

Canciones de Lorca

Poems by Federico García Lorca (1898-1936)

[1] Balanza

La noche quieta siempre.
El día va y viene.
La noche muerta y alta.
El día con un ala.
La noche sobre espejos
y el día bajo el viento.

[3] La casada infiel

A Lydia Cabrera y a su negrita

Y que yo me la llevé al río
creyendo que era mozuela,
pero tenía marido.

Fue la noche de Santiago
y casi por compromiso.
Se apagaron los faroles
y se encendieron los grillos.
En las últimas esquinas
toqué sus pechos dormidos,
y se me abrieron de pronto
como ramos de jacintos.
El almidón de su enagua
me sonaba en el oído,
como una pieza de seda
rasgada por diez cuchillos.
Sin luz de plata en sus copas
los árboles han crecido
y un horizonte de perros
ladra muy lejos del río.

Pasadas las zarzamoras,
los juncos y los espinos,
bajo su mata de pelo
hice un hoyo sobre el limo.
Yo me quité la corbata.

Ella se quitó el vestido.
Yo el cinturón con revólver.
Ella sus cuatro corpiños.
Ni nardos ni caracolas
tienen el cutis tan fino,
ni los cristales con luna
relumbran con ese brillo.
Sus muslos se me escapaban
como peces sorprendidos,
la mitad llenos de lumbre,
la mitad llenos de frío.
Aquella noche corrí
el mejor de los caminos,
montado en potra de nácar
sin bridas y sin estribos.
No quiero decir, por hombre,
las cosas que ella me dijo.
La luz del entendimiento
me hace ser muy comedido.
Sucia de besos y arena
yo me la llevé del río.
Con el aire se batían
las espadas de los lirios.

Me porté como quien soy.
Como un gitano legítimo.
Le regalé un costurero
grande, de raso pajizo,
y no quise enamorarme

[1] Balance

Night always peaceful.
Day comes and goes.
Night dead and soaring.
Day with a wing.
Night above mirrors
and day below the wind.

[3] The unfaithful housewife

To Lydia Cabrera and her black girl

I took her down to the river,
thinking she was free,
but she had a husband.

It was the night of St James's,
and I went almost out of duty.
The street lamps went out,
and the crickets lit up.
In hidden-away corners
I touched her sleeping breasts
and they soon opened up to me
like sprays of hyacinths.
Her starched petticoats
sounded to my ear
like a piece of silk
being sliced by ten knives.
No silvery light shines through
the tops of the looming trees
and a horizon of dogs
is barking far away from the river.

Past the brambles,
the rushes and the hawthorns,
beneath her flowing hair
I made a hollow in the ground.
I took off my tie.

She took off her dress.
I my gunbelt.
She her four bodices.
Neither nard-flowers nor sea-shells
have skin so fine,
nor does moonlit glass
shine so brightly.
Her thighs slipped through my hands
like startled fish,
half full of fire,
half full of ice.
That night I rode
the best of paths,
mounted on a mother-of-pearl steed
without bridle or stirrups.
As a man, I shan't repeat
the things she said to me.
The light of understanding
makes me more reticent.
I took her, dirty with kisses
and sand, away with me from the river.
The swords of the lilies
were fighting with the air.

I behaved as the man I am.
As a true-blooded gypsy.
I gave her a large sewing box
of straw-yellow satin,
and refused to fall in love

porque, teniendo marido,
me dijo que era mozuela
cuando la llevaba al río.

[4] Alba
Abril de 1919
(Granada)

Mi corazón oprimido
siente junto a la alborada
el dolor de sus amores
y el sueño de las distancias.
La luz de la aurora lleva
semilleros de nostalgias
y la tristeza sin ojos
de la médula del alma.
La gran tumba de la noche
su negro velo levanta
para ocultar con el día
la inmensa cumbre estrellada.

¡Qué haré yo sobre estos campos
cogiendo nidos y ramas,
rodeado de la aurora
y llena de noche el alma!
¡Qué haré si tienes tus ojos
muertos a las luces claras
y no ha de sentir mi carne
el calor de tus miradas!
¿Por qué te perdí por siempre
en aquella tarde clara?
hoy mi pecho está reseco
como una estrella apagada.

