprets a literary work as the representation or expression of some abstract concept which will therefore give the work” (11–12).

mi teatro es calderoniana" (see García Posada 2004, 90).

I read the opening scene of *Bodas* in much the same way as a conductor might read a musical score, into which the composer has inscribed all the necessary instruction for performing a piece through the notation provided. I have used "stage mood" as an analytical parameter to measure the effect of the action upon the spectator.[4] With reference to the action suggested by the play's opening, many critics and early press reviewers have not questioned what mood is created on stage as the curtain rises, probably because no words are uttered. Focus falls on a silent Madre,[5] a silence that creates tension from the very start. A theatrical director might ask what the character is doing in context. Lorca seems to have left it to the individual director: nothing is designated in the opening stage direction. Reading backwards, however, from the opening dialogue between Madre and Novio, it becomes evident that a silent Madre demands actions that create tension.

When tracing the action in the opening to Lorca's *Bodas de sangre*, the following words from the playwright himself when discussing Y*erma*, however vague when cited out of context, should be borne in mind: "[H]ay que volver a la tragedia. Nos obliga a ello la tradición de nuestro teatro dramático" (qtd. in Buero Vallejo 1973, 130). A tragedy, as Aristotle and others have clearly stated, is measured by its impact on the spectator; not by some intellectual abstraction such as tracing a theme, as Levin (1980) remarked in the above quotation. If we are to look for what provides unity in *Bodas*, what creates the desired tragic effect, we should look to the theatrical signifiers which serve to highlight the play's unity: for example, to Novio at the play's opening innocently looking for a knife before going out to the fields; to Madre's mumblings that lead to her outburst at line 12 of Act 1, Sc. 1 at the mention of the knife (García Lorca 1988, 93).[6] The knife, as we learn subsequently in Madre's tirade against knives, has power over men's lives; the knife to which her husband and her eldest son fell victims before the start of the play's action. The threat posed by the knife, whether visible or through mention, runs imperceptibly throughout the action, to culminate in that "cuchillito" alluded to by Madre and Novia in the play's closing verses quoted below, as a force with uncheckable power that governs the characters' progress, only to be contemplated helplessly.

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[4] The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "mood" as: "The pervading atmosphere or tone of a particular place, event, or period; that quality of a work of art or literature which evokes or recalls a certain emotion or state of mind."

[5] See Fernández Cifuentes (1986) on Lorca's direction of *Bodas de sangre* in November 1933 (Madrid) and December 1933 (Barcelona): "el eje de la representación se desplazó entonces de la Novia a la Madre" (144).

[6] All citations to García Lorca's (1988) *Bodas de Sangre* refer to the edition by Allen Josephs and Juan Caballero and are given here and henceforth by page, act, and scene (sc.), as well as by line when appropriate.

Where in *Bodas* do we find the dramatic expression of tragedy as conceived by Lorca? Reading from the end to the beginning, an analytical approach suggested at the outset, we might start with the final incantation delivered by Madre and echoed by Novia at the close of the play where *anagnorisis* is marked:

> MADRE. Vecinas, con un cuchillo,
> con un cuchillito,
> en un día señalado, entre las dos y las tres,
> se mataron los dos hombres del amor.
> Con un cuchillo,
> con un cuchillito
> que apenas cabe en la mano,
> pero que penetra fino
> por las carnes asombradas,
> y que se para en el sitio
> donde tiembla enmarañada
> la oscura raíz del grito.
>
> NOVIA. Y esto es un cuchillo,
> un cuchillito
> que apenas cabe en la mano;
> pez sin escamas ni río,
> para que un día señalado, entre las dos y las tres,
> con este cuchillo
> se queden dos hombres duros
> con los labios amarillos. (165–66; Act 3, Sc. 2)

This closing duet expresses a meditation about what it is that makes the plight of Lorca's characters tragic: man, or rather woman, as the victim of the depersonalized knife, symbol of implacable forces that penetrates to "la oscura raíz del grito." This is what Madre and Novia understand as the play ends: the force governing their lives that lies beyond their control.

