

**Intertheatrical Pursuits:
Frecknall's *The House of Bernarda Alba* after Lorca,
Adillo Rufo's *Cielo Calderón* o "La vida es sueño" según Lorca,
Calderón's *La vida es sueño* (auto)**

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ABSTRACT

The author undertakes an intertheatrical reading of Federico García Lorca's *La casa de Bernard Alba* in the light of: (1) Rebecca Frecknall's radical production, at The Royal National Theatre of Great Britain in 2023, of Alice Birch's expressionistic adaptation of the play scored to be followed rhythmically; (2) Sergio Adillo Rufo's production, in Spain in 2022, of Lorca's 1932 production of the second version of Calderón's *auto*, *La vida es sueño*, which the director reconstructed with interpolated scenes in prose that spoke to the politics of Lorca's world and, by extension, to ours; (3) the seventeenth-century Calderonian *auto* that, according to tradition, concentrates on the dogma of redemption. Part I offers a critical reading of Frecknall's stage mounting; Part II discusses Adillo's dramaturgical and directorial choices; Part III mediates between Lorca's dramatic text (with a nod to Frecknall's staging) and Calderón's *auto* ([re]interpreted by Adillo, as apposite); and Part IV finishes with mediations between the endings of the dramatic and performance texts—on the page and as translated to the stage—along with some concluding thoughts on intertheatricality as a form of intertextuality. Interwoven perforce is a connection to the sociopolitical context of the birth of *La casa de Bernarda Alba* (1936): the Second Spanish Republic (1931–1939), and Lorca's touring theatre known as La Barraca (1932–1934).

KEYWORDS

Federico García Lorca, *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, Rebecca Frecknall, Sergio Adillo Rufo, *Cielo Calderón*, La Barraca, Calderón de la Barca, *La vida es sueño* (auto), intertheatricality, intertextuality

RESUMEN

El autor emprende una lectura interteatral de *La casa de Bernarda Alba* de Federico García Lorca a la luz de: (1) la producción radical de Rebecca Frecknall, en el Royal National Theatre de Gran Bretaña, de la adaptación expresionista de

Alice Birch, compuesta para ser seguida rítmicamente; (2) la producción de Sergio Adillo Rufo, en España en 2022, de la producción de Lorca en 1932 de la segunda versión del auto de Calderón, *La vida es sueño*, reconstruido con escenas interpoladas en prosa que ponían de relieve la política del mundo lorquino y, por ende, el nuestro; (3) el auto calderoniano del siglo XVII que, según la tradición, se concentra en el dogma de la redención. La primera parte ofrece una lectura crítica del montaje de de Frecknall; la segunda parte discute las elecciones dramáticas y de dirección de Adillo; la tercera parte media entre el texto dramático de Lorca (con un guiño a la puesta en escena de Frecknall) y el auto de Calderón ([re]interpretado por Adillo, como apropiado); y la cuarta parte termina con mediaciones entre los finales de los textos dramáticos y los de performance— en la página y según se representaban en las tablas, junto con algunas reflexiones finales sobre la interteatralidad como forma de intertextualidad. También se aborda, desde luego, el contexto sociopolítico del nacimiento de *La casa de Bernarda Alba* (1936): la Segunda República Española (1931–1939), y el teatro itinerante de Lorca conocido como La Barraca (1932–1934).

PALABRAS CLAVES

Federico García Lorca, *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, Rebecca Frecknall, Sergio Adillo Rufo, *Cielo Calderón*, La Barraca, Calderón de la Barca, *La vida es sueño* (auto), interteatralidad, intertextualidad

*I would rather these textual scholars spent
more time in the theatre and less in the databank.*
—Sir Ian McKellen, quoted in Greg Doran, *My Shakespeare*

Prologue

García Lorca, Frecknall, Adillo, Calderón, and Intertheatricality

Federico García Lorca, as is well known, had a connection to early modern Spanish theatre (see Pérez-Simón 2020). In 1931, he was appointed by the newly elected, left-of-center Second Republic government as artistic director of the Teatro Universitario, a traveling theatre that came to be known as La Barraca (or “The Hut,” from the improvised wooden structures that housed the touring puppet shows). Between 1932 and 1934, Lorca directed classical works from the corpus of Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, and Calderón de la Barca for rural village

audiences, often altering/adapting them in relation to the political and pedagogical urgencies of the times—the creation of national identity and the diffusion of culture in line with a liberal Republicanism—and incurring the criticism of right-wing groups (see Byrd 1975). In explaining why he returned to the classical repertoire rather than directing “modern” plays, Lorca stated: “Nuestro teatro moderno—moderno y antiguo; es decir eterno, como el mar—es el de Calderón y el de Cervantes, el de Lope y el de Gil Vicente. Mientras tengamos sin representar un *Mágico prodigioso*, y tantas otras maravillas, ¿cómo vamos a hablar de teatro moderno?” (Laffranque 1969, 604; see also Vilches de Frutos 2005, 71). As he recuperated this national patrimony, Lorca was able to add training as a director to his repertoire as poet, playwright, and intellectual. Surely, this experience served him in writing the so-named rural trilogy of *Bodas de sangre* (1933), *Yerma* (1934), and *La casa de Bernarda Alba* (1936), all authored while he was under the anxiety of influence of La Barraca and the Spanish classics (see Arata 2021).

To commemorate the ninetieth anniversary of the creation of La Barraca, the Instituto del Teatro de Madrid de la Universidad Complutense undertook, in 2022, to reconstruct Lorca’s 1932 production of Calderón’s *auto sacramental*, *La vida es sueño* in its second version of 1673 (published in 1677). The result was *Cielo Calderón o “La vida es sueño” según Lorca* (a partir del auto sacramental de Calderón y algunos textos de Lorca), directed by Sergio Adillo Rufo, who also acted as dramaturge. A dialogue between two historical and literary moments (the Counter-Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the Second Spanish Republic proclaimed on 14 April 1931 and dissolved on 1 April 1939) was deemed apropos of today’s (meta/post)modern public, for whom a dialectic between rightist and leftist ideologies would prove familiar. *Cielo Calderón* had its première in July 2022 at Almagro’s Festival Internacional del Teatro Clásico and was revived for a performance on 25 October 2022 in the Paraninfo of the Universidad Complutense in Madrid (which this re-viewer¹ attended).

A year later, Rebecca Frecknall’s radical production of *The House of Bernarda Alba* in an adaptation by Alice Birch (2023) after Federico García Lorca opened on the proscenium-arch Lyttleton stage (in the complex of the Royal National Theatre) on 16 November 2023 and ran through 6 January 2024. For this re-viewer, there was a kind of subliminal connection—below the threshold of sensation, consciousness, awareness—in the act of seeing Frecknall’s representation of *Bernarda Alba* after Lorca, and then of re-viewing in her mind’s

¹ The terms *re-view* and *re-viewing* are used in the original French sense of *revoir*, to see again, to indicate a *process* less of scrutinizing, analyzing, criticizing and more of reading, understanding, discerning. The hyphenation is meant to denote that process. The title of my book, *Reading Performance: Spanish Golden-Age Theatre and Shakespeare on the Modern Stage*, speaks as well to that mindset (see Fischer 2009).

eye Adillo's re-shaping of Lorca's reproduction of the *auto sacramental* against the backcloth of the Calderonian construction. This intertheatrical pursuit² of mediating between the two mises en scène vis-à-vis Calderón's second version of the original *auto* begins in Part I with a re-viewing of Frecknall's mounting; turns in Part II to a reading of Adillo's dramaturgical and directorial choices; moves in Part III toward mediating between Lorca's dramatic text (with a nod to Frecknall's [re]staging) and Calderón's seventeenth-century *auto* ([re]interpreted by Adillo, as apposite); and finishes in Part IV with mediations between the endings of the dramatic and performance texts, on the page and on the stage, along with some concluding thoughts on intertheatricality as a form of intertextuality.

Intertextuality/intertheatricality here is not understood apropos to dialogue or source, nor defined in intentional, influential, or determinate terms but from the post-structuralist viewpoint of an unbounded, infinite interconnectedness of things, states, ideas. In this sense, Jeanne P. Brownlow and John W. Kronik (1998) reiterate that the pursuit of intertextual mediations—or, in our case, *intertheatrical mediations*—is non-linear, “a wide-ranging instrument of relevance retrieval whose function is the accrual rather than the immediate exchange of knowledge” (12). Intertextuality, as is well known, moved in the postmodern world beyond the initial, ground breaking work of Harold Bloom (1997)—his redefinition of influence an act of “strong misreading,” of creative interpretation, a “poetic misprision” (xxiii)—to incorporate the deconstructive work of Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes. It evolved further through the fine-tunings of, among others, Jonathan Culler, Michel Foucault, Umberto Eco, Linda Hutcheon, who served as interpretants of each others' texts, responding to or mediating between signs and so enabling further theoretical processing.

