

THE POSITIVE MYTHMAKING ROLE:

FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA IN TWO EARLY POEMS

RESUMO:

Estudo do processo de formação mítica nos poemas "Canción tonta" e "El niño mudo", de García Lorca, a partir das reflexões de Jung sobre a forma em que a criança percebe a realidade, expressando desejos primitivos e verdades básicas, e resultando de uma imaginação criadora, o que constitui um ponto de contato entre o poeta e a criança.

ABSTRACT:

A study of García Lorca's mythmaking process in the poems "Canción tonta" and "El niño mudo," on basis of Jung's reflections on the child's form of perception of reality, which expresses basic primal desires and truth and results from creative imagination, being a point of contact between the poet and the child.

Long before the creation of García Lorca's more involved mythopoetic works such as the "Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías" and the "Romance sonámbulo," one can find traces and perhaps even the catalytic agent for his mythmaking process in earlier poems, in particular those works that deal with children. One senses that Lorca had come to believe as had Jung that "In the adult there is hidden a child, something that is always becoming. The age of childhood is the unforgettable token of... joys ... which, undismayed by things without, streams all-embracing from within."¹ This "withinness" of which Jung speaks is the essence of the primitive world of the child, a world not bordered by the same reality that restricts adult perception. The child copes with external reality on his own terms. It is this inner-directed reality that will constitute the basis for Lorca's mythic explanations of prosaic existence which will later be evolved into a "poetics."

From Canciones I have selected one of the briefest and most deceptively simple poems, the "Canciōn tonta."² This work consists solely of a six line dialogue between mother and child. Its title is ironic, as are many of Lorca's titles for within his poetic world this song is anything but silly.

The son expresses a totally abstract envisaging of reality by his use of three wishes, the first of which is "Mamá yo quiero ser de plata." Here the child is opting for a new existence, a new substance other than the human. The mother, perhaps half-heartedly humoring her son answers, "tendrās mucho frīo." The second wish sets forth the same type of thought. "Yo quiero ser de agua." The child in lacking the limitations of a well-dimensioned world can easily allow his imagination to conceive of an existence of silver or water, perhaps having been

attracted by the shine of the metal or the color of the water. To the child this transformation is not an impossible task, but the mother, well-rooted in reality begins to perceive the essence of what he is saying. Through the attitude of playfulness, these concepts sound a negative note in her unconscious mind. The connotation of silver and water may have had an involved psychic effect upon her. The mother is somehow aware, if only playfully, that these first two wishes suggest a lack of warmth and a distancing. In her answer "tendrās mucho frío," she is suggesting to the child that he seek a more suitable analogy. The child's third wish "Bördame en tu almohada" is met with instant approval, almost elation. The emotional tone is conveyed in an emphatic exclamation, "Eso sí! / Ahora mismo!"

This work for me captures the moment when mother and child through play and fantasy become mutually aware of their importance to one another. The son by means of his "silly wish" breaks down the ordered universe to what at first glance appears to be an absurd, almost comical level, but the mother becomes suddenly drawn into his world of childhood fantasy. Jung states,

The feeling of bliss accompanies all those moments which have the character of flowing life, moments, therefore, or states, when what was dammed up can freely flow, ... We have all known situations or moods 'when it goes of itself,' where there is no longer any need to manufacture all sorts of wearisome conditions by which joy or pleasure might be stimulated. The age of childhood is the unforgettable token of this joy, which, undismayed by things without, streams all-embracing from within.³

Here both mother and child are caught up in this fantasy. The poet portrays the son as he verbalizes his psychic desire to permanently externalize his existence as a part of his mother's pillow. He wishes to be woven back into the fabric of primal warmth.

The poem is structured on a warmth-cold polarity. From the child's point of view (although we may think that he is playfully wishing to change his physical state) he chances upon the one thing that truly matters to him, the permanent warmth of his mother. From the mother's view point she can perhaps sense the coldness of "silver" and "water." Knowing that these have a negative connotation she feels that for the present it is sufficient that the thought of warmth unites them.

In this poem the child envisages an existence of "silver." It is precisely this type of non-directed fascination for the non-human: colors, metal, sounds, etc., that will later allow the child in the "Romance de la luna luna" to be seduced and enchanted by the moon's "senos de duro estaño" and her "polisón de nardos." Thusly he goes anxiously, almost happily, to his "death," "becoming part of a poeticized death wish. Within Lorquian mythology death can appear alluring and fascinating. It only holds terror for those of us who unlike the child, think of the concrete reality of it. The poet, like the child, will configure a totally new non-human mythic reality concerning death, one in which color, sound, warmth and magic all play an equal part.

