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## CONTENTS

### GYPSY BALLADS by Federico García Lorca

Translated by Langston Hughes  
Illustrated by John McNee, Jr.  
Introduction by Robert H. Glauber

Introduction	1
Ballad of the Moon, Moon	5
Preciosa and the Air	7
Brawl	9
Ballad of the Sleepwalker	10
The Gypsy Nun	13
The Faithless Wife	15
Ballad of Deep Sorrow	18
San Miguel	20
San Rafael	22
San Gabriel	24
Arrest of Antoñito El Camborio on the Road to Seville	27
Death of Antoñito El Camborio	29
Death of Love	31
Ballad of One Doomed	33
Ballad of the Spanish Civil Guard	36

### TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

First translated at the "Alianza de Escritores" in Madrid during the Civil War with the aid of the poets, Rafael Alberti, Manuel Altolaguirre, and other friends of Lorca's. Revised in New York, July, 1945, with the aid of Miguel Covarrubias; and in June, 1951, with the poet's brother, Francisco García Lorca, at Columbia University. Checked with the Lloyd, Spender, Humphries, and Barea versions of certain poems, also with the published French and Italian translations. Final copy, June 10, 1951.

# Lorca

## GYPSY BALLADS

Translated by LANGSTON HUGHES

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### INTRODUCTION

To a lesser or greater degree, all writers, because of the mimetic nature of their craft, reflect and illuminate the society from which they spring. Doubtless, there are exceptions to this rule. Poe probably was such a one. But, they are rare. No less rare, however, are the writers who completely project their society. Such a poet is Federico García Lorca. He is the crystalization of all the cross currents which went into the molding of Spain.

In Lorca's work, both poetry and prose, the Arab, the gypsy, the peasant, and the grandee are mixed through intense, personal Catholicism, paganism, complicated mores, and willful conservatism into traditional patterns of cruelty, sex, religion, violence, beauty, and death. Lorca's literary output is a microcosm of Spanish history, thought and behavior. He was an observer whose ethnic instincts were developed to a prodigious degree. In him, the Spanish racial memory found its perfect spokesman.

"Gypsy Ballads", the most widely read book of contemporary Spanish poetry, was first published in 1928. Though it was only Lorca's third collection of poems to appear, his reputation was tremendous. Previous to it he had published "Book of Poems" (1921) and "Songs" (1927). Another work, "Poem of the Deep Song", had already been written but did not appear in book form until 1931. Two plays, "The Spell of the Butterfly" and "Mariana Pineda", had been produced with indifferent success. A puppet play had also been staged.

Lorca worked on his "Gypsy Ballads" from 1924 to 1927. As successive versions of the poems appeared, he

## 2

recited them to his friends. Spaniards are accustomed to an oral tradition and by word of mouth the poems spread. He recited them in the cafes, in the "Residencia de Estudiantes" where he lived in Madrid, and at private gatherings. The poems caught so much of the gypsy spirit, that is to say the essential spirit of Spain, and were framed in so lively and contagious a diction that many of them soon became virtually public property. A curious outcome of this was that one finds in Spanish literary criticism of the period references to Lorca's work and its effects on other writers even before its publication in book form. He became the "official" amanuensis of the gypsy.

Lorca cautioned, however, that these poems were not meant as case histories, either real or imagined. He had utilized the gypsy "as a literary theme for a book. Nothing more." To him, the gypsy was the clearest personification of the principal preoccupations and symbols of Spanish life.

What are these preoccupations? Simply, they can be categorized as **death** and **sex**. To the Anglo-Saxon mind, these are strange companions, especially so as the dominating forces of life, but to the Spaniard they are the two inevitable partners. All men share them. From the early "Ballad of the Little Square," Lorca evidenced his great concern with death. It supplied him with a theme capable of endless variations. In "Gypsy Ballads" seven of the poems deal with death and "black pain". Yet they are not morbid. To have been so would have meant a condemnation of life.