To return to the play's textual opening, the first challenge confronting the director is its first stage direction: "*Habitación pintada de amarillo*" (93; Act 1, Sc.1). Lorca was a successful artist, and some scholars have tried to read colour symbolism into this stage direction. But what would the relevance be of interpreting yellow as the colour symbolizing envy? In *Bodas,* Lorca is writing as a playwright: is he then prescribing a yellow set? Hardly, since having flats painted yellow would add little significance as background to the action which develops in the opening scene. Following upon my contention that a playtext is addressed in the first instance to theatre professionals, it seems plausible to

suggest that the stage direction quoted above is addressed to the lighting designer, so that it could be interpreted as a room bathed in yellow light in order to convey intensity? heat?[7] An oppressive heat that characterizes the lands in which the action unfolds.

Recognizing parameters such as lighting, a theatrical reading will *tap* the text in order to fathom its theatricality, something which cannot be contained within the narrow margins of a text destined to be printed. Oppressive heat created by lighting, therefore, enhances the mood of the opening dialogue which consists of eleven very short lines. Read mechanically on the page they would do little to indicate the mood in a room painted yellow: read theatrically, taking the cue offered in Act 1, Sc. 1, line 12 by Madre's outburst, the dialogue up to that line must be punctuated by pauses, pauses unmarked in the playtext that measure the growing tension between Madre and Novio.

Reading the playtext closely: Novio announces upon entering that he is off to cut grapes from the vine. The dialogue turns quickly to Novio looking for his knife, a simple enough request and certainly not a loaded one in this instance. The tension builds up as the exchange between Madre and Novio develops, where brief rejoinders broken up by long pauses as suggested above lead to Madre's outburst about the power of knives. By line 12 Novio's innocent remark about his knife rouses Madre from her obsessive thoughts about knives, and confirms that what underlies the tension created by her silence at the very beginning of the scene is her obsessive thoughts: "La navaja, la navaja… Maldita sean todas y el bribón que las inventó" (93; Act 1, Sc. 1).[8]

After line 12 much of the way the first scene is laid out on the page seems to indicate a dialogue between Novio and Madre; however, read theatrically, Madre's speeches look like comprising an uninterrupted monologue running from line 15 to line 26, while Novio's interjections prove to be unsuccessful attempts to check her progress (94; Act 1, Sc. 1). Novio's lines, as Madre's monologue reaches its peak, express first his weariness with "Vamos a otro asunto" and "Bueno," measuring the frustration of one who has heard Madre's complaints all too often; followed by "*(bajando la cabeza).* Calle usted" that marks his growing exasperation, because past experience has shown him that he can have little promise of success. Next, his impatient imploration is equally impotent: "¿Está bueno ya?" Finally, it is only when he shouts her down—"¿Vamos a acabar?"

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[7] Although he does not allude to the opening scene specifically, Doménech (2008) has also sensed in the opening stage direction that "el calor desempeña una función de primera orden" (144).

[8] When I directed the play in Jerusalem in 1999, I decided to place Madre dressed in black, in profile, swaying slowly on a rocking-chair stage-center, with her gaze fixed in front of her; so that the voice of Novio awakens her from her abstraction. This, of course, is an individual director's solution.

(Lorca's stage direction here is "*fuerte"*)—by asking her if what she wants is that he should kill his father's and older brother's murderers that he manages to interrupt Madre's monologue effectively. Her tone changes to one of pathos as she recalls the tragic incidents in the past which led to the loss of husband and son, and she is brought to her senses by the fear of losing her only remaining son.

Reading backwards, as I have already proposed, is how dramatic texts open themselves to suggest a playwright's view of how stage action is constructed. If the exchange between Novio and Madre were to be read mechanically, Madre's outburst would seem melodramatic. Those short lines of dialogue, therefore, with necessary pauses that are not indicated textually and with the help of yellow lighting intensifying the mood, designate the way Lorca visualizes the tension underlying the relations between Madre and Novio. This is no innocent exchange between Madre and Novio: instead, it should convey to the audience a forced dialogue that depicts Madre's tormenting thoughts while her son is looking for his knife. As stated earlier, stage tension is broken only when Madre gains some control over her obsession, and Lorca indicates the change of mood by the use of suspension dots at lines 43–44, because Madre realizes that her harangue may drive Novio to an act of revenge that might deprive her of her only remaining son:

NOVIO. ¿Es que quiere usted que los mate?