In another early poem dealing with children, "El niño mudo,"⁴ the mythmaking process is evolved to a greater degree. Here the narrator adopts the same child-like consciousness as seen in "Canción tonta" and from this perspective he proceeds to create a complete myth.

In child-like fashion, the narrator superimposes his personal myth upon the pathetic reality of the existence of a mute child. The narrator mythically explains the child's ina-

bility to speak. The reality of the situation is tragic, but through mythic transformation the child's situation is given a universal poetic and cosmic explanation. To the narrator within the poem the boy is not mute, since he is never referred to in those terms. Therefore, I am led to assume that the title is a statement of reality since it refers to the small child in realistic, almost clinical terms. This conveys to me the impression that here for Lorca, myth exists only within the poem itself. The title seems to be the definition of concrete reality. In both cases the assigning of the title to the work leads me to believe that the poet's perception of the scene is of a different tone, one might say it is an ironic tone expressing his vision of the so-called real world.

From within the poem the narrator seems to ask why should a child be mute when reality envisaged through myth can portray him as simply having lost his voice? This is the metamorphosized reality that the narrator makes manifest within the work. "El niño busca su voz/En una gota de agua/buscaba su voz el niño."

The child seeks his voice in the world of nature searching within a "drop of water." There is no explanation or clarification of this image and the resulting ambiguity may be a source of richness for it sharpens the reader's attention allowing him to co-participate in the mythic dream. Is the "gota de agua" the child's tear or perhaps a symbol of the transitory ineffable quality that once was his voice? I personally believe that this "gota de agua" is the distilled essence of the drops of water that the poet will later describe in "Lluvia."

To contemplate the dead drops on a glass/ And those drops are eyes of the infinite; gazing/ Back into the

*white infinity which is their parent/ They are the poets
of water who have seen and mediate/ Things which the
vast crowds of rivers ignore. 5*

To me the drop of water is the essence of the soul of nature. The boy is seeking his voice in a drop of water which acts as the "poet of nature" who has seen and mediates all matters.

The narrator parenthetically informs us twice that the boy's voice has been captured by the "rey de los grillos." His voice now exists within nature forming part of it. The muteness of the boy animistically comes alive at the end of the poem. "A lo lejos, se ponía un traje de grillo." The boy is voiceless no longer. The voice is now alive and through myth, the sadness of the boy's silence has a new cosmic dimension which lessens somewhat its element of tragedy.

But not withstanding, there is a note of pathos introduced into the poem. Lorca the mimetic author has tried to portray the psychic reasoning of this child and it is this aspect of the poem that becomes pathetic in my estimation, for even within the child's most secret wishes he has deemed himself to silence. He hopes only to make tangible that which he has never possessed and that which exists all about him. "No la quiero para hablar/ me haré con ella un anillo/ que llevará mi silencio." He wished only to make a ring to carry his silence so that the nothingness of his muteness will become concrete to him. The "niño" is pathetically trying to reconstruct his own reality and give it a new meaning, but the sad commentary seems to be that the child even within his own myth cannot imagine himself verbal.

The larger myth of the total poem as perceived through the narrator reconstructs a cosmic explanation for the child's muteness, one in which nature has borrowed or stolen the child's

voice and it now exists outside of him. His muteness is given a cosmic identification through Lorquian mythology, one in which the human, the real, and the factual are all lacking having been replaced by a mythopoetic reality more acceptable to the poet.

It becomes almost an impossibility to separate that which is a child-like perception of reality from that which is a primitive perception for within the child one can perceive vestiges of the workings of the primitive mind. J.B.Trend affirms that "the poetry of children's games was frequently an inspiration to Lorca."⁶ Perhaps it was not so much the poetry of the songs themselves that influenced Lorca as it was the vivid, free, and totally creative imagination of the child that was projected through these songs. It is this imaginative and flexible perception of reality that freely expresses basic primal desires and truths. In discussing myth and poetry Richard Chase affirms,

The poetical imagination when it attains any consistent fire and efficacy is always displacing the texture of the mind into the external world so that it becomes a theater of preternatural forces. A certain control and direction given the poetical emotions, and poetry, as it always has, becomes mythical.⁷

NOTES

1. C.G. Jung, Psychological Reflections (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), pp. 277-8.
2. Federico García Lorca, Obras completas (Madrid: Aguilar, 1954), p. 301. Following quotes will refer to this text and page.
3. Jung, p. 278.

4. Lorca, pp. 329-330. Following quotes will refer to this text and page.
5. Roy Campbell, "The Early Poems," Lorca: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Manuel Duran (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1962), p. 79.
6. J. B. Trend, "Lorca," Lorca: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Manuel Duran (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1962), p. 39.
7. Richard Chase, "Partison Review," XIII (Summer 1946), p.346.