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Three Tragedies: Blood Wedding, Yerma, Bernarda Alba (New Directions Paperbook)



Synopsis

Here in the authorized translation by James Graham-Luján and Richard L. O'Connell, with an illuminating biographical introduction by the poet's brother, Francisco García Lorca, are three tragic dramas by the great modern Spanish poet and playwright which have caught the imagination and won the critical acclaim of the literate world. *Blood Wedding*. Concerned with love that cannot become marriage among the primitive hill people of Castile, this is a play of the workings of tremendous passions and tribal ritual toward an inescapable tragic end. *Yerma*. The whole tragic burden of Yerma is measured by the deepening of her struggle with the problem of frustrated motherhood. • From García Lorca, by Edwin Honig. *The House of Bernarda Alba*. Again about women whom love moves to tragedy, • Bernarda Alba tells of the repression of five daughters by a domineering mother, of how their natural spirits circumvent her but bring violence and death.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This edition has Lorca's three most famous plays: *Blood Wedding*, *Yerma*, and *The House of Bernarda Alba*. There is some sense in putting them together, though they are not consecutive. All are relatively later plays, *Blood* sometimes called his first major work and *The House* being his last completed play and widely acknowledged masterpiece. Perhaps more importantly, all have similar settings and themes; they are often considered a trilogy dealing with early nineteenth-century rural Spain. The plays focus on central Lorca concerns like desire, repression, ritual, tradition and authority vs. individualism, etc. This gives continuity, as does the tragic link indicated in the title. The themes are increasingly dramatized through women. This would have been notable anywhere in the

1930s but is even more remarkable in coming from a heavily Catholic country suffering conservative backlash. Mores were stringent, having a profound cultural effect and intensely affecting individuals; transgressors were heavily punished or, as in the case of Lorca himself, even killed. Lorca's sympathy with women's lot is highly notable, and it is hard to deny a strong connection between it and his own tortured existence as a homosexual in a time and place where he could not live openly with impunity. One can legitimately see these works as similar to Henrik Ibsen's famous "problem plays" - dramatizations of contemporary social problems. Lorca bravely calls into question many traditional Spanish and Catholic beliefs, showing their limitations and the tragic effects that sometimes result. However, there is more to them. Lorca's language has a lyricism and sophistication rarely seen in drama since Ibsen led the switch to prose.

Federico Garcia Lorca was murdered near his home in Grenada, Andalusia in August 1936, by Nationalist forces, in the early days of the Spanish Civil War. Salvador Dali best captured the gut-wrenching agony of that prelude to World War II in his painting, *Soft Construction with Boiled Beans (Premonitions of Civil War)* of a man (with no gut) tearing himself apart. The painting now hangs in the Philadelphia Museum of Art. It may have been a political tit-for-tat murder since a prominent Nationalist politician was murdered the previous month. Lorca's homosexuality may have also been a contributing factor. His body has never been found. As with so many of the participants (and non-participants!), he had friends on both sides. The circumstances of his death have contributed to his legacy, and his reputation as one of Spain's greatest poets. Admittedly I had not previously read any of Lorca's works, and have been cautioned by a couple of friends that his poetry (in translation) was difficult and/or not very satisfying. Therefore I decided to read three of his most famous plays, *Blood Wedding*, *Yerma* and *The House of Bernarda Alba*. This New Directions edition was first published in 1955, with a prologue by his brother, Francisco Garcia Lorca. I found the prologue a bit of a turgid slog, with a range of disjointed statements about his plays, those included in this volume, and others that are not. Francisco says that *Blood Wedding* was based on newspaper accounts of events that occurred in Almeria, yet the blurb of the back sets the play in Castile. The one takeaway I retained is that Granada itself is the hidden personage in his plays. Violence is another hidden personage in all three plays.

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