MADRE. No… Si hablo es porque… ¿Como no voy a hablar viéndote salir por esa puerta? Es que no me gusta que lleves navaja. Es que… no quisiera que salieras al campo. (95; Act 1, Sc. 1, ll. 42–45)

Tension is allayed for a while by the humor introduced, as Lorca has indicated that Novio should lift Madre in his arms and exclaim: "Vieja, revieja, requetevieja" (95; Act 1, Sc. 1). Relaxing the mood enables Novio to bring up the subject of his marriage: a thought, a director may decide, has been at the back of his mind from his first entrance. And through her replies, Madre should convey that the subject of her son's marriage causes her some anxiety. But she represses her fears by advising him what presents to buy Novia. This is the point at which Lorca first hints at the play's subtext: Madre's fear of the Felix family.

To sum up: in an opening scene read theatrically, Lorca builds a dramatic stage mood in a very short time, in which he convincingly presents Novio's struggle with a mother he cannot check, as well as Madre's obsession with knives and the suffering that the loss of her husband and older son in the past have cost her. And yet the subtext framing this unusual dialogue emerges only later in the opening scene, when Novio shows his hesitation before Madre in bringing up the subject of his marriage to Novia. Knives at the opening, and more graphically at

the end, frame the play's dramatic action by investing knives with the power to assault men's lives. Not the actions of the men who hold the knives but the knives themselves which, in the closing poem, as mentioned earlier, are shown to act of their own accord. Lorca does not supply a cogent narrative with details that a reader may assimilate from the opening: instead, Madre's fears emerge clearly in the exchange between Vecina and Madre once Novio has exited.

By the middle of the first scene, with Vecina's entrance, the mood has relaxed somewhat. We read backwards once more, through Vecina's mention of the Félix family. But now, instead of merely recanting on her fear of knives, Madre explains the circumstances which led to the killing of her husband and son. Through the dialogue between Madre and Vecina, Lorca makes clear to spectators that what underlies Madre's lack of enthusiasm at the forthcoming marriage is mention of the Felixes, the family of murderers and of one of its members in particular: Leonardo. The relevance of such a scene for Lorca lies less in the introduction of a character, Vecina, who makes no further appearances in the play, and more with Madre's anger unleashed when she learns that the girl her son is to marry had a previous attachment with Leonardo, a member of the Félix family. These feelings Madre admits she finds impossible to repress, though she realizes that Leonardo was only eight years old when her husband and elder son were killed by the Félixes. The force of her reaction is punctuated textually by inserting suspension dots and explicated by intermittent stage directions:

> MADRE. Es verdad… Pero oigo eso de Félix y es lo mismo *(entre dientes.)* Félix que llenárseme de cieno la boca *(escupe)* y tengo que escupir, tengo que escupir para no matar. (99; Act 1, Sc. 1)

The sense of tragic inevitability that Lorca has inscribed in the whole of the opening scene is suggested by the irreconcilable conflicts sketched between past and future: Madre takes to heart the advice offered her by Vecina, that she should put the past behind her and accede to her son's request to marry. However, though she recognizes this is what she must do, the dramatic stage direction marking the end of the scene suggests that her fears are only relegated to silence. Madre crosses herself as if to protect herself from the danger she senses: *"La Madre se dirige a la puerta de la izquierda. En medio del camino se detiene y lentamente se santigua"* (100; Act 1, Sc. 1). By the end of this first scene, Lorca provides spectators with a detailed account of the underlying tensions in the relationship between Madre and Novio that create the mood on stage.

In Act 1, Sc. 2 the initial stage direction—*"Habitación pintada de rosa. . . ."* (100)—is addressed once again to the lighting designer; this time to create an intimate mood which exudes warmth. But for all the warmth the lighting may

convey as the baby is lulled to sleep, there is a forceful dislocation between lighting and the words spoken by Suegra and Mujer de Leonardo in the lullaby they recite. No explicit instruction as to how it is to be recited but stage action dictates the tensions that will be transmitted as the lullaby progresses. The dramatic events described cannot possibly be read in a monotone: they require the actors gradually to become absorbed in the narrative contained in the lullaby, having first joined the two characters in reciting the opening refrains. They sing of a horse that is driven to the riverbank but refuses to drink because "el agua era negra / dentro de las ramas" (101). And the horse is eventually reduced to tears:

> SUEGRA. Las patas heridas [from galloping against its will],
> las crines heladas [from fear],
> dentro de los ojos
> un puñal de plata [cold image of the recurring knife].
> (101; Act 1, Sc. 2)