It would be interesting to speculate at length about the origins of the peculiar Spanish attitude toward death. Briefly, it is the combination of a holdover of medieval man's natural acceptance of birth and death, the terrorization of the people during the Counter Reformation, the ever-present starkness of the Spanish landscape, and the lack of social advance. "In every country," Lorca said, "death is the end. It comes and the curtains are drawn. Not in Spain. In Spain they are opened. . . . In Spain the dead are more alive, dead, than in any other place in the world."

For the writer, one interesting outcome of this pre-occupation has been a fertile symbology. Lorca's work abounds in oblique references to death. In a lecture he once outlined the principal figures which signify death to the Spaniard. "The chopping knife, and the cartwheel, and the clasp knife, and the prickly beard of shepherds, and the baldheaded moon, and the fly, and dank cupboards, and rubble, and the images of saints covered in lace, and quicklime, and the stabbing outline of eaves and bay windows, they all have in Spain the minute grasses of death". All of these are in Lorca's verse.

The Spanish attitude toward sex should not be considered in a Freudian light. There is in it no concern with the subconscious as such. It is not a verbalization of dreams. To the Spaniard, sex is frank eroticism tempered by a great reverence for chastity. It is a constant battle between desire and virginity, between sadistic cruelty and masochistic piety. The classical literature abounds in what Barea characterized as "the ideas and ideals of Lust through Pain, Holiness through Horror, and Virginity triumphant over Violence." In Lorca, too, this is evident.

This pitting of an erotic love against a desire for spiritual chastity is a heritage of the Arabic domination of Spain. Moorish poetry treated it frequently in many of the early "casidas." With the development of the ballad form, the idea became more widespread. Eventually, it worked its way into popular consciousness.

From this dichotomy come many of the images in the Ballads. The poems devoted to the patron saints of Granada, Córdoba, and Seville visualize the saints as "adorned with laces", "encrusted with spangles and sequins", and as a "cross between a lily and a smile". Blunt masculinity plays no part in this religious attitude. In "The Faithless Wife", though satisfied by the woman he took to the river, the gypsy "didn't want to fall in love with her." She had lied. ". . . having a husband, she told me she was single". Passion was not enough.

"Gypsy Ballads" is a summing up of these attitudes toward death and sex and a masterly use of their symbols. It is obvious why the poems are so popular in all Latin countries. The men can easily see their own in the dis-

# 4

appointment of the gypsy in "The Faithless Wife". Here is the perfect excuse for their often feeble sallies as Don Juan. They understand all too well the submission of Antonio Heredia. The women feel the sorrow of Soledad Montoya and the terror of Preciosa. They know the pregnant solitude of the gypsy nun. All recognize the brutality of the Civil Guard and the indifference of the judge. For a non-Spaniard, this identification is often very difficult, but for the Spaniard Lorca created in "Gypsy Ballads" a contemporary Iberian folklore whose prime strength is its anonymity.

These factors all contribute to the extremely high position in Spanish literature of the Ballads. Yet there is another aspect of the work which must be considered; their place in the totality of Lorca's work.

Significantly, here too they are unique. Most of these poems mark the close of the first period of Lorca's creative life. He dealt in them for the last time wholly in poetry with his interpretation of the folk idiom. After the Ballads, he went his own way. "Poet in New York" (1929) and "Lament for Ignacio Sánchez Mejías" (1935) are far more sophisticated both in content and form than any of his previous poetry.

Lorca used the Ballads as a testing ground for many of his growing dramatic theories. Each poem in the book is a theatrical scene complete with situation, characterization, conflict, and resolution. Several have dialogue. His interest in the theatre was getting the upper hand. Many of the later plays, particularly "Blood Wedding", have their roots in "Gypsy Ballads". He refined and measured his dramatic techniques here and proved that, working within the strict, octosyllabic, traditional patterns of the ballad, he could create a form that successfully bridged the gap between poetry and drama. After the Ballads, Lorca was seldom interested again in the purely lyrical. He had awakened to his ability as a playwright and was now in full possession of his powers. It might be said that the success of "Gypsy Ballads" gave Lorca the necessary confidence and stimulation to go on to become one of the few truly great poetic dramatists of all times.