Relevant to our discussion of intertextuality/intertheatricality as it plays out among the dramatic/performance texts of Lorca-Frecknall/Birch-Calderón-Adillo, Barthes (1971), states:

Le Texte est pluriel . . . Le Texte n'est pas coexistence de sens, mais passage, traversée; il ne peut donc relever d'une interprétation, même libérale, mais d'une explosion, d'une dissémination. Le pluriel du Texte tient, en effet, non à l'ambiguïté de ses contenus, mais à ce que l'on pourrait appeler la *pluralité stéréophonique* des signifiants qui le tissent

² The reference to “intertheatrical pursuits” in the title and elsewhere is beholden to the title of the volume edited by Jeanne P. Brownlow and John W. Kronik (1998), *Intertextual Pursuits: Literary Mediations in Modern Spanish Narrative*. This article is dedicated to the memory of my mentor, John W. Kronik (1931–2006), indefatigable pursuer of intertextual connections and self-consciousness in art (see Fischer 1996).

(étymologiquement, le texte est un tissu). (228)³

And the reader of the text (dramatic or performance) is likened by Barthes to:

un sujet désœuvré (qui aurait détendu en lui tout imaginaire): ce sujet passablement vide se promène (c'est ce qui est arrivé à l'auteur de ces lignes et c'est là qu'il a pris une idée vive du Texte) au flanc d'une vallée au bas de laquelle coule un *oued* (l'*oued* est mis là pour attester un certain dépaysement); ce qu'il perçoit est multiple, irréductible, provenant de substances et de plans hétérogènes, décrochés: lumières, couleurs, végétations, chaleur, air, explosions ténues de bruits, minces cris d'oiseaux, voix d'enfants de l'autre côté de la vallée, passages, gestes, vêtements d'habitants tout près ou très loin: tous ces *incidents* sont à demi-identifiables: ils proviennent de codes connus, mais leur combinatoire est unique, fonde la promenade en différence qui ne pourra se répéter que comme différence. (228–29)⁴

Barthes' comparison here seeks to apprehend, in more concrete terms, the kind of subliminal connection below the threshold of sensation, consciousness, awareness—"la *pluralité stéréophonique*"—that constituted, for this spectator/critic, the acts of re-viewing, reading—interweaving—the dramatic and performance texts of Lorca-Frecknall/Birch-Calderón-Adillo.

Part I. Frecknall: *The House of Bernarda Alba* after Lorca

When one sees a paper slipped inside a theatre program, it often signals a shift in the cast of actors taking part in a play. This was the case for the matinee performance of Frecknall's production of *The House of Bernarda Alba* after

³ "The text is plural . . . The Text is not a co-existence of meanings but a passage, an overcrossing; thus it answers not to an interpretation, even a liberal one, but to an explosion, a dissemination. The plural of the Text depends, that is, not on the ambiguity of its contents but on what might be called the *stereographic plurality* of its weave of signifiers (etymologically, the text is a tissue, a woven fabric)" (Barthes 1977b, 159).

⁴ "The reader of the Text may be compared to someone at a loose end (someone slackened off from any imaginary); this passably empty subject strolls—it is what happened to the author of these lines, then it was that he had a vivid idea of the Text—on the side of a valley, a *oued* [North African watercourse] flowing down below (*oued* is there to bear witness to a certain feeling of unfamiliarity); what he perceives is multiple, irreducible, coming from a disconnected, heterogeneous variety of substances and perspectives: lights, colours, vegetation, heat, air, slender explosions of noises, scant cries of birds, children's voices from over on the other side, passages, gestures, clothes of inhabitants near or far away. All these *incidents* are half-identifiable: they come from codes which are known but their combination is unique, founds the stroll in a difference repeatable only as difference" (Barthes 1977b, 159).

Lorca on 13 December 2023. Specifically, it meant that the role of the antagonist, Adela, the youngest of Bernarda Alba's five daughters, was to be played not by Isis Hains but by Imogen Mackie Walker, due to the indisposition of the former actress. And then a mere fifteen minutes before the curtain was to rise, the acclaimed Harriet Walter, who was to interpret the leading role of Bernarda, announced her own indisposition, and so her presence, stance, and voice would not loom large; the role would be played by Celia Nelson. Nor would the scheduled filming of the production take place at that time. "The Show Must Go On," however, and the actors acquitted themselves in inimitable British fashion despite the last-minute shifts, perhaps even with greater verve and prerogative.

The subtitle Lorca gave to his play, "Drama de mujeres en los pueblos de España," and the pointed reference to it as a "documental fotográfico" following the list of characters in his manuscript, suggested that, minimally, the play was intended as an elucidation of contemporary Spanish life in the wake of the Spanish Civil War (on 18 July 1936, Francisco Franco initiated a military uprising against Madrid's Republican government, and on 16 August, Lorca was arrested and shot three days later outside the village of Viznar, northeast of Granada, by Nationalist forces).⁵ If *La casa de Bernarda Alba* was completed on 19 June 1936, and Lorca read the manuscript to friends a few days later, the play was virtually silenced until 8 March 1945. It received its official première, not in Spain but in Buenos Aires, with the Catalan actress Margarita Xirgu (forced into exile under the Franco regime) in the title role. The text used for this première, and for the published version edited by Guillermo de Torre (1945), was a typed transcript that contained differences, of more or less significance, from the autograph.⁶

⁵ Evidence, however much still conjectural, has materialized in the twenty-first century connecting Lorca's murder to family vendettas unfolding from his handling of distant relatives as portrayed in *La casa de Bernarda Alba*. Conjecture has it that people from the Andalusian village of *Asquerosa*—meaning "disgusting, filthy"; renamed *Valderrubio* in 1943, alluding to the "blond" tobacco plantations springing up in the "valley"—where the García family lived from 1905? to 1909 may have had a direct hand in the assassination. Bernarda Alba herself may have sprung from Lorca's recollection of his neighbor and distant cousin, Frasquita Alba Sierra, who dominated tyrannically over her unwedded daughters and dressed only in black. Subsequently, los Roldán, important landowners in the region, may have been offended by Lorca's seeming depiction of their relatives, los Alba (see Delgado 2014, 81). The extent to which Lorca's portrayal was based on real persons, or on figments of his imagination, is apparently unknown.

⁶ Subsequent editions of *La casa de Bernarda Alba* followed the unreliable de Torre (1945) text until the publication of the autograph manuscript by Mario Hernández (1981). M.ª Francisca Vilches de Frutos (2005) bases her edition of the play on the autograph manuscript, conserved in the Fundación Federico García Lorca, and offers a detailed analysis of "el apógrafo y el autógrafo" in her introduction (90–117). Enrico Di Pastena (2019) follows Vilches de Frutos' tenth edition of 2015 for his Spanish-Italian edition and translation, with commentary in Italian; here, this commentary is cited in Italian and linked by page to Richard Sadleir's (2019) English translation

If the play arguably had its origin in Naturalistic realism and real-life events, elements of Symbolism and Expressionism permeate it though they are less pronounced than in Lorca's earlier *oeuvre*. Lorca purportedly (re)iterated the principle of "reality" and "pure realism" during the reading of the manuscript, exclaiming at the end of each scene, "¡Ni una gota de poesía! ¡Realidad! ¡Realismo!" as recorded by the musician Adolfo Salazar (del Río 1940, 248). That exclamation, however, has been taken to mean that Lorca in effect desired not "un realismo literal" but "un realismo relativo," whereby the play was "depurada y escueta," emptied of "elementos exteriores" (Josephs and Caballero 1989, 74, 75), so as to move beyond a local and particular realism toward a poetic or symbolic realism.

Lorca, in other words, "trasforma tuttavia il dramma rurale: elimina ogni elemento accessorio, spoglia la trama di retoricismo e di colore locale, oppone a un ruralismo convenzionale e di sapore naturalista quella più spigolosa e potente realtà dei campi da lui ben conosciuta" (Di Pastena 2019, 29, cf. Sadleir 2019, 91). Moreover, with regard to language, the playwright does not unimaginatively imitate the rural dialect but "impiega la ricchezza espressiva del parlato popolare (proverbiosità, iperboli, comparazioni) come una base di partenza, impastandone in modo originale gli elementi con costrutti e traslati di radice letteraria" (Di Pastena 30, cf. Sadleir 91; see also Edwards 1998, xxviii–xxxii).

Let us take, by way of a well-worn example, the stage directions preceding each act of *La casa de Bernarda Alba*.⁷ On the face of it, the call on the page for a white interior suggests a grounded, real(istic) environment (however much it may be conveyed on stage by bathing the space in a white light, not by simply painting the walls white). In symbolic terms, whiteness indicates an atmosphere of purity, innocence, coldness, emptiness, sterility, silence, if not of death and mourning, especially since the set moves inward toward an evermore enclosed and darkened (nighttime) space, tinged in blue. In this sense the whiteness, along with the blackness of the characters' attire and the dearth of color throughout (except for

within the Di Pastena text. For an (exhaustive) list of the principal editions of *La casa de Bernarda Alba* from 1945 to 2019, see Di Pastena 315–16. Henceforth, references to the Spanish text of *La casa de Bernarda Alba* are to Vilches de Frutos' (2005) edition and will be noted, unless otherwise indicated, by page and act alone. References to Birch's (2023) *Bernarda Alba* after Lorca will be noted by page alone.