We are not told at first what is causing the horse to gallop furiously and why its legs are injured—refusing to lower its head to drink. And the silver dagger reflected in those dark waters, as the play's closing poem clarifies, can only signify death. The narrative is also interrupted by another shorter and more graphic one: two men scramble down to the riverbank after which blood flows in plentiful quantities. But in the closing lines of the lullaby, the focus returns to the horse with images depicting the dread that overcomes it:

> MUJER. No quiso tocar
> la orilla mojada
> su belfo caliente
> con moscas de plata.
> A los montes duros
> sólo relinchaba
> con el río muerto
> sobre la garganta. (101–2; Act 1, Sc. 2)

As Mujer and Suegra reach the end of the lullaby, Lorca supplies a stage direction that requires the actors to lower their voices: "MUJER (*bajito)*" and "SUEGRA (*Levantándose muy bajito)*" (103), suggesting both their reticence to awaken the slumbering child and their desire to distance themselves from the threat posed by the horse's violent resistance. Instead, as if the horse were in their presence, they order it to go to the valley where the mare awaits:

> SUEGRA. ¡No vengas, no entres!

Vete a la montaña.
Por los valles grises
donde está la jaca. (102–3; Act 1, Sc. 2)

And the refrain recited at the start of the lullaby is repeated, leaving spectators with the image of the horse and its refusal to drink.

Leonardo's entry, following as it does upon the gentler mood created by the fading voices of Suegra and Mujer, cannot but change the stage mood by its brusqueness underlined by his dry initial: "¿Y el niño?" (103; Act 1, Sc. 2). A reading of the scene leaves those charged with staging it in no doubt as to Leonardo's state of mind upon entering; though not expressed directly Leonardo must appear troubled by a thought he does not disclose. His entry produces anxiety in his wife, and Suegra's question on entering a little later only exacerbates matters as she needles Leonardo about having ridden the horse too hard. This detail of the exhausted horse intentionally links Leonardo's horse to the horse in the lullaby.

Suegra, still needling Leonardo, next introduces a subject already sketched for the spectator in Act 1, Sc. 1: the forthcoming marriage between Novia and Novio. The subject causes Leonardo more vexation, and the stage directions indicate the tone Leonardo should adopt in his replies: "*(agrio*)" and "(*serio*)" (104; Act 1, Sc. 2). Furthermore, Leonardo's actions towards his wife when she begins to weep is nothing if not brusque: "¿Vas a llorar ahora?" (104). And then Mujer's reply— "¡Quita! *(Le aparta buscamente las manos de la cara.)*" (105)—as he takes her with him off-stage to see the sleeping child. Suegra observes all of this in silence.

Muchacha's entry at this point serves to reduce the tension after the couple exits. Her excitement about the forthcoming wedding tells of how she saw Madre and Novio buying presents for Novia. Leonardo and Mujer re-enter: he dismisses Muchacha roughly and she exits in tears. Tension resumes when a bewildered Mujer asks what thoughts are troubling him, to which Leonardo's reply is: "(*Agrio*) ¿Te puedes callar?" (106; Act 1, Sc. 2). His retort must be loud for it awakens the sleeping child. Leonardo exits as brusquely as he entered, still the image of a highly troubled individual. The women resume their lullaby as Suegra re-enters with the child in her arms. But the lullaby now introduces a striking variant: the horse that had so violently resisted the act of drinking, now drinks from the dark waters: "El caballo *se pone* a beber" (106, emphasis mine). The implication is clear: for all its forceful resistance the horse is obliged to drink from those threatening, dark waters. The lullaby elaborates an idea which runs right through the play: the individual is powerless to resist the hidden hand of Fate.

The setting for Act 1, Sc. 3 is Andalusian, but a rather stylized setting at that. Nothing of the Andalusian poster here; rather the aspect of Andalusia's barren

landscape as observed by Madre: "Cuatro horas de camino y ni una casa ni un arbol" (108). Lighting and texture in this scene are uppermost in Lorca's mind in the stage direction: the flats are painted white, and the lighting makes their appearance severe: "*las paredes de material blanco y duro"* (108). There is plenty to distract the eye in this setting when compared to the bare instructions of the first two scenes: "*una cruz de grandes flores rosa . . . cortinas de encaje y lazos rosa . . . abanicos redondos, jarros azules y pequeños espejos"* (108). But for all this detail, the overriding color is a harsh white that serves as a background to an unusually tense engagement scene. Madre and Novio are shown into Novia's house by a maid: silence and motionlessness prevail throughout the beginning of the scene as Lorca's direction indicates (108): *"(Quedan madre e hijo sentados, inmóviles como estatuas. Pausa larga.).*"