**Robert H. Glauber**



### BALLAD OF THE MOON, MOON

The moon came to the forge  
with her bustle of spikenards.  
The child looks, looks.  
The child is looking.  
In the trembling air  
the moon moves her arms  
showing breasts hard as tin,  
erotic and pure.

# 6

Fly, moon, moon, moon,  
for if the gypsies come  
they'll make rings  
and white necklaces  
out of your heart.

Child, let me dance!  
When the gypsies come  
they'll find you on the anvil  
with your little eyes closed.

Fly, moon, moon, moon,  
because I hear their horses.

Child, leave me alone, and don't  
touch my starchy whiteness.

The horseman draws near  
beating the drum of the plain.  
Within the forge the child  
has its eyes closed.

Through the olive groves  
come gypsies bronzed and dreamy,  
their heads held high  
and their eyes half-closed.

How the owl hoots!  
How it hoots in the tree-tops!  
Through the sky the moon goes  
with a child by the hand.

Within the forge  
gypsies weep, crying loudly.  
The air veils her, veils her.  
The air is veiling her.

## PRECIOSA AND THE AIR

Playing on her parchment moon  
Preciosa comes  
down an amphibious path  
of crystals and of laurels.  
The silence, without stars,  
flies from the beat of the music  
to fall where the pounding sea  
sings a night full of fishes.  
On the peaks of the mountain  
the carabineers sleep  
guarding the white towers  
where the English live,  
and the gypsies of the water  
to amuse themselves  
build pavilions of snail-shells  
and branches of green pine.

Playing on her parchment moon  
Preciosa comes.  
When he saw her the wind,  
that never sleeps, got up.  
Old Saint Christopher, naked as a bird  
and full of celestial tongues,  
looks at the child playing  
on a sweet absent bagpipe.

Child, let me lift up  
your dress to look at you.



# 8

Open to my ancient fingers  
the blue rose of your belly.

Preciosa throws away her tambourine  
and runs off without stopping.

The stud-wind pursues her  
with a hot sword.

The sea scowls up its roar.

The olive trees turn pale.

Flutes of forest shade sing,  
and the smooth gong of snow.

Preciosa, run, Preciosa,  
before the green wind catches you!

Preciosa, run, Preciosa!

Watch where he's coming!

Satyr of fallen stars  
with flaming tongues.

Preciosa, scared to death,  
runs into the house where,  
above the pines,

the English consul lives.

Startled by her cries

come three carabineers,

black capes belted

and caps on their temples.

The Englishman gives the gypsy lass

a glass of warm milk

and a little glass of gin

Preciosa won't drink.

While she tells those people

weeping about her adventures,

furiously the wind bites

the roof-tiles of slate.

**BRAWL**

Half way down the ravine,  
 gay with rival blood  
 the knives of Albacete  
 shine like fishes.  
 A light hard as playing cards  
 in the acid greenness  
 silhouettes furious horses  
 and the profiles of riders.  
 On the crest of an olive tree  
 two old women cry.  
 The bull of the dispute  
 charges up the walls.  
 Black angels bring  
 handkerchiefs and snow-water,  
 angels with big wings  
 made of knives from Albacete.  
 Juan Antonio of Montilla  
 rolls dead down the hill,  
 his body full of lilies  
 and a pomegranate at his temples.  
 Now he rides a cross of fire  
 on the road of death.

The judge, with the Civil Guards,  
 comes through the olive groves.  
 Slippery blood sings  
 a silent song of serpents.  
 Honorable Civil Guards:  
 the same as usual—  
 four Romans dead  
 and five Carthaginians.

Crazed with hot rumors and fig trees,

# 10

the afternoon falls fainting  
on the wounded limbs of the riders.  
Black angels fly  
through the western air,  
angels with long braids  
and hearts of oil.

## THE BALLAD OF THE SLEEPWALKER

Green as I would have you green.  
Green wind. Green branches.  
The boat on the sea  
and the horse in the mountains.  
With a shadow around her waist  
she dreams on her railing,  
green flesh, green hair,  
with eyes of cold silver.  
Green as I would have you green.  
Under the gypsy moon  
things are looking at her  
but she can't look back at them.  
Green as I would have you green.  
Big frosty stars  
accompany the fish of darkness  
opening the road to dawn.  
The fig-tree polishes the wind.  
with the sandpaper of its branches,

and like a wild cat the mountain  
bristles with acid fibres.  
But who's coming? And whence?  
She lingers on her railing,  
green flesh, green hair,  
dreaming of the bitter sea.