⁷ (Acto primero): "Habitación blanquísima del interior de la casa de Bernarda. Muros gruesos. Puertas en arco con cortinas de yute rematadas con madroños y volantes. . . . Es verano. Un gran silencio umbroso se extiende por la escena. Al levantarse el telon está la escena sola. Se oyen doblar las campanas." (Acto segundo): "Habitación blanca del interior de la casa de Bernarda. . . ." (Acto tercero): "Cuatro paredes blancas ligeramente azuladas del patio interior de la casa de Bernarda. Es de noche. El decorado ha de ser de una perfecta simplicidad. Las puertas iluminadas por la luz de los interiores, dan un tenue fulgor a la escena. . . . Al levantarse el telón hay un gran silencio, interrumpido por el ruido de platos y cubiertos (139, 189, 241; Acts 1, 2, 3).

Adela's allusive display of a green dress and a red-and-green-floral fan), implies that Lorca has created "una perfecta estilización no realista de Andalucía" (Josephs and Caballero 1989, 75). The important point is that with this "blanco y negro" opposition (75), Lorca transcends the code of rural drama "gracias a la capacidad connotativa del lenguaje simbólico utilizado, mediante el cual conecta con los movimientos de renovación vanguardista de la época" (Vilches de Frutos 2005, 78).

Why this schematic foray into historical, editorial, (meta)literary, and critical contexts that provide a frame of reference for both the dramatic and performance texts of this production, adapted and staged after Lorca? Since one can hardly speak of a stable, reliable text with respect to *La casa de Bernarda Alba* (see note 4 above), this reader/re-viewer would be hard-pressed to countenance puristic objection to—yet another—version of the play, especially if it were an actable adaptation so often wanting in the world of dramatic translations. A reading of this work after Lorca reveals that, in generating her text for performance, Birch respected the spine of Lorca's play, cutting, expanding, juxtaposing, or interpolating dialogue or scenes only to make her expressionistic concept *work on stage*.⁸ Her text, Birch says, is "scored and ought to be followed rhythmically," with "overlapping of speech" signaling how it is to be enacted (2). The spacing of the dialogue in the written performance text, the use of upper and lower case letters, and the punctuation are all intended to aid the actors with "the pacing and the weight of their words" (2).

Set (and costume) designer Merle Hensel provided a staggering structure for the play's titular house, opened up in sections: "a vast institutional block that swallows the entirety of the Lyttelton stage. It looks halfway between a hotel and a prison—but not, crucially, a home—with two top floors divided into cell-like bedrooms and the bottom given over to a living room, kitchen, and high metal fences that separate the house from the world" (Lukowski 2023). The design also suggested at once the cross-section of a "doll's house" and a "convent," with the unadorned upper bedrooms resembling "cells of nuns" (Gardner 2023)—thus evoking the servant Poncia's textual reference to the house as a "convento" (210; Act 2).

If the bedrooms were fettered by gates on either side, they were still "tiny defiant spaces of freedom in which everything [was] visible" (Alfree 2023). *Martirio* (Lizzie Annis), aged 24, physically challenged with a twisted foot rather than a hunched back, was pressing at walls or swallowing pills; *Amelia* (Eliot

⁸ It should be noted that, presumably, Lorca continued to work on the manuscript once he had returned to Granada on 13 July 1936; he was, however, unable to leave a definitive version by the time he was fatally shot on 19 August 1936 (Josephs and Caballero 1989, 74; Vilches de Frutos 2005, 90–92; Di Pastena 2019, 71, cf. Sadleir 2019, 131).

Salt), aged 27, was swigging wine; *Magdalena* (Pearl Chanda), aged 30, was resting after a fainting spell or whirling around in a dress; *Adela* (understudy Imogen Mackie Walker), aged 20, was parading about in undergarments or donning a then disallowed green dress; *Angustias* (Rosalind Eleazar), aged 39, was applying make-up, flaunting herself in pink, masturbating over a fiancé's picture, or praying; Maria Josefa (Eileen Nicholas), aged 80, was breaking out of a window or hiding from the world under a bed; Bernarda (understudy Celia Nelson), aged 60, was hovering at doors or listening behind walls. From the first, then, we were invited to have the production “[float] free of cultural specifics to foreground the play as a horror show of the mind” (Allfree). The openness of Hensel's set appeared to offset the received idea that space was a function of the dialogue, whereby “las voces, los ruidos, los movimientos revelarán paulatinamente al espectador que el espacio visible es sólo una zona de paso, sin verdadera capacidad de convocatoria” (Fernández Cifuentes 1986, 190).

Though Lorca's own stage directions call first for a “habitación blanquísima, then for a “habitación blanca,” and finally for “cuatro paredes blancas ligeramente azuladas”—white inherently symbolizing coldness, sterility, death—Hensel's set whitewashed the house's conventional colorlessness with greenish-blue hues of the tertiary color teal for the walls and furnishings, providing a design choice with multifarious possibilities. Like its counterpart white, teal is a cool color that can resist oppressive heat in high temperatures (literally, summer heat and, figuratively by extension, sexual heat) because of its ability to reflect most of the sun's wavelengths. The psychology of teal, though, points to a color that has the “calming properties of blue and the renewal qualities of green” and is thought to be “revitalizing and rejuvenating” (“Everything” n.d.). Was it meant, therefore, to highlight the life-giving sexuality, always already present within the house however much repressed and suppressed? Teal is also said to symbolize “decency and renovation” as well as “clarity, open communication, and practical thinking” (“Color” n.d.)—notably what Lorca had yearned to signal by exposing the social and moral maladies of the Spain of his time.

Did the teal hues thus bespeak a need for rational and decent behavior on the part of the irrational and oppressive Bernarda? Or, on the part of the spontaneous yet rebellious Adela, whose refusal to be shut away spiraled into a total lack of control and a headstrong irrationality as she pursued Pepe El Romano, despite the realistic reading of sardonic servant Poncia that, if the eldest died in childbirth, the man might then come for the youngest? Or did the green component of the teal color somehow merge with, and intensify, Adela's defiant dancing in the green dress, made to be worn on her birthday and symbolic of a passionate rush for freedom? At the same time, it was hardly possible to ignore the premonitory presence of the “Chekhovian” gun (Akbar 2023) that Bernarda would (mis)fire in the play's final moments: “Chekhovian,” in the sense that noticeable details

should be integrated into the narrative or else removed. Framed in inverse relief on a cold and sterile *teal* wall in the main living room, the gun's discharging would catalyze Adela's self-destruction and compromise Bernarda's coveted "Good Appearance of family harmony" (Birch 180).

The production's initial sequence did not foreground Lorca's text: the tedious tolling of church bells and the realistic, pointed dialogue between the long-serving (and long-suffering) Poncia and another Maid, both of whom had returned early from the church service honoring Bernarda's deceased (second) husband to steal food from the pantry and voice their bitter resentment of the matriarch's tyrannical domination over the household. The production opened, not realistically but expressionistically, which is often the trademark of Frecknall's work. In a choreographed prelude, Pepe El Romano (James McHugh), the phantom suitor normally not seen nor heard (he does not figure in Lorca's cast list), actually appeared on stage as a dancer "with the hench physique of a prize bull" (O'Mahony 2023). A muscular, sexy figure bathed in Lee Curran's gold lighting, he moved in the courtyard with "sinuous, almost impossible beauty" (Allfree 2023), while Bernarda's five daughters stood illuminated as silhouettes, freshening themselves with fans darkened in shades of black. The stud exited via one of the two iron gates flanking the yard, to which he would return to woo the eldest and engage in lovemaking with the youngest. Those grilles seemed to take on a life of their own.

Simultaneous conversations were interwoven immediately following the prelude, so that we were watching different storylines unfold in a three-tiered space. We gleaned more from Birch's written performance text than from the whirlwind business on stage, which allowed us to hear but not understand what was being said. On the second level of the "doll's house" stage right, the Maid (Byrony Hannah) struggled—extradramatically—to give Maria Josefa her medicine before singing her a lullaby. Again, on the second level, Amelia sought—extradramatically once more—to make Magdalena join the others below. And, on the first level, conversations meshed among the sisters and the six village woman who had entered to show their respect for the dead. In the latter sequence, dress was the subject of Adela's response to Woman 1 (Charlotte Workman): "I hate black. Be wearing it forfuckin'ever now," adding—probably out of earshot—"She'll sit on our hearts and she'll take Years to just Watch us Die. And then she'll Smile" (Birch 8). If we were hard-pressed to understand the words spoken, including the use of expletives that at times permeated all the speech (though they jarred some, they did not jar this re-viewer as they seemed naturally placed and executed), we could be challenged to draw on alternative ways of apprehending, even in the light of a distracted, fractured focus. Once the scenes became more unified and conventional, they were quite powerful. Things seemed more balanced when the dialogue veered toward Lorca's traditional opening, with

Poncía and the Maid partaking of the victuals in the cupboard, and Poncía (Thusitha Jayasundera) vowing to “Lock [herself] in a room with her [Bernarda] and Spit at her for a Whole Year” (Birch 18).

Nothing specific can be said about the formidable Harriet Walter’s performance, so lauded by the critics, because this re-viewer was not privileged to experience it first hand. If that was a curse, it was also a blessing because it forced focus elsewhere, to wit, the other characters’ interpretive choices and the set design. That said, a word or two is in order about some of the choices around how this Bernarda was directed and played, gleaned from the last minute—admirable—understudy performance of Celia Nelson.