The mood prevalent at the opening of Act 1, Sc. 3—a tense silence reminiscent of the silence in Act 1, Sc. 1—provides the subtext, making it easier for the spectator to interpret, from information culled from the exchange between Madre and Vecina in the second half of Sc. 1, why Madre feels discomfort at being in Novia's house. Novio, never haunted by the past, is understandably nervous on the occasion of his engagement. Madre's first words in the scene express her desire to leave no sooner has she arrived, as well as her disapproval of the isolated location of Novia's house. Novio tries to explain, "Éstos son los secanos," only to have Madre reply: "Tu padre los hubiera cubierto de árboles" (108; Act 1, Sc. 3). Try as she may, Madre is unable to free herself from the past and its disturbing reminders.

With Padre's entrance (he is, as his behaviour in the scene suggests, a character drawn in the comic mode), Madre and Novio rise and shake his hand, still in silence. And when they do engage in conversation, there are no words of welcome: instead, the talk is about the harshness of Padre's lands and of his efforts to force the land to yield its fruits. Expressing a desire that both Madre and Padre's capitals be merged after the forthcoming marriage, Padre comes through as openly acquisitive whereas Madre remains reserved and aloof. As far as her property is concerned, Novio can do with it as he wishes but only after her death. All in all, the mood is certainly not one of celebration; instead the union is *brokered*. And a non-celebratory tone endures as each parent enumerates the qualities of their offspring, especially Padre's description of his daughter that is reminiscent of the way a horse might be apprized:

MADRE. Mi hijo tiene y puede.
PADRE. Mi hija también.
MADRE. Mi hijo es hermoso. No ha conocido mujer. La honra más limpia que una sábana puesta al sol.
PADRE. Qué te digo de la mía. Hace las migas a las tres. . . . No

> habla nunca; . . . y puede cortar una maroma con los dientes. (111; Act 1, Sc. 3)

A perfunctory blessing puts an end to these negotiations: "MADRE: Dios bendiga su casa. PADRE: Que Dios la bendiga" (111). And arrangements for the wedding are made with Madre agreeing to them drily: "Conformes" (112).

From the moment Novia enters at Act 1, Sc. 3, dramatic focus falls on her, not least because of the seriousness with which she greets her fiancé and her future mother-in-law. Her physical appearance confirms that she is the very antithesis of the happy bride-to-be, as Lorca's stage direction indicates: "(*Aparece la Novia. Trae las manos caídas en actitud modesta y la cabeza baja.*)" (112). This may be read to suggest maidenly shyness, but as soon as she speaks her words convey that she shares the terseness of Madre's speech. When she is asked whether she is happy, her retort is curt: "Estoy contenta. Cuando he dado el sí es porque quiero darlo" (112). No maidenly modesty in those words. Again, when Madre asks Novia if she knows what marriage involves—"Un hombre, unos hijos y una pared de dos varas de ancho para todo lo demás"—Novia replies in a tone that is equally stern: "(*Seria.)* Yo sabré cumplir" (112). And upon receiving the engagement presents, Lorca's text suggests that Novia gives an expressionless "Gracias" (112). Furthermore, her dry rejoinder to Novio's innocent expression of affection shows no tenderness on her part. Rather her reply makes her sound like the experienced, older woman she is not:

> NOVIO. Cuando me voy de tu lado siento un despego grande y así como un nudo en la garganta.
> NOVIA. Cuando seas mi marido ya no lo tendrás. (111, Act 1, Sc. 3)

The actor playing Novia should show that, as with other characters already sketched (Madre and Leonardo), the character's scarcity of words throughout the scene suggest repressed feelings that unsettle her and that she struggles to conceal. No sooner do most of the on-stage characters take their leave, and she is left alone with her inquisitive maid, than she gives vent to her pent-up feelings by showing none of the interest her maid does in the gifts she has received. Lorca's direction now points to the frustration raging in Novia: ("*mordiéndose la mano con rabia*") (113). Once again, read theatrically from the end to the beginning, it is the end of Act 1, Sc. 3 which provides the explanation for Novia's seriousness: this is marked with a crescendo in the exchange between Novia and her maid as she is forced to admit that it was Leonardo's unexpected appearance on horseback that has unsettled her. Leonardo passes her window a second time (only his horse's hooves are heard off-stage), and with Novia's dramatic admission that it

was Leonardo, "¡Era!" (114), the curtain falls rapidly to mark the end of Act 1, Sc. 3. Lorca's "*Telón rápido*" (114) demonstrates his keen dramatic sense in extending the tension that opens Act 1 right up to its closing moment.