Friend, let me change  
my horse for your house,  
my saddle for your looking-glass,  
my knife for your blanket.  
Friend, I've come bleeding  
from the mountain passes of Cabra  
If I could, youngster,  
we'd close the deal.

But I am no longer I,  
and this house is not my house.

Friend, I would like to die  
decently in my bed  
by steel, if I could  
on sheets of Holland linen.

Don't you see this cut I have  
from my chest to my throat?

Three hundred dark roses  
stain your white shirt front.  
Your blood oozes pungent  
around the edge of your waistband.

But I am no longer I,  
and this house is not my house.

Let me go up at least  
as high as the highest railings.

Let me go up!

Up to the green railings!

Banisters of the moon  
where the falling water sounds.

# 12

The two friends go up,  
up toward the highest railing,  
leaving a trail of blood,  
leaving a trail of tears,  
Little tin-plate lanterns  
tremble on the roof-tops.  
A thousand tambourines of crystal  
wound the early dawn.

Green as I would have you green.  
Green wind. Green branches.  
The two friends went up.  
A steady wind left in the mouth  
a strange taste of gall,  
mint, and sweet basil.

Friend, where is she, tell me?  
Where is your bitter maiden?  
How often she waited for you!  
How often she would wait,  
Cool face, black hair,  
at this green railing.

On the face of the cistern  
a gypsy girl sways.  
Green flesh, green hair,  
with eyes of cold silver.  
An icicle of moonlight  
supports her on the water.  
The night becomes intimate  
as a little plaza.

Drunken Civil Guards  
pound on the door.  
Green as I would have you green.  
Green wind. Green branches.  
The boat on the sea  
and the horse in the mountains.



### THE GYPSY NUN

Silence of lime and myrtle.  
Mallow among the herbs.  
The nun embroiders gilliflowers

# 14

on a straw-colored cloth.  
Seven rainbow birds  
fly through the grey chandelier.  
The church growls in the distance  
like a bear on its back.  
How well she embroiders!  
With what grace!  
On the straw-colored cloth  
she would embroider  
the flowers of her fancy.  
What a sunflower!  
What magnolias of spangles and ribbons!  
What saffron and what moons  
on the cloth for the mass!  
Five citrons are candied  
in a nearby kitchen.  
The five wounds of Christ  
cut in Almeria.  
In the eyes of the nun  
two horsemen gallop.  
A last muffled rumor  
loosens her chemise,  
and at the sight of clouds and mountains  
in the distant stillness,  
her heart of sweet herbs  
and sugar breaks.  
Oh! What a steep plain  
with twenty suns above!  
What rivers walking upright  
her visions half-see.  
But she keeps on with her flowers  
while the light in the breeze  
plays a game of chess  
on her high latticed window.

**THE FAITHLESS WIFE**

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

It was St. James' Eve,  
and almost because I had to.  
The street lights went out  
and the crickets lit up.

At the farthest corners  
I touched her sleeping breasts  
and they opened for me quickly  
like bouquets of hyacinths.

The starch of her underskirts  
rustled in my ears  
like a piece of silk  
slit by ten knives.

With no silver light to crown them  
the trees grew bigger,  
while a horizon of dogs barked  
afar from the river.

Beyond the brambles,  
the bulrushes, and the hawthorns,  
I made her mat of hair  
hollow the muddy bank.





I took off my tie.  
She took off her dress.  
Me, my belt with the pistol.  
She, the four parts of her bodice.  
Neither lilies nor snail shells  
have such a lovely skin,  
nor do the crystals of the moon  
shine with such a light.  
Half bathed in fire  
and half bathed in ice,  
her thighs slipped from me  
like frightened fish.  
That night I rode  
down the best of roads  
on a mother-of-pearl filly  
with no bridle and no stirrups.  
Being a man, I can't tell you  
the things that she told me.  
The light of understanding  
makes me very careful.  
Soiled with kisses and sand  
I led her away from the river  
While the swords of the lilies  
battled with the breeze.  
I acted like the thoroughbred  
gypsy that I am,  
and gave her a present,  
a big sewing box  
of straw-colored satin.  
But I didn't want  
to fall in love with her  
for, having a husband,  
she told me she was single  
when I took her to the river.