[5] Danza da lúa en Santiago

¡Fita aquel branco galán,
fita seu transido corpo!
É a lúa que baila
na Quintana dos mortos.
Fita seu corpo transido,
negro de somas e lobos.
Nai: A lúa está bailando
na Quintana dos mortos.
¿Quén fire poldro de pedra

na mesma porta do sono?
¡É a lúa! ¡É a lúa
na Quintana dos mortos!
¿Quén fita meus grises vidros
cheos de nubens seus ollos?
É a lúa, é a lúa
na Quintana dos mortos.
Déixame morrer no leito
soñando na frol d'ouro.
Nai: A lúa está bailando
na Quintana dos mortos.
¡Ai filla, c'o ar do ceo
vólcome branca de pronto!
Non é o ar, é a triste lúa
na Quintana dos mortos.
¿Quén xime co-este xemido
d'inmenso boi malencónico?
Nai: É a lúa, é a lúa
na Quintana dos mortos.
¡Sí, a lúa, a lúa
coroadada de toxo,
que baila, e baila, e baila
na Quintana dos mortos!

because she told me she was free,
even though she had a husband,
when I took her down to the river.

[4] Dawn
April 1919
(Granada)

As a new day breaks,
my troubled heart aches
with the sorrow of its loves
and its dreams of distance.
The light of dawn brings
seedbeds of nostalgia
and the unseeing sadness
of the innermost soul.
The great tomb of night
lifts its black veil
to hide with daylight
the immense and starry heights.

What shall I do as I gather
nests and branches on this land,
surrounded by the dawn
but with my soul full of night!
What shall I do if your eyes
are dead to bright lights
and my flesh cannot feel
the heat of your gaze!
Why did I lose you for ever
on that bright afternoon?
Now my chest is parched,
like an extinguished star.

[5] Dance of the moon in Santiago

Look at that handsome white man,
look at his body racked with pain!
It's the moon that's dancing
in the dead men's square.
Look at his body racked with pain,
black with shadows and wolves.
Mother: The moon is dancing
in the dead men's square.
Who is wounding a foal of stone

at the very gates of sleep?
It's the moon! It's the moon
in the dead men's square.
Who is looking at my grey windows
with eyes full of clouds?
It's the moon! It's the moon
in the dead men's square.
Let me die in my bed,
dreaming of a golden flower.
Mother: The moon is dancing
in the dead men's square.
Ah, daughter, the air from the sky
has turned me white all of a sudden!
It's not the air, it's the sad moon
in the dead men's square.
Who is moaning with the moan
of a huge, melancholy ox?
Mother: It's the moon, it's the moon
in the dead men's square.
Yes, the moon, the moon,
wearing a crown of gorse,
who's dancing, dancing, dancing
in the dead men's square!

[6] Árboles
1919

¡Árboles!
¿Habéis sido flechas
caídas del azul?
¿Qué terribles guerreros os
lanzaron?
¿Han sido las estrellas?
Vuestras músicas vienen del
alma de los pájaros,
de los ojos de Dios,
de la pasión perfecta.
¡Árboles!
¿Conocerán vuestras raíces toscas
mi corazón en tierra?

[7] Soneto de la dulce queja

No me dejes perder la maravilla
de tus ojos de estatua, ni el acento
que de noche me pone en la mejilla
la solitaria rosa de tu aliento.
Tengo miedo de ser en esta orilla
tronco sin ramas; y lo que más siento
es no tener la flor, pulpa o arcilla
para el gusano de mi sufrimiento.

Si tú eres el tesoro oculto mío,
si eres mi cruz y mi dolor mojado,
si soy el perro de tu señorío,
no me dejes perder lo que he ganado
y decora las ramas de tu río
con hojas de mi otoño enajenado.

[9] El poeta llega a La Habana
A don Fernando Ortiz
Son de negros en Cuba

Cuando llegue la luna llena iré a
Santiago de Cuba,
iré a Santiago
en un coche de agua negra.
Iré a Santiago.
Cantarán los techos de palmera.
Iré a Santiago.
Cuando la palma quiere ser cigüeña,
iré a Santiago.
Y cuando quiere ser medusa el plátano,
iré a Santiago.
Iré a Santiago
con la rubia cabeza de Fonseca.
Iré a Santiago.
Y con el rosa de Romeo y Julieta
iré a Santiago.
Mar de papel y plata de moneda.
Iré a Santiago.

¡Oh Cuba! ¡Oh ritmo de semillas secas!
Iré a Santiago.
¡Oh cintura caliente y gota de madera!
Iré a Santiago.
Arpa de troncos vivos. Caimán.
Flor de tabaco.
Iré a Santiago.
Siempre he dicho que yo iría a Santiago
en un coche de agua negra.
Iré a Santiago.
Brisa y alcohol en las ruedas,
iré a Santiago.
Mi coral en la tiniebla,

[6] Trees
1919

Trees!
Are you former arrows,
fallen from the sky?
What terrible warriors
fired you?
Was it the stars?
Your songs come from
the souls of the birds,
from the eyes of God,
from perfect passion.
Trees!
Will your gnarled roots meet
my heart within the earth?