The scene division in Act 1 is theatrically significant and it works effectively when constructing performance. Further examples also demonstrate how a reading of later scenes helps to construct earlier ones.

(i) Act 1 is divided into three scenes that together present three foci of tension that illustrate the central conflict of the play: the influence of a hostile fate on the life of the characters. To recapitulate: Madre's obsessive fear is associated with the fact that in the past she lost a husband and her older son to the power of knives; Leonardo's disquiet is linked to a horse taking him where he does not wish to go; and Novia's lack of enthusiasm about her forthcoming marriage is confirmed by the presentiment she feels when she catches sight of Leonardo's horse pass by her window. Each of the scenes introduces a conflict facing one of these three characters: Madre's explosion about knives; Leonardo, though the reason for his impatient mood is not disclosed at this early stage in the play (it is supplied only in his exchange with Novia in the forest scene in Act 3 as the verses quoted below signify), nevertheless shows all the symptoms of one who, like the horse in the lullaby, is resisting some force against his will. Herein lies the link between Leonardo and the horse in the lullaby, recited before Leonardo's entrance and continuing immediately after he leaves, suggesting the reason for Leonardo's mood. In constructing Act 1, Sc. 2 and delineating the character of Leonardo, directors and actors can rely on information provided in the forest scene in Act 3, where Leonardo explains to Novia that he would get on his horse, and some invisible force acting against his will would drive the horse to her house:

> LEONARDO. Porque yo quise olvidar
> y puse un muro de piedra
> entre tu casa y la mía. . . .
> Pero montaba a caballo
> el caballo iba a tu puerta. (151; Act 3, Sc. 1)

Finally Novia, as yet ignorant of the powerful emotions experienced by Madre and Leonardo, is troubled by the thought of her forthcoming marriage, and she feels the pressure of a force acting against her. She will learn to recognize it in the course of the play's action, particularly in Act 2, Sc. 2, and in Act 3, Sc. 1.

(ii) In addition, Madre's harsh comments in Act 2, Sc. 1 and Sc. 2, explain the lack of enthusiasm she demonstrates in Act 1, Sc. 1 when discussing her son's forthcoming marriage. However, only at the end of Act 2, do her repressed fears

explode with passion when her worst fears are confirmed, as she sees Novia fleeing with Leonardo on the horse. Addressing herself to Padre, she separates the two families with a cry of vengeance, and her words at the end of Act 2 link the two halves of the play's title: the broken union in Act 2 is followed by a cry for blood:

> MADRE. Dos bandos. Aquí hay dos bandos. *(Entran todos.)* Mi familia y la tuya. Salid todos de aquí. . . . ¡Fuera de aquí! Por todos los caminos. Ha llegado otra vez la hora de la sangre. Dos bandos. Tú con el tuyo y yo con el mío. ¡Atrás! ¡Atrás! (140; Act 2, Sc. 2)

(iii) In the closing poem of *Bodas,* as has been previously stated, Madre, seated again but now facing the spectators, resignedly identifies the knife floating in the air as being so small "que apenas cabe en la mano" (166; Act 3, Sc. 2). Herein lies her tragic recognition of its power that has haunted her throughout the action. The spectator, however, only gains a complete understanding of the fateful threat represented by the knife in the verses that close the play.