## BALLAD OF DEEP SORROW

The picks of the roosters  
dig looking for dawn  
as down the dark mountain  
comes Soledad Montoya.  
Yellow copper, her skin  
smells of horses and of dusk.  
Smoky anvils are her breasts  
moaning round songs.

Soledad, whom are you seeking,  
alone and so late?

I'm seeking whom I seek!

What's it to you?

I come for what I'm looking for,  
me and my joy.

Soledad of my sorrows,  
horse that takes its head,  
you will end up in the sea  
where the waves will swallow you.

Don't speak to me of the sea—  
for black pain gushes  
through the land of the olives  
under the rustle of their leaves.

Soledad, what sorrows!  
What awful sorrows!  
You weep juice of lemons  
sour with waiting and whispers.  
Sorrow more than I can bear!  
Like a crazy woman  
I run through the house.  
My two braids sweep the floor  
from the kitchen to the bedroom.  
Deep in sorrow, turning jet-black  
from skin to clothes.  
Oh, my shirt of linen!  
Ah, my thighs of poppies!  
Soledad, wash your body  
in the broth of larks,  
and leave your heart in peace,  
Soledad Montoya.

Below the river sings:  
ruffle of sky and leaves.  
With the flowers of the squash-vine  
the new light is crowned.  
Oh, sorrow of the gypsies!  
Sorrow clean and always lonely  
Sorrow of the hidden river  
and the far-off dawn.

# 20

## SAN MIGUEL (Granada)

You see from your railing  
in the mountain, mountain, mountain,  
mules and the shadows of mules  
loaded down with sunflowers.  
Their eyes in the shadows  
are blurred with vasty night.  
At the corners of the air  
the salt dawn crackles.  
A sky of white mules  
closes quick-silver eyes,  
giving the shadowy quiet  
an ultimate of heartbeats.  
And the water turns cold  
so no one will touch it,  
crazy uncovered water  
in the mountain, mountain, mountain.

San Miguel, adorned with laces  
in the bedroom of his tower,  
shows his splendid thighs

garlanded by globes of light.  
Archangel domesticated.  
at the stroke of twelve,  
pretending sweet anger  
of plumes and nightingales.  
San Miguel sings at his window,  
a youth of three thousand evenings,  
fragrant with eau-de-cologne  
far from the breath of flowers.

On the beach the sea  
dances a poem made of balconies.  
And the banks of the moon  
loose their rushes, gain in voices.  
Loosely luscious ladies pass  
eating sunflower seeds,  
their behinds large and hidden  
Like planets of copper.  
Tall gentlemen pass  
and gentlewomen of sombre mien  
dark with nostalgia for  
a yesterday of nightingales.  
And the Archbishop of Manila,  
poor, and blind with saffron,  
says a double-edged mass,  
one for men and one for women.

San Miguel is quiet  
in the bedroom of his tower,  
his vestments encrusted  
with spangles and sequins.

San Miguel, king of balloons  
and all odd numbers,  
in the Berber arabesques  
of balconies and cheers.

# 22

## SAN RAFAEL (Córdoba)

Closed carriages arrive  
at the edge of the reeds  
where waves polish  
naked Roman torso.  
Carriages the Guadalquivir  
holds in its ripe crystal  
between prints of flowers  
and echoes of tempests.  
The children sing weaving  
the disillusionment of the world  
beside these old carriages  
lost in the night.  
But Córdoba does not tremble  
in the strange confusion  
for when the darkness lifts  
its architecture of smoke,  
a foot of marble shows

its chaste shrunken glow.  
Petals of flimsy tin  
embroider the pure greys  
of the breeze unfurled  
on the arches of triumph.  
And while the bridge whispers  
ten rumors of Neptune,  
tobacco sellers flee  
along a broken wall.