This production’s Bernarda Alba was meant to “cut an imposing figure, bolt upright, feet planted firmly on the ground” (Crompton 2023). Nelson was vigilant and wary as she entered, listening to the concurrent conversations, if not murmurings, interwoven in Birch’s version. If she did not wield the proverbial—phallic—“bastón” of Lorca’s text, thus seeming less overtly masculine and threatening, she was policing nonetheless (cf. stage direction for her entry in Act 1; 148). Her initial—(in)famous—pronouncement of “Silence” was almost lost amidst the simultaneous chatter and clatter enveloping the space. Ironic, of course, in that “quizá el acto verbal más famoso de todo el teatro lorquiano sea el ‘¡Silencio!’ con que Bernarda Alba abre y cierra su presencia en la escena” (Dougherty 1986, 104). Was there, at least to start with, some attempt to attenuate immediate association with the historical and cultural silencing of dissent, and to focus more broadly on the tragedy of a woman who refused to *see* what was going on around her, no matter how much she looked and listened? Or was it that Nelson’s entrance as Bernarda simply did not read as forcefully as the absent Walters’ presence might have?

In his notes to the first major production of the play in Spain, which opened in Madrid on 10 January 1964, the director Juan Antonio Bardem stated that Bernarda should be “the very personification of authority, using her stick and her cold smile to assert it,” but that she should “raise her voice” only “when her authority is threatened” (Edwards 1998, xlv). This was, more or less, the directorial paradigm followed in Frecknall’s *mise en scène*. Bernarda escalated, physically abusing her daughters at two pivotal points on stage. In the first, she grabbed the cosmetic-enhanced cheeks of Angustias, spit on them, and then held them hard as she wiped, oblivious to cries of pain (see Birch 92). In the second, Bernarda tortured Martirio, also in love with Pepe El Romano, scalding her hand in boiling water for having stolen Angustias’ coveted picture of him. In that case stage did not coincide with page, nor with Lorca’s text: in Birch’s text (144), mother merely(!) hit daughter hard across the face instead of beating her with the proverbial “bastón.” In other instances Bernarda conversed quite normally, even motherly, when, for example, Adela queried her about people’s reactions to

shooting stars or bolts of lightning (Birch 186)—effectively dispelling blanket interpretations of her character. Stage directions suggest that, at that moment, Bernarda was “softened” by Adela’s “curiosity, her joy” (Birch 188). For the present re-viewer the role of Bernarda Alba, as conceived by the director and executed by the actor, was nuanced: “Her rule, her sequestration of her daughters from the world of passion and men, her relentless insistence on their obedience, is flecked by ripples of doubt and care. She thinks she is protecting them from the harsh patriarchal society outside, yet her rigour destroys them” (Crompton 2023). This was, in a sense, her tragedy.

Maria Josefa’s presence was enhanced by intermittent banging and intense crying out: we *saw* her trying to open the bedroom door, and we *heard* and *understood* her scream “Fucking Bernarda, Let me out” (Birch 39) Her physicality exteriorized thoughts pulsating inside the minds and bodies of the frustrated daughters: “I Will Not stay in this house and watch these women turn to dust. Raging and seething and longing and dying and fading and collapsing and scratching and rotting and desperate for weddings that will never happen, hoping for life that will never come, pulverising their hearts one by one” (Birch 96). Birch’s adaptation of Maria Josefa’s language could not but impact as did the visionary insights of Lear’s Fool; she said it all, but it fell on deaf ears, heard in Bernarda’s iron-fisted rejoinder, “Lock her up” (Birch 96). The seer-like grandmother next appeared (after the interval), not just wearing a white (wedding?) dress and carrying an “oveja” in her arms (as in Act 3 of Lorca’s text), but covered in mud with hair disheveled and holding a bloodied lamb to which she sang a lullaby. Her discourse to Martirio, in which she spoke of escaping to the seashore with her lamb/baby boy, and of how Pepe El Romano would devour all the young women in the house, followed—*grosso modo*—Lorca’s text except, significantly, in one instance: before saying, “Pepe El Romano is a Giant,” she incorporated that Martirio’s “Father fucked Everybody, every Woman he could lay his hands on” (Birch 209), thereby explicitly equating the two men. As a frenzied, if prescient, force, Nicholas’ Maria Josefa was rival only to Jayasundera’s pungent Poncia who, in her pragmatic way, continually saw what others, especially Bernarda, refused to see. Recall Bernarda’s false, if blind, sense of security: “I See Everything” (Birch 192).

The staging of the scene preceding the production’s interval (the end of Act 2 of Lorca’s play) was particularly grueling emotionally. Rich red lighting (with obvious symbolism) signaled a disturbance outside: an unmarried girl, bloody, and almost naked, who had killed her baby and was being dragged through the street by enraged villagers, entered the Alba house and ran into Adela’s outstretched arms, followed by men and women moving in slow motion. As Bernarda shouted for the girl to be killed, Adela clutched her own stomach (Birch 168). Was she hallucinating that the crowd was grabbing at her, because she was

already pregnant? Simultaneously, upstairs, Maria Josefa was smashing a window, hands bloodied, to jump out. Tellingly, the performance text (on page and on stage) omitted Bernarda's outraged cry in Lorca's text—"¡Carbón ardiendo en el sitio de su pecado!" (240; Act 2)—which followed upon her calling for the girl to be killed before the guards arrived. Outer and inner worlds merged chillingly in that hothouse atmosphere. Houselights went up to signal the interval, no doubt for a rather rattled audience, but not as rattled as it might have been had Lorca's full text been preserved.

If a trend nowadays is to run a play right through from beginning to end and forego the interval, not just to respect "the two hours traffic of our stage," but also to keep the momentum moving and the tension high, Frecknall's production did not lose force after the break (Act 3 of Lorca's text). While everyone sat at dinner—Bernarda, the only one on stage showing an appetite, and a voracious one at that—the muscular, sexy figure of Pepe El Romano jolted suddenly from under the table and danced provocatively. It could not be missed that, at the same time, a stallion ("el caballo garañón" in Lorca's text [244; Act 3]) was kicking at the stable wall, consumed by heat; and outside, by the gate in the courtyard, there was movement as though *someone were there*. The stallion, symbol of the virility—strength, energy, and sexual prowess—the women desperately craved, merged with Pepe. He became palpably present on stage, thus reifying pent-up desire perennially banging not just in the women's minds but also in their groins (witnessed when we peeped into their private spaces upstairs). Pepe was indeed the someone outside the gate. The interpolated stage directions state: "Adela runs to him. He lifts her up, through the bars of the gate, we see his hands on the back of her hair as they kiss through the gaps in the bars" (Birch 198, 200). Throwing caution to the wind, they continued kissing and started "fucking through the bars of the gate" (Birch 200). Pepe appeared, not in full bodily view but synecdochically, as he passed a hand through the grille and under Adela's dress. This occurred while a bloodied Maria Josefa, bearing her lamb, spoke in prescient madness of how Pepe El Romano, the "Giant," would "Devour" them all (Birch 209). It was all happening then, in the moment, and we were voyeurs along with Martirio, who caught them more explicitly and dramatically *en flagrant délit* than Lorca's text could convey.

In the ensuing confrontation between Martirio and Adela, it was as if a dam burst, causing sudden, rapid, and uncontrollable release of emotional energy following years of silence and secrecy that had proved deadly. Martirio did not mince words in ordering Adela to "leave that man," and Adela in turn provoked Martirio into admitting that she "[loved] him too" (Birch 210, 214)—perhaps a bit overdone given Adela's screeching, presumably because of directorial prerogative. We could actually sense Adela's anguish upon seeing Martirio not as her sister but as "merely another Woman standing opposite"; and Martirio's envy

and jealousy, and the unwilling “strength” gained from a heart “full of such hatred” and her “drowning in it” (Birch 214, 216). Adela had pushed Martirio too far with her nervous “laughing” exteriorized on stage but not indicated in Lorca’s text, and with her taunting as she again moved toward the door: “Come and watch if you like you seem to like doing that” (Birch 218). The lovesick martyr that was Martirio reacted the only way she knew, by calling on “MOTHER” to control what she could not bear.

This Adela could not seize her mother’s tyrannical stick (“vara de la dominadora” in Lorca’s text [275; Act 3]) and break it in two, because this Bernarda carried no such stick. Words and body language had to do for this Adela: “This is not my house anymore, not my prison anymore—do not take one more step Mother. No one tells me what to do anymore, but him. Only him. Only Pepe” (Birch 218). Maria Josefa’s predictions were fulfilled to (im)perfection before our ears and eyes. Adela’s final act of angry rebellion, fueled by hot passion and Martirio’s rancorous falsification of Pepe’s death following Bernarda’s misfired gunshot, climaxed only as it could have for the sister she loved the most: the Death drive overtook the Life drive, Thanatos over Eros. Adela retired to her cell-like bedroom, took the green sash from her dress (merging here with the cold teal coloring of her surroundings?), fixed it to the light fitting, made a noose at the other end, stood on a chair, placed the noose around her neck, stepped off the chair, kicked it away, and dropped sans the “thud” resounding in Lorca’s text but with force nonetheless (Birch 223). A crowd gathered outside as Bernarda, still willfully blind and deaf to the erupted tensions still erupting, cared more for guarding her (already tainted) reputation, name, and social standing than for the death of her child. “My daughter has died a virgin. . . . Dress her like a little girl. Like a little girl” (Birch 226) was all she could muster. “*Silence*,” reiterated six times, indicated that the house would not forswear such retrogressive silencing but “drown in a sea of mourning,” even as Martirio declared, piteously, that Adela was fortunate because “she Knew Love she was Happy” (Birch 226).