[7] Sonnet of a sweet lament

Do not let me lose the marvel
of your statue-like eyes, or the word
with which by night the solitary rose
of your breath caresses my cheek.
I am afraid of being a trunk without branches
on this shore; and what I most regret
is not having the flower, flesh or clay
for the worm of my suffering.

If you are my hidden treasure,
if you are my cross and my drenched sorrow,
if I am a dog for you to command,
do not let me lose what I have won,
and decorate the branches of your river
with leaves of my enraptured autumn.

[9] The poet arrives in Havana
To Don Fernando Ortiz
A "son" of the Cuban blacks

At the next full moon I'll go to
Santiago, Cuba,
I'll go to Santiago
in a coach of black water.
I'll go to Santiago.
The palm-frond roofs will sing.
I'll go to Santiago.
When the palm tree wants to be a stork,
I'll go to Santiago.
And when the banana tree wants to be a jellyfish,
I'll go to Santiago.
I'll go to Santiago
with the blond head of Fonseca.
I'll go to Santiago.
And with the rose of Romeo and Juliet
I'll go to Santiago.
Paper sea and silver coins.
I'll go to Santiago.

Oh, Cuba! Oh, rhythm of dried seeds!
I'll go to Santiago.
Oh, burning waist and drop of wood!
I'll go to Santiago.
Harp of living tree-trunks. Alligator.
Tobacco flower.
I'll go to Santiago.
I've always said that I'd go to Santiago
in a coach of black water.
I'll go to Santiago.
Breeze and alcohol in its wheels,
I'll go to Santiago.
My coral in the darkness,

iré a Santiago.
El mar ahogado en la arena,
iré a Santiago.
Calor blanco, fruta muerta,
iré a Santiago.
¡Oh bovino frescor de cañavera!
¡Oh Cuba! ¡Oh curva de suspiro
y barro!
Iré a Santiago.

I'll go to Santiago.
The sea drowned upon the sand,
I'll go to Santiago.
White heat, dead fruit,
I'll go to Santiago.
Oh, bovine coolness of sugar cane!
Oh, Cuba! Oh, curve of yearning
and mud!
I'll go to Santiago.

English translations by Susannah Howe

[10] Prometheus

Poem by Lord Byron (George Gordon) (1788-1824)

Titan! to whose immortal eyes
The sufferings of mortality,
Seen in their sad reality,
Were not as things that gods despise;
What was thy pity's recompense?
A silent suffering, and intense;
The rock, the vulture, and the chain,
All that the proud can feel of pain,
The agony they do not show,
The suffocating sense of woe,
Which speaks but in its loneliness,
And then is jealous lest the sky
Should have a listener, nor will sigh
Until its voice is echoless.

Titan! to thee the strife was given
Between the suffering and the will,
Which torture where they cannot kill;
And the inexorable Heaven,
And the deaf tyranny of Fate,
The ruling principle of Hate,
Which for its pleasure doth create
The things it may annihilate,
Refus'd thee even the boon to die:
The wretched gift Eternity
Was thine – and thou hast borne it well.
All that the Thunderer wrung from thee
Was but the menace which flung back
On him the torments of thy rack;
The fate thou didst so well foresee,
But would not to appease him tell;
And in thy Silence was his Sentence,
And in his Soul a vain repentance,
And evil dread so ill dissembled,
That in his hand the lightnings trembled.

Thy Godlike crime was to be kind,
To render with thy precepts less
The sum of human wretchedness,
And strengthen Man with his own mind;
But baffled as thou wert from high,
Still in thy patient energy,
In the endurance, and repulse
Of thine impenetrable Spirit,
Which Earth and Heaven could not convulse,
A mighty lesson we inherit:
Thou art a symbol and a sign
To Mortals of their fate and force;
Like thee, Man is in part divine,
A troubled stream from a pure source;
And Man in portions can foresee
His own funereal destiny;
His wretchedness, and his resistance,
And his sad unallied existence:
To which his Spirit may oppose
Itself – and equal to all woes,
And a firm will, and a deep sense,

Which even in torture can descry
 Its own concenter'd recompense,
Triumphant where it dares defy,
And making Death a Victory.