Only one fish in the water  
that joins the two Córdovas:  
pliant Córdova of reeds,  
Córdova of architecture.  
Children with impassive faces  
undress on the river bank,  
apprentices of Tobias  
and Merlins of waist,  
and they tease the fish  
with ironic questions  
as to whether he wishes wine-flowers  
or waterfalls of half-moons.  
But the fish that gilds the water  
and puts the marble in mourning,  
gives them a lesson in equilibrium  
like a lone column.  
The Archangel, adorned  
in dark spangles,  
looks for rumors and a cradle  
in the assemblage of the waves.

Only one fish in the water.  
Two Córdovas of beauty.  
Córdova of broken streams.  
Dry celestial Córdova.





**SAN GABRIEL**  
(Seville)

Handsome reed of a boy,  
wide shoulders, slender body  
skin like a midnight apple,  
sad mouth and large eyes,  
nerves of hot silver,

he roams the deserted street.  
 His patent-leather shoes  
 crush the dahlias of the air  
 with two rhythms that sing  
 short celestial dirges.  
 On the shores of the sea  
 there walks no palm like him,  
 nor emperor crowned,  
 nor morning star.  
 When he bows his head  
 on his chest of aspens,  
 the night looks for a plain  
 to kneel and worship.  
 The guitars all play  
 for San Gabriel Archangel,  
 tamer of pigeons  
 and enemy of willows.

San Gabriel, the child  
 cries in the womb of its mother!  
 Don't forget the gypsies  
 gave you your suit.

Annunciation of the Kings,  
 poorly dressed and bathed in moonlight,  
 opens her door to the morning star  
 walking down the street.  
 The Archangel San Gabriel,  
 cross between a lily and a smile,  
 great-grandson of the Giralda,  
 comes on a visit.  
 In his embroidered jacket  
 hidden crickets chirp.  
 The stars of the night  
 turn into little bells.

San Gabriel, here I am

# 26

with three nail-wounds of joy.  
Your brilliance opens jasmines  
in my shining face.

God bless you, Annunciation,  
marvellous dark one!

More beautiful than stems of the wind,  
you shall bear a son!

Ah, San Gabriel of wonder!

Kid Gabriel of my dreams!

For you to rest I vision

a great big chair of small carnations.

God bless you, Annunciation,  
poorly dressed and bathed in moonlight!

Your son shall have a mole  
and three wounds on his chest.

Ah, San Gabriel, how you shine!

Dearest Gabriel of my dreams!

Deep in my breasts I feel  
the warm milk being born.

God bless you, Annunciation,  
mother of a hundred dynasties!

Your eyes shine dryly,  
landscapes of horsemen.

The child sings in the lap  
of the astonished Annunciation.

Three bullets of green almonds  
tremble in his little voice.

On a rope ladder  
San Gabriel mounts the air.

The stars of the night  
become straw-flowers.

**ARREST OF ANTOÑITO EL CAMBORIO  
ON THE ROAD TO SEVILLE**

Antonio Torres Heredia,  
son and grandson of Camborios,  
starts out for Seville  
to the bullfights,  
with a dry reed for a cane.  
Dark as a copper-green moon,  
he walks slowly and proudly.  
His oily blue curls fall  
shining into his eyes.  
Half way down the road  
he starts cutting round lemons  
and throws them in the water  
until the water turns golden.  
And half way down the road

# 28

under the branches of an oak,  
the Civil Guards patrolling  
march him off bound at the elbows.

The day passes slowly.  
The afternoon hangs on one shoulder  
and sweeps its bullfighter's cape  
over the sea and over the streams.

The olive groves await  
the night of Capricorn,  
while a little breeze on horseback  
jumps over the hills of lead.

Antonio Torres Heredia,  
son and grandson of Camborios,  
without his reed of a cane,  
walks between five guards  
in three-cornered hats.

Antonio, what kind of a man are you?  
If you were really a Camborio  
you'd have made a fountain of blood  
with five streams.

You're neither a legitimate Camborio  
nor anybody else's son.

The gypsies are gone who used  
to wander the hills alone.