(Post Script) With regard to the Leonardo-Novia relationship, Doménech (2008) has assumed a romantic liaison that is unsupported by the text: "Leonardo se casó con una prima de la Novia—ésta, en cierta forma, urdió ese matrimonio, pero sigue enamorado de la Novia. La Novia se va a casar con el Novio, pero sigue enamorada de Leonardo" (67). Doménech then calls the relationship between Novia and Leonardo "una pasión *amorosa*" (67, emphasis mine). Although the play may suggest an amorous relationship, as the action develops it becomes clear that there is no love intrigue at all. Just as the title of the play refers to a wedding that is never seen by the spectator (it takes place in the interval between the two scenes of Act 2), so love is not the force underlying the attraction between Leonardo and Novia. It is the highly charged forest scene in Act 3, Sc. 1, the forest to which, as both Novia and Leonardo remark, the horse has taken them involuntarily, that dispels any romantic speculation, expressing as it does in sinister and erotic images that a higher force pre-determines their union: "Clavos de luna nos funden / tus caderas y mi cintura," as Leonardo says (154; Act 3, Sc. 2). As Fernández Cifuentes (1986) reminds us in the citation quoted earlier, once again Lorca reverses the conventional expectations of the audience. There is no choice, no free-will, in Lorca's dramatic vision of a tragic world and no love either: the Moon depicted in Act 3, Sc. 1 is an all-determining supernatural force that binds the characters' destinies.

Doménech (2008) has also attempted to suggest explanations as to why

Leonardo and Novia went their separate ways before the start of the action: "aunque no se diga, deducimos que al padre no le pareció bien Leonardo como yerno por sus limitados recursos económicos" (144). Yet in the forest scene Lorca has made it clear that it is Leonardo who left Novia, not the reverse: LEONARDO. "y puse un muro de piedra / entre tu casa y la mía" (151; Act 3, Sc. 1). Doménech's assumption is useful, however, in that it illustrates an aspect of Lorca's dramaturgy that Fernández Cifuentes (1986) mentions in the citation quoted earlier. It is true that Lorca invites the spectator to speculate about the separation of Novia and Leonardo by imagining conventional reasons for the split. Nevertheless, as stated above, he does so only to highlight the reverse at a later point in the action. It has been widely acknowledged that Lorca used *peripeteia* as a device to involve the spectator in speculation only to reverse expectations in a play containing the word "bodas" in its title; *peripeteia* being as much a dramatic device for Lorca as it was for the Ancient Greek tragedians.[9]

Too much has been made also of the fact that Lorca does not give most of the characters in *Bodas* individual names. For example, in 1962 Calvin Cannon wrote: "They are not heroes but unindividuated parts of ancient folkways" (85). By 1986, Fernández Cifuentes, commenting on reviews of the early performances of *Bodas*, referred to its "unindividuated" characters: "[la obra] carece de individualidades como carece de nombres propios" (139). (Leonardo's is the exception, of course, because of his moodiness throughout Act 1, Sc. 2, and all of Act 2.) Once again, Lorca appears purposefully to have misled his spectators. Appraisals to the contrary arise when literary critics fail to consider that the playtext is nothing more than the document through which the playwright transmits his visualization of stage action to the director/actors. The characters in *Bodas* may be represented as "unindividuated": however, they can *only* be so for the reader. Before spectators, all the characters are represented by flesh and blood actors with individual physical traits. There are no folkloric types in *Bodas de sangre*;[10] on stage there are clearly defined characters with very specific physical traits, and an analysis of the dramatic action brings out their psychological identities.

In the foregoing analysis of the play's opening, I have attempted to read the words on the page, as well as the stage directions not inscribed textually that are interspersed throughout, as indicators of how Lorca visualized stage action in his play.

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[9] As Miguel García-Posada (2004) observes: "La fuerza del instinto (y del destino) lo arrastra todo, como en la tragedia griega, convertido el autor en una suerte de Esquilo redivivo" (10).

[10] Although there are puppets when Lorca creates plays such as *La zapatera prodigiosa*.

ISAAC BENABU holds the Louis Lipsky Chair in Drama at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he is professor emeritus. His areas of research include theory of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Hispano-Hebraic poetry in medieval Spain, Sephardic Studies, and the theatre of Federico García Lorca. He has published widely in all these areas. He is the author of *On the Boards and in the Press* (1991), *Reading for the Stage* (2003), *Textos "ilegibles"* (2019); joint editor with Joseph Sermoneta of *Judeo-Romance Languages* (1985); and editor of *Circa 1492* (1992). He has been a visiting professor at a number of universities in Europe, North and South America, and Australia. He is artistic director of the University Theatre Company (Jerusalem) and of *Thespis*: the Jerusalem International Festival of Theatre at the university. He has directed theatre internationally.

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