A stage curtain dropped suddenly and closed in the bottom half of the tragic house of Bernarda Alba: from walled up (blocked) matriarch to walled in (confined) offspring. The stain on Bernarda’s reputation was palpable. Scandal was not so secret as she wished or supposed but seeping out, no matter how much she had denied it to Poncia: “*Were* anything awful to happen it would never get through the walls” (Birch 158, emphasis in original).⁹ The auditorium lights went

⁹ If Shakespeare “had no patience with walls, real or imaginary, and even in a play consumed with religious and ethnic animosity [*The Merchant of Venice*], he tore them down” (Greenblatt 2017), neither did Lorca. He, too, aimed to tear walls down in a play consumed with silence, repression, unrequited passion, rebellion, blind adherence to religion and tradition.

up, and though the audience gave a standing ovation, many, if not all, appeared to be influenced, at the very least, by the anxiety of silence. *Silence* that might have evoked, in dramatic terms for some, themes and tropes that pervade the early modern *comedia* especially regarding external (public) honor or reputation.¹⁰ Or, silence that might have resurrected, in political terms for others, memories of repression, of being initially walled in for Reason of State after Franco's death (20 November 1975). A "pacto de olvido," also termed a "pacto de *silencio*," was operant during the transition years in Spain in order to stabilize democracy. The idea was to *silence* and *forget*: the atrocities committed during the Francoist dictatorship, the control exercised over the education system and the media (see Delgado 2015, 183–84). Facts, the truth of what had actually happened—for example, the circumstances of Lorca's assassination—would have to seep through the walls of the Amnesty Law of 1977.¹¹

Part II. Adillo: *Cielo Calderón* o "*La vida es sueño*" según Lorca

In his adaptation of Calderón's *auto sacramental* according to Lorca, Adillo had to contend with three distinct contexts: the Counter-Reformation, Spain's Second Republic, and the secularized spectators of the first decades of the twenty-first century. Striking was Lorca's choice of dramatic material in 1932: first of an *auto*, given the "initial difficulty of the strangeness (in drama) of the subject-matter" (Parker 1943, 202); and second, the choice of *La vida es sueño*, in that it concentrates on "the dogma of the Redemption" (197) and "almost exclusively on the purely theoretical analysis of dogma (without thereby being remote from life)," being "perhaps over-subtle in the sense of over-abstract" (203). As an allegory, though, of Creation, Fall, and Redemption as evoked by the dogmas, it contains Biblical archetypes that form part of the collective unconscious and arguably would have been accessible even to poorly educated or uncultured audiences in remote, rural areas.

Not all that much is known of Lorca's dramaturgy with respect to the *auto*,

¹⁰ Take, for instance, the subtitle of Daniel Rogers' (1965) vintage publication on *El médico de su honra*. Focusing on the protagonist's prescription of an unproductive "dieta / del silencio" (Calderón 1981, 2. vv. 1674–75) in probing his presumed dishonor due to his wife's seemingly suspicious behavior, Rogers states: "Silences heighten the suspense of the play in performance; metaphors of silence illuminate an aspect of the tragic theme; poet and the dramatic craftsman are at one" (274).

¹¹ The Amnesty Law of 15 October 1977 declared that no individual could be subjected to judicial proceedings for crimes committed during the civil war by parties on either side, Republican or Nationalist. Even before the Spanish constitution proclaiming Spain a "social and democratic state" was endorsed in October 1978, a "deal" was made to "avoid a truth and reconciliation commission, recriminations, and/or judicial procedures relating to the violation of human rights during the period from 1936 to 1975" (Delgado 2015, 184).

though the list of personages suggests that he worked from Calderón's second version of 1673, and from Ángel Valbuena Prat's edition of 1926–1927 (Adillo 2023, 133). With regard to Adillo's dramaturgy, some verses were omitted, redistributed, or transposed so that certain personages intervened to a greater or lesser extent (for example, el Albedrío and el Hombre at times interchanged parts). Obscure passages were simplified: those containing archaisms or syntactical hyperbatons that express complex theological concepts or engage in baroque wordplay indecipherable for most spectators of today. The director allowed the actors freedom to substitute linguistic humor with a comicity of their own making especially in verses with doctrinal content, given that the action of the *auto* was already "teología encarnada"; and considering that many of the ideas could be symbolically transmitted through stage objects or through "*tableaux vivants*" recognizable to a public familiar with Christian iconography: the creation of man, piety, penance in the wilderness, crucifixion, the sacraments of baptism and communion (Adillo 2023, 135–36).

Adillo did not aim to focus on the catechetical conundrum of freedom of the will conveyed, for example, in the anguished laments of Segismundo in the drama ("¿y yo, con más albedrío / tengo menos libertad?"); or of el Hombre in the *auto* ("¿teniendo más alma yo, / tengo menos libertad?") (Calderón 1994, 1. vv. 151–52; cf. Calderón 2012, vv. 670–71; see also Sears 2002). Instead, the intention was to bring "la luz de la cultura a los más desfavorecidos (especialmente a aquellos que viven en el medio rural)," and to underscore the ideal of political freedom and the liberal values of Republicanism: "educar a los ciudadanos y ciudadanas de los pueblos españoles en el ejercicio responsable de la libertad para contribuir al desarrollo de la democracia" (Adillo 2023, 148, 136).

The director framed his staging of the *auto* for Lorca's time and ours with four interpolated scenes in prose, thereby approaching the three-act division of a *comedia* to accommodate today's public: a *Prólogo*; a *Primer Interludio*, fomented by an "apagón" or stage blackout preceding the plot of el Príncipe de las Tinieblas/Lucero/Pecado and la Sombra/Culpa/Muerte to effect el Hombre's downfall (Adillo 2022, 23; cf. Calderón 2012, v. 798); a *Segundo Interludio*, prompted by another "apagón" after el Hombre's fall into a sin-induced sleep that simulates death and before he is left "como primero, vestido de pieles" (Adillo 2022, 37; cf. Calderón 2012, s.d. v. 1373); and an *Epílogo*. Those metatheatrical interpolations drew on real people and real circumstances of La Barraca to dramatize how the troupe was comprised of players from opposing sides of the political spectrum. For example: Federico himself who, like everyone else, had a part in the inner representation of the *auto*; Isabel García Lorca, sister to Federico; Arturo Sáenz de la Calzada and his partner Enriqueta ("Ketty") Aguado, representatives of the leftist-leaning syndicate of the Unión Federal de Estudiantes Hispanos; Modesto Higuera, who would later be director of the Teatros

Nacionales Franquistas; Eduardo Ródenas, who in 1933 enlisted with the Falange (Adillo 2023, 137). Also incorporated in this dramaturgical “collage” (Adillo 2023, 146) were fragments of speeches and articles from the 1931 period, including some penned by the playwright himself (the Prólogo ended with a pre-show monologue delivered by a passionate Federico, explaining La Barraca’s Republican mission, the value of classical Spanish works, and the choice of Calderón’s *auto*). Included, too, were some Lorquian passages from *El público* (1930), *La comedia sin título* (c. 1935), and even *La casa de Bernarda Alba* (Adillo 2023, 137).

The themes of the four interpolated scenes resonated with the inequity and repression also running rampant in *La casa de Bernarda Alba: social inequality* between big cities and rural areas (lest we forget the disparity between the urban elites who ran the educational project and the rural audiences); *enlightenment*, a move to bring to light culture (intellectual and spiritual) in rural areas darkened by ignorance and religious tradition; greater *freedom and equality for women*. (Feminist demands, spearheaded by Clara Campoamor and Victoria Kent so named on stage [Adillo 2022, 4], culminated in a measure adopted on 1 October 1931 by which women earned the constitutional right to vote). As Ketty asserts in the Segundo Interludio: “Si queremos llevar la cultura a los rincones más recónditos de España, a los pueblos donde nunca han visto teatro, nuestro repertorio tiene que encajar con el ideario democrático de la República” (Adillo 2022, 37).

At the same time, those interpolated scenes dealt head-on with ideological tensions within La Barraca: the double-edged controversy over the choice of Calderón’s *auto* to inaugurate its mission. For the (radical) Left, the *auto* would not adequately transmit, to those they wished to convert, the ideological message of their Republican government. As Arturo says: “Desde luego a esas mujeres [las del rosario] no las vamos a convencer de que voten a la izquierda con un auto sacramental, por muy modernos que sean los figurines” (Adillo 2022, 4). Or, as Ketty observes: “[A]l auto le quitas toda la parte de exaltación cristiana o coges otra obra, porque esas señoras que se han traído el rosario no necesitarán más sermones” (Adillo 2022, 37). According to the actors representing the conservative Right, the Left had appropriated Calderón’s *auto* which belonged to *their* conservative base alone: “porque encarnaba sus propios valores de la España imperial, monárquica y católica” (Adillo 2023, 141; see Pérez Magallón 2010). By staging *La vida es sueño (auto)*, then, Lorca underscored the major religious problem besetting the Second Republic: though Spain was a secular state according to the Constitution of 1931, the identity of most of its population, especially in rural areas, was as yet constructed around strict adherence to the teachings and rituals of Catholicism. If the choice of this *auto* could be justified in aesthetic terms in recognition of the importance of classical Spanish works, it also

could be construed as a “gesto conciliador hacia la mayoría de la población católica,” not to mention its thematic reference to “la libertad” as a gift bestowed upon human beings (Adillo 2023, 147).