Their old knives  
are shivering in the dust.

Nine o'clock at night  
they took him to jail  
while the Civil Guards  
all were drinking lemonade.

At nine o'clock at night  
they locked up the jail  
while the sky shone brightly  
like the haunches of a colt.



### DEATH OF ANTONITO EL CAMBORIO

Voices of death resounded  
near the Guadalquivir.  
Ancient voices lay siege  
to the voice of the male carnation.  
With the bite of a wild boar,  
he gnashed at their boot tops.  
In the fight he leaped  
like a soapy dolphin.  
He bathed his crimson tie  
with enemy blood—  
but there were four blades  
so he had to go down.  
When the stars with their javelins  
stabbed the grey water,  
when the young bulls dreamed  
veronicas of clove-pinks,  
voices of death resounded  
near the Guadalquivir.

# 30

Antonio Torres Heredia,  
Camborio of the tough mane,  
dark as a green moon,  
voice of male carnation:  
Who took your life  
near the Guadalquivir?

My four cousins, the Heredias,  
sons of Benamejí.

What they didn't envy in others,  
they always envied in me:  
my raisin-red shoes,  
my medallion of ivory,  
my skin that's kneaded  
of olives and jasmine.

Ah, Antoñito el Camborio,  
worthy of an Empress!  
Put your mind on the Virgin  
for you're about to die.

Oh, Federico García!

Call the Civil Guards.

My body's broken  
like a stalk of grain.

Three spurts of blood  
and he died in profile,  
a piece of live money  
that can never be repeated.

A cocky angel placed  
his head on a cushion.  
Others bashfully weary  
lighted a lamp.

And when his four cousins  
got home to Benamejí,  
voices of death were stilled  
near the Guadalquivir.

**DEATH OF LOVE**

What is that shining  
high up in the sky-halls?  
    Shut the door, son of mine,  
    the clock's just struck eleven.  
In my eyes, in spite of me,  
four lights are sparkling.  
    It must be those folks  
    there polishing copper.

Garlic-pod of dying silver,  
the waning moon dresses  
yellow towers in yellow hair.  
The night, followed by a thousand  
strange dogs that don't know her,  
knocks trembling at  
tall balconies of crystal,  
and an odor of wine and amber  
drifts down the sky-halls.

A breeze of wet cane



# 32

and the rumor of old voices  
whine through the broken arch  
of midnight.

Oxen and roses sleep.

Alone in the sky-halls  
four lights clash  
with the fury of Saint George.

The sad women of the valley  
come with the blood of man  
quiet as cut flowers

and bitter as young thighs.

The old women of the river  
weep at the foot of the mountain  
in an unbearable moment  
of names and flowing hair.

Facades of lime

make the night square and white.

Seraphim and gypsies  
play on accordions.

Mother, when I die,  
let everybody know.

Send blue telegrams  
North and South.

Seven cries, seven bloods,  
seven double poppies  
shatter dark moons in dusky rooms.

Full of cut hands  
and little crowns of flowers,  
a sea of oaths echoed  
I don't know where.

The sky slammed its doors  
at the rude sound of the woods,  
while the lights kept up their clamor  
in the high sky-halls.

**BALLAD OF ONE DOOMED**

Loneliness without rest!  
The little eyes of my body  
and the big eyes of my horse  
never close at night  
nor look that other way  
where a dream of thirteen boats  
quietly disappears  
in the distance.  
Instead, shields of wakefulness,  
my eyes clean and hard  
look toward a north  
of metals and of cliffs  
where my veinless body  
consults decks of frozen cards.  
Heavy water-oxen charge  
boys who bathe in the  
rippling moons of their horns.  
And the hammers sing  
on the somnambulous anvils  
the insomnia of the rider  
and the insomnia of the horse.  
On the twenty-fifth of June  
they said to Amargo:



Now, you may cut, if you wish,  
the oleanders in your courtyard.  
Paint a cross on your door  
and put your name beneath it,  
for hemlock and nettle  
shall take root in your side  
and needles of wet lime  
eat at your shoe-leather.  
It will be night, in the dark,  
in the mountains of magnet  
where water-oxen drink  
in the dreaming reeds.  
Ask for lights and bells.  
Learn to cross your hands,  
to taste the cold air  
of metals and of cliffs  
because within two months  
you'll lie down shrouded.  
Santiago moved his misty  
sword in the air.  
Behind him heavy with silence  
the curved sky flowed.