Part III. Lorca’s *La casa de Bernarda Alba* and Calderón’s *La vida es sueño (auto)*: Allegorical Mediations

Let there be light; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.

—Genesis, 3–4

In theological terms, Calderón’s second version of *La vida es sueño (auto)* is a dogmatic allegory of [Hu]Man’s spiritual trajectory from creation through fall from grace to redemption. Its characters, except for el Hombre, are all abstractions symbolizing the cosmos, the supreme being, and the agencies of good and evil: the four elements (la Tierra, el Aire, el Fuego, el Agua); the trinity of el Poder, la Sabiduría, el Amor; la Sombra (conflated with el Caos); la Luz (conflated with la Gracia); el Príncipe de las Tiniebras (conflated with el Pecado); el Entendimiento; el Albedrío. From a secular standpoint, however, the transformation of theological abstractions into drama—all the while engaging the imagination, the emotions, and the intellect, and fusing “theological, psychological, poetic, structural, dramatic, and narrative elements”—can be said to highlight “philosophical reverberations that go beyond Catholicism” (McKendrick 1989, 255).

Similarly, *La casa de Bernarda Alba* is an allegory of Woman’s [her]story from her roots through her downfall to her emotional/spiritual/social disintegration and death, with resonance beyond the representative rural Spanish village in which the action takes place. Its characters, whatever the humanity lying beneath the surface, are on *one* level all abstractions denoting the conflict between authority and freedom, morality and instinct, reality and imagination or desire in the stifling prison-world of the play. The women’s appellations, laden with meaning, convey character: Bernarda (ursine strength as connoted by her name of Germanic origin); Angustias (an unhappy virgin, anguished by her rapid ageing); Magdalena (pessimistic but caring, as suggested by her Biblical namesake, witness to the crucifixion and the resurrection); Martirio (sexually frustrated, envious and hateful, tearful in her martyrdom); Amelia (inexperienced and naïve, but industrious and striving, as implied by her name of Latin and Hebrew roots); Adela (spirited, spontaneous, headstrong, as connoted when she says, “He tenido fuerza para adelantarme” [270; Act 3]); María Josefa (irrational and lucid, and incorporating the names of the progenitors of Christ the Savior).

(1) “Masa confusa” (Calderón), “Muros gruesos” (García Lorca)

Calderón’s *auto* begins when the four as yet undifferentiated elements—“masa confusa. . . / caos y nada” (vv. 29, 31), and in chiasmic terms “...contrariamente unidos... / ...y unidamente contrarios...” (vv. 56–57)—strive for primacy in the cosmos.¹² Is this perhaps reminiscent, in the secular realm, of the chaotic confusion seething in the house where Bernarda’s unmarried daughters live, “potentially capable of receiving individualizing forms but as yet unactualized” (Parker 1943, 204)? Like the warring elements, these women have discrete attributes but still live *en masse* wrangling in an enclosed space. Frecknall’s production, we recall, attempted to capture that mass confusion by having simultaneous conversations interwoven at the outset, so that we were watching different storylines unfolding in a three-tiered space. In the *auto*, la Sabiduría has reservations about releasing el Hombre from his imprisoned state of non-being: “sin ser alma y vida, / discurso, elección, ni aviso / en metáfora de cárcel” (vv. 346–48). If la Sabiduría worries about bringing him to light or life (“le sacas a luz” [v. 350]), anticipating that he will create disharmony and death (“que nazcan de sus raíces / el pasmo, el susto, el peligro, / el adulterio, el rencor / el hurto y el homicidio” [vv. 358–61]), el Amor exhorts el Poder to create el Hombre nonetheless. This is, in principle, because el Hombre will have recourse to the “razón y juicio” of el Entendimiento, and so use “un libre albedrío” to distinguish between “el mal o el bien” (vv. 395, 398, 399).

Have we not signified here, too, the discord and dissension between various factions within the “muros gruesos” (139; Act 1) of Bernarda Alba’s sealed-in domicile, “tapiado con ladrillos puertas y ventanas” (157; Act 1)? This is where everyone lives enclosed as if in a prison, where the qualities of understanding—perception and judgment, awareness and tolerance, compassion and love—and the freedom of the will are virtually non-existent. Adela and María Josefa, youth and old age, signal repeatedly their frustration at being shut in and shut out without the right to exercise their will. “Yo no quiero estar encerrada. . . ¡Yo quiero salir!” cries Adela angrily (180; Act 1), adding later: “¡Yo hago con mi cuerpo lo que me parece!” (201; Act 2). And María Josefa screams symbolically: “¡Dejame salir, Bernarda! . . . A casarme a la orilla del mar” (187–88; Act 1). Arguably, el Amor’s rationally adjudicated intervention in the *auto* highlights a seething subtext in Lorca’s play: the need to mitigate against the commanding strength of the likes of Bernarda, whom Poncia delineates forcefully as “mandona,” “dominante,” “tirana de todos los que la rodean” (140, 141; Act 1). “Aquí se hace lo que yo mando” (158; Act 1), imposes Bernarda imperiously, validating the

¹² Here and henceforth, references to Calderón’s *auto sacramental*, *La vida es sueño*, *segunda versión* are to the edition by Plata Parga (2012) and will be noted in the text by verse alone.

servant's judgment.

(2) “*La Sombra*”/“*El Príncipe de Las Tinieblas*”; “*Apagón*”; “*Un silencio umbroso*”

(2a) “*La Sombra*”/“*El Príncipe de Las Tinieblas*” (Calderón)

La Sombra and *el Príncipe de las Tinieblas*, shade and darkness/Satan, form an iniquitous leitmotif throughout the *auto*.¹³ *La Luz* (“imagen de la Gracia,” v. 584), connected with “life, order, and *amor*” (Parker 1943, 211), has been designated “esposa” (v. 444) to *el Hombre* in the newly created universe. *La Sombra* (*imagen* “de la Culpa,” v. 585), linked with “‘lifeless life,’ disorder, and *odio*” (Parker 211), has been plunged into darkness and associated with “the blindness of non-being” (Parker 212), as *la Sabiduría* has already intimated: “el ciego / vientre de su oscuro limbo” (vv. 344–45). *La Sombra* constitutes “the principle of nothingness, privation, disorder, and chaos” (Parker 212): “siendo el áspid yo, / que de la luz huyendo se escondió” (vv. 508–9). Exiled from the world by the creation of *la Luz*, *la Sombra* is consigned to the “reino de confusión” (v. 530). This is the “negado auxilio de la luz” (v. 535), dominion of *el Príncipe de las Tinieblas*, a kingdom that is a “prisión / de infaustos calabozos” (vv. 539–40). The projected creation of *el Hombre* is represented by a move from the “darkness of imprisonment to the light of freedom,” to a positive state of moral awareness (Parker 213).

Once given life and a rational soul (“vida y alma racional” [v. 625]), *el Hombre* will, in following *la Luz/la Gracia*’s illuminated torch (“un hacha” [s.d. v. 640]), experience enlightenment, self-knowledge of who he *is*, *will be*, and *was* (“qué soy, qué seré o qué fui” [v. 651]), and be furnished with freedom of the will: “que eso tú solo podrás / hacer que sea malo o bueno” (vv. 656–57). The point is for *el Hombre* not to be diverted from the positive path of life and light, from the freedom of action to do good and not evil. Evil, it is said, is tied negatively to a dousing of the light of enlightenment: “la Gracia te lleva a que sepas del bien, / no apagues su Luz y sepas del mal” (vv. 725–26). *La Sombra* and *el Príncipe* plot to cast a *shadow* over *el Hombre*’s illumed life with a poison (“tal hechizo o tal veneno” [v. 784]) that will thrust him into a dreamlike state of darkness, death, and moral culpability and so prevent him from playing his part

¹³ For a production photograph of García Lorca interpreting the role of *la Sombra* in his 1932–1933 mounting of *La vida es sueño (auto)*, see Arata (2021, 67, Figure 5). Significantly, did the jet-black costume design by Benjamín Palencia perhaps prefigure, as a premonitory sign, the black attire traditionally worn by the women-in-mourning in *La casa de Bernarda Alba*? Let us recall, too, that Poncia tells Adela: “¡Sombra tuya he de ser! (205; Act 2; see below).

on the world stage: “sueño que de muerte es / imagen, muerte, después, / que es culpa y culpa que es sombra” (vv. 778–80).

(2b) “Apagón” (Adillo)

The moment of the plot of *la Sombra* and *el Príncipe de las Tinieblas* (see above) was also the moment of the carefully integrated insertion, both technically and metaphorically, of the *Primer Interludio* with its *apagón* or blackout. *La Barraca*’s actors were left in the dark (accidentally on purpose), with penumbral lighting cast only by the stage torch or “antorcha” of *la Gracia*, played by actor Pilar (Aguado, sister to Ketty) (Adillo 2022, 22). In accordance with the first part of the classic definition of the *auto sacramental* given by a shepherd in the *loa* to *La Segunda Esposa y triunfar muriendo* (1648?)—“sermones / puestos en verso, en idea / representable” (Calderón 1967, 427a)—we have here a spectacular instance not only of dramatic poetry but also of latter-day metatheatrical ingenuity with both auditory and (strained!) visual appeal. We recall the ways in which the dialogue amongst the actors in these interludes captured the aforementioned ideological tensions seething locally in *La Barraca* and globally in the Second Spanish Republic. Now, however, we focus on the metaphorical and allegorical significance, implicit or explicit, of the life-giving light of enlightenment and the death-driven darkness of moral and spiritual ignorance (cf. above: “*la Gracia te lleva a que sepas del bien, / no apagues su Luz y sepas del mal*” [vv. 725–26]). “Hay que liberar a la España rural del caciquismo y del oscurantismo que había hecho permanecer al pueblo en la ignorancia,” cried right-leaning actor Eduardo (Ródenas), parodying with malicious political intent part of Federico’s pre-show monologue on *La Barraca*’s Republican mission (Adillo 2022, 22). And another left-wing actor, Isabel (García Lorca), threw light directly on the *auto* being represented on stage: “Pilar, alumbra con la luz de Gracia, que aquí no se ve nada” (Adillo 2022, 22).

(2c) “Un silencio umbroso” (García Lorca)

We do not have to proceed much further in a reading of Calderón’s second version of the *auto*, or of Adillo’s *auto* after Lorca, to perceive the force of allegory mediating between *La vida es sueño* and *La casa de Bernarda Alba*. Parker’s perusal, along with the poetic verse of the *auto* cited above, provide a plethora of images and tropes that express the symbolic realism permeating Lorca’s play. Succinctly put, the given conflict—between a freedom-loving world of natural instinct and passion and an oppressively repressive sphere of mores and tradition—becomes, in allegorical terms, a clash between “life-enhancing and life-denying forces” (Edwards 1998, xxx). However “*relucientes las cosas*” (141;

Act 1), however shining and luminous the external appearance of things in Bernarda's habitat, they are shrouded in darkness and, moreover, in the "silencio umbroso" (139; Act 1) signaled in the opening stage directions. This is a lifeless space, a "maldito pueblo sin río" where the water is feared to be "envenenada," as Bernarda says (156; Act 1). It is a house with closed doors and shuttered windows, where almost the only respite are the few drops of rain falling from "un nublado negro de tormenta" (192; Act 2); the premonitory tone of this last image permeates the Lorquian universe. Blackness: not just of dress and fans (156; Act 1) but also of the emotional darkness enveloping the characters, inhibited as they are from playing their chosen parts on the (Lorquian) stage.

(3) *Life-Enhancing and Life-Denying Forces*

(3a) Life-Enhancing Enlightenment and Freedom of the Will (Adela)

This mediation cannot come to final fruition without confronting the imagery of shade and light in *Bernarda Alba*-play in relation to *La vida-auto*. "¡Sombra tuya he de ser!" (205; Act 2), declares Poncia to the irrational, if passionately alive, Adela, after predicting that Pepe el Romano will seek *her* once the narrow-waisted and widely-wasted Angustias has died in childbirth. And then, as if following el Amor's rationality in the *auto*, namely that freedom of the will (el Albedrío) must work together with understanding (el Entendimiento), Poncia counsels Adela to exercise responsible judgment and not commit a negative, immoral act "contra la ley de Dios" (204; Act 2). If Poncia, in trying to persuade the youngest daughter to readjust her reasoning, threatens to bring the potential disgrace to light ("encender luces" [206; Act 2]), Adela also deploys an adjusted light motif to underline the inevitability of the life force impelling her to act energetically and resolutely, freely with a will: "Trae cuatro mil bengalas amarillas y ponlas en las bardas del corral" (207; Act 2). Though el Entendimiento would surely have argued otherwise regarding this use of "el Albedrío," this is not *Cielo Calderón* (sacred verse, "sermones / puestos en verso" [Calderón 1967, 427a]) but *Tierra Lorca* (secular drama, with human characters, not abstractions). In this element, as Adela insists, "Nadie podrá evitar que suceda lo que tiene que suceder" (207; Act 2).¹⁴ Poncia's recourse to the metaphor of "Sombra," a negative force of darkness and death, devoid of life-giving light, cannot but work as a premonition of Adela's decent into eternal darkness through suicide, however much her death is also an act of freedom and resistance, and even though the truth seeps through the walls. Her self-destruction cannot but plunge the household further into "un mar de luto" (280; Act 3), into the abyss of

¹⁴ Compare Leonardo's loaded line in *Bodas de sangre* (1935): "¡Cuando las cosas llegan a los centros no hay quien las arranque!" (García Lorca 1988, 120; Act 2).

obscurantism and ignorance, precisely what Lorca was fighting against by endeavoring to transmit “cultura” to remote or isolated places. “Cultura, porque sólo a través de ella se pueden resolver los problemas en que hoy se debate el pueblo español, lleno de fe, pero falto de luz. Y no olvidéis que lo primero de todo es la luz,” proclaimed Federico in his pre-show monologue (Adillo 2022, 7).

(3b) Life-Denying Obscurantism and Oppression (Bernarda Alba)

“La fe católica de España, la fe de la Inquisición y de los santos de nuestra tierra palpita vigorosa y ferviente en cada verso de Calderón, y con nuestra fe católica late el odio a la herejía y al ateísmo laico, odio nacional y de raza que ha sido el alma de nuestro patriotismo español” (Adillo 2022, 52). Had the Calderonian reference been omitted, one could well have imagined that Lorca’s Bernarda Alba of 1936 had stepped out of her refashioned (doll)house in Frecknall’s production of 2023 and retreated into Adillo’s set of 2022. Undoubtedly, she would have felt at home with the religious fanatics who, functioning as an obstreperous inner audience, had broken the fourth wall in the Epílogo of Adillo’s *Cielo Calderón* in order to protest the appropriation, by La Barraca, of the drama of redemption that is Calderón’s *auto*.

Poncia could not have been more blunt: “Ahora estás ciega” (227; Act 2), referring to Bernarda’s misunderstanding of the jealousy eating at Martirio, which made her take Angustias’s picture of Pepe el Romano. “Tu no has dejado a tus hijas libres,” Poncia contends (228; Act 2). Bernarda is willfully blinded to the truth: “Aquí no pasa nada. . . . Y si pasara algún día, estáte segura que no traspasaría las paredes” (230; Act 2). She holds firmly to the delusion that her daughters respect her and so never have gone against her wishes—“jamás torcieron mi voluntad” (232; Act 2)—a belief that is contradicted by *reality*. She does not *understand* that, as soon as the daughters are set free, “se te subirán al tejado,” as Ponica puts it; erroneously, she thinks she will bring them down “tirándoles cantos” (232–33; Act 2). Poncia is on the mark in trying to *will* Bernarda, by the exercise of mental powers, to see “la cosa tan grande’ que aquí pasa” (256; Act 3). The unmindful matriarch remains unconditionally convinced that “[su] vigilancia lo puede todo,” despite the servant’s discerning forewarning: “Pero ni tú ni nadie puede vigilar por el interior de los pechos” (257; Act 3).

Bernarda’s conflict with Poncia on two illuminating occasions can arguably conjure up, in allegorical terms, el Hombre’s initial failure to follow the light of Gracia toward self-knowledge. An argument among el Hombre, el Entendimiento, and el Albedrío ensues. El Entendimiento warns el Hombre that unless he is attentive, the “cárcel dura / . . . prisión oscura” (vv. 643–44) in which he finds himself upon waking from dust will be his grave (“polvo fuiste, polvo eres, / y polvo después serás” [vv. 855–56]). In contrast, el Albedrío stresses el Hombre’s

already glorified destiny, attainable through the exercise of freedom of the will (“Si fuiste polvo, ya eres / la más perfecta criatura / que vio del sol la luz pura” (vv. 863–65). El Hombre’s preference for el Albedrío reveals his conceit and disrespect: “Más tu despejo [el del Albedrío] me agrada / que aquella severidad [la del Entendimiento]” (vv. 873–74).

Bernarda, like El Hombre, prefers the flawed will power of her vigilance to the practical truths targeted by Poncia, allegorically the voice of el Entendimiento (and la Sabiduría). If el Albedrío gives la Sombra and el Príncipe de las Tiniebras four occasions to poison el Hombre, their efforts are rendered impotent until la Sombra seduces el Hombre with a poisonous apple. He bites and throws over el Entendimiento amidst the latter’s protestations: “Atiende, que usas / muy mal de tu Entendimiento, / si atropellado le injurias” (vv. 1192–94). Bernarda, like la Sombra and el Príncipe de las Tiniebras, creates myriad moments to envenom the appetites, desires, and spirits of her five daughters. The “maldito pueblo sin río, pueblo de pozos,” where one fears that even the drinking water might be poisoned (156; Act 1), becomes an objective correlative for the domineering matriarch who, in asserting her will, neither sees nor understands that she is as polluted as those whom she pollutes. El Hombre casts el Entendimiento from his midst and vents his wrath: “¡Nadie a mi furia se oponga, / o teman todos mi furia!” (vv. 1207–08). His situation brings to mind, not only Bernarda’s strong-willed responses and furious disregard for the guidance of Entendimiento in the person of Poncia, but also Adela’s heedlessness—her life-giving *élan vital* notwithstanding—in ignoring that voice of Understanding and biting into the apple, as it were, in freely and willfully pursuing her passion for her elder sister’s fiancé.

The “terremoto” that fragments the recently created harmony in El Hombre’s world (s.d. v. 1215) cannot but conjure up Bernarda Alba’s fragmented universe, underscored when she calls for incarceration, death, and suppression, respectively, at the end of each act: “¡Encerradla!” to lock María Josefa away in Act 1; “¡Matadla!” to punish the sin of la hija de la Librada in Act 2; and “¡Silencio!” to conceal Adela’s unchaste, disgraced state in Act 3 (186, 240, 280). These imperatives, which perpetuate the status quo of darkness, call up La Sombra’s extinguishing the torch of “la pura / Luz de la gracia” once el Hombre falls and is returned to an enchained, cave existence (vv. 1225–26).

Without overextending the *dénouement* of Calderón’s allegorical *auto*, suffice it to say that la Sabiduría, appearing in human form as a “peregrino” and assuming el Hombre’s chain and his place in the cave, frees him from the power of la Sombra: “Ya estás libre, que yo solo / quebrantarlas [las cadenas] pude” (vv. 1662–63). As la Sombra and el Príncipe de las Tiniebras attack la Sabiduría, a second “terremoto” (s.d. v. 1729) renders the forces of darkness dead: a representation, in sacramental terms, of Christ’s sacrifice for the salvation of

[Hu]mankind. “Victoria y tragedia es” (v. 1758), proclaims la Sabiduría (if resurrection is forthcoming in three days, it is coalesced here into one “representable escena” [v. 1769]). El Hombre’s marriage to la Luz de la Gracia can only come about through the combined workings of el Poder (“a la tierra te volví [v. 1910]), la Sabiduría (“Mira lo que a mí me cuestas” [v. 1915]), and el Amor (“Mira lo que yo te amo” [v. 1916]). If El Hombre purports to *understand*—“La enmienda ofrezco a tus plantas” (v. 1924)—he is forewarned, by both el Entendimiento (“Yo, aconsejarle a la enmienda” [v. 1925]) and el Albedrío (“Yo, inclinarle a lo mejor” [v. 1926]), about (re)awakening to a lethal sleep of death (vv. 1917–23).

Unlike el Hombre, neither the traditionally-minded Bernarda nor the free-spirited and rebellious Adela is inculcated with the requisite wisdom and understanding that might ward off waking to that sleep of death, Bernarda figuratively, and Adela literally.

Part IV. Endings: Intertheatrical Mediations

The interpolated Epílogo in Adillo’s *Cielo Calderón* o “*La vida es sueño*” según Lorca saw a cause-effect relationship between Lorca’s participation in La Barraca, his implicit connection to the Left-wing party, and his assassination—despite the (ironical) protestations of Federico to the contrary regarding politics: “Escuchen. Yo soy amigo de todos y lo único que deseo es que todo el mundo trabaje y coma. . . . Tengan la bondad de escucharme. Aquí me están complicando con la política, de la que no entiendo nada ni quiero saber nada” (Adillo 2022, 52). Speaking next of the sustainability of theatre in the face of the potential loss of subvention and support, Federico appropriated a line from *El público*, Lorca’s paean to authentic, visceral (if impossible) theatre that breaks both sexual and social norms, as opposed to conventional theatre “al aire libre”: “Tendrán que darme un tiro para inaugurar el verdadero teatro, el teatro bajo la arena” (García Lorca 2001, 119, 123; Adillo 2022, 53).

The theatre suddenly, if fatefully, went dark—“oscuro repentino” (Adillo 2022, 53)—and there followed a reprise of the “Himno de Riego” (originating from Spain’s *Trienio Liberal* of 1820–1823, and a popular anthem of the Second Spanish Republic). Lorca cried for the hymn to be silenced, not just because it had been played and replayed during the other “apagones,” but also because more was at stake than a retrospective documentary record: “¡Silencio, silencio, he dicho! ¡Silencio!” (Adillo 2022, 53; cf. García Lorca 2005, 280; Act 3). A “disparo” or shot resounded, and the rest was “silencio.” Nothing remained, except for the costume of La Sombra/Federico, a “traje de viuda tibetana,” lying stage center.

Adillo’s *Cielo Calderón* ended dramatically, if shockingly, but probably no less so for audiences than did Frecknall’s *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, with the

self-strangulation of Adela and Bernarda's regressive, if fruitless, re-invocation of the trope of silence. At that intertheatrical moment, Bernarda's presence could not but have reverberated throughout, not to mention her closing, weighty words: "We will drown in a sea of mourning" (Birch 2023, 226). For Adillo (2023), the sea of mourning would be for a "nuevo Cristo que se sacrifica involuntariamente y en vano en su intento por redimir a los españoles de la incultura" (149): an appropriation of a future historical moment, the impending assassination of Federico García Lorca on 19 August 1936 by Nationalist forces.¹⁵

Adillo's appropriation of history flew in the face of the (felicitous) finale of Calderón's *auto sacramental*, whose "argumento" or variable theme (Parker 1943, 59) revolves around the history of [Hu]Man's creation, fall, redemption. Succinctly put: "Los cuatro Elementos, con la ayuda de la Gracia, vuelven a favorecer al Hombre, cada uno de ellos con un tributo relacionado con un sacramento salvífico: el Agua proporciona la materia del bautismo; la Tierra el pan y el vino; el Aire las palabras de la transubstanciación y el Fuego la llama del amor del Espíritu" (Plata Parga 2012, 17). Or, put another way: "The bond of love between the Elements and Man [*sic*]—the harmony of the world—is restored in the Sacraments," with the Eucharist (or invariable "asunto") being "the supreme sign and symbol of the unity and harmony of Creation" (Parker 224, 59, 224). If both Calderón's *auto* and Lorca's re-presentation are, finally, a "canto a la libertad," *Cielo Calderón o "La vida es sueño" según Lorca* is disconcerting: "se cierra como una elegía por España, un país que no tiene redención posible" (Adillo 2023, 149).

Turning once more to *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, a play undoubtedly brewing in Lorca's mind while La Barraca produced Calderón's *auto* in 1932, yet unwritten until 1936, and to Frecknall's revival of 2023, the following question arises. To what extent did these dramatic and performance texts end as an elegy, not just for Spain, but for repressed societies beyond; as well as for the death of the author, not just rhetorically as a singular, authoritative figure (Barthes 1977a), but literally as a tragic, indefensible event? One answer lies in the interaction with an audience: the ability of theatre-goers, or of armchair spectators for that matter, to read intertheatrically on the stage and/or on the page.

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¹⁵ Let us recall in this regard another intertheatrical context, especially in the light of Lorca's conscious connection to Calderonian theatre. Calderón (1981), too, used his *dramatist oblige* in *El médico de su honra* (1637) to incorporate subsequent history into a play world (the early reign of King Pedro I of Castille, 1350–1369), also fraught with silence and silencing, by appropriating verses from a well-known ballad tradition that foretells the king's subsequent—extra-dramatic—death at the hands of his exiled half-brother, Enrique of Trastámara, at the Battle of Montiel in 1369: "Para Consuegra camina, / donde piensa que han de ser / teatros de mil tragedias / las montañas de Montiel" (3. vv. 2634–37).

Intertheatricality, the brand of intertextuality we have denominated as focusing on the *reading*—consciously or subliminally—of *theatrical* works in the light of others on the page or on the stage, depends finally, as we have seen, on the response of the audience, “sujet passablement vide” (Barthes 1971, 228). In the case at hand, this blank subject, initially a *tabula rasa*, assumed the interconnected roles of spectator-reader-critic, perceiving multiple and irreducible perspectives emanating across the page-stage spectrum from apparently disconnected and heterogeneous substances but ultimately revealing connectedness in their heterogeneity (cf. Barthes 1971; 1977b, 159). We have essayed in this pluralistic re-viewing to go beneath the surface and read the symbol operant in the play world of Lorca’s *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, seen at first in the light of Frecknall’s production of Birch’s performance text; and then apropos of the second version of Calderón’s *auto*, *La vida es sueño* and Adillo’s production of Lorca’s production of that *auto*. Given the multiple threads interwoven into this in-depth study, we come to chew upon the implications of Oscar Wilde’s (1992) provocative caveat about the peril of reading too deeply where a work of art is concerned: “All art is at once surface and symbol. Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril. Those who read the symbol do so at their peril. It is the spectator and not life, that art really mirrors” (n.p.). If, indeed, it is the *spectator* reading on the page or on the stage that art really mirrors, then we are quite heartened, especially given Wilde’s next assertion: “Diversity of opinion about a work shows that the work is new, complex, and vital” (n.p.). The works of both Lorca and Calderón leave no doubt as to their ongoing freshness, complexity, and vitality, above all when resurrected live in the hands of creative theatre practitioners such as those whose performative acts this re-viewer has experienced.

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