On the twenty-fifth of June  
Amargo opened his eyes,  
and the twenty-fifth of August  
he lay down to close them.  
Men came down the street  
to look upon the doomed one  
who cast on the wall his shadow  
of loneliness at rest.  
The impeccable sheet  
with its hard Roman accent  
gave death a certain balance  
by the rectitude of its folds.

## BALLAD OF THE SPANISH CIVIL GUARD

Their horses are black.  
Black are their iron shoes.  
On their capes shimmer  
stains of ink and wax.  
They never weep because  
their skulls are of lead.  
With their patent leather souls  
they ride down the road.  
Crouched like hunchbacks and dark  
wherever they pass  
they spread silences of murky rubber  
and fear of fine sand.  
They go by, if they wish to go,  
concealing in their heads  
the vague astronomy  
of abstract pistols.

Oh, city of the gypsies!  
On the corners, banners.  
The moon and pumpkins  
preserved with gooseberries.  
Oh, city of the gypsies!  
Who could see you and not remember you?  
City of grief and of musk  
with towers of cinnamon.  
When the night came  
that nightly comes nightly,

the gypsies at their forges  
forged suns and arrows.  
A horse with a mortal wound  
knocked at door after door.  
Glass roosters crowed  
toward Jerez de la Frontera.  
The naked wind swirled  
round a corner of dismay  
in the night-silver night  
that nightly comes nightly.  
Saint Joseph and the Virgin  
lost their castanets  
so came looking for the gypsies  
to see if they could find them.  
The Virgin comes dressed  
like a village Mayor's wife  
in tinfoil from chocolate candy  
and necklaces of almonds.  
Saint Joseph swings his arms  
under a silken cape.  
Behind comes Pedro Domecq  
with three sultans of Persia.  
The half moon dreams  
an ecstasy of cranes.  
Banners and torches  
invade the roof-tops.  
In the looking-glasses sob  
dancers without hips.  
Water and shadow,  
shadow and water  
toward Jerez de la Frontera.  
Oh, city of the gypsies!  
On all the corners, banners.

# 38

Put out your green lights  
for the Civil Guards are coming.  
Oh, city of the gypsies!  
Who could see you and not remember you?  
Leave her far from the sea  
with no combs for her hair.

Two by two they ride  
into the city in fiesta.  
A rustle of straw-flowers  
invades their cartridge belts.  
Two by two they ride,  
a shadow-show but doubled.  
To them the sky is nothing  
but a window full of spurs.

Swept clean of fear, the city  
multiplies its doors.  
Forty Civil Guards  
burst through them like a storm.  
The clocks all stopped  
and the cognac in the bottles  
put on a November mask  
to arouse no suspicions.  
A flight of screams unending  
rose among the weathervanes.  
Sabres cut the air  
that horses trampled.  
Through the dusky streets  
gypsy crones fled  
with drowsy nags  
and crocks full of coins.  
Up the steep streets  
mounted sinister capes  
followed by a fugitive





# 40

whirlwind of scissors.  
At Bethlehem's manger  
the gypsies gather.  
Saint Joseph, covered with wounds,  
shrouds a young maiden.  
All through the night  
stubborn guns sound sharply.  
The Virgin heals the children  
with star-drops of saliva.  
But the Civil Guard  
advances sowing sparks  
that set fire to imagination,  
young and naked.  
Rosa de los Camborios  
sobs on her doorstep,  
her two breasts cut away  
and put on a platter.  
Other girls flee  
pursued by their tresses  
through the air where black roses  
of gun-powder explode.  
When all the roof-tops are nothing  
but furrows on the earth,  
dawn shrugs her shoulders  
in a vast profile of stone.  
Oh, city of the gypsies!  
As the flames draw near  
the Civil Guards ride away  
through a tunnel of silence.  
Oh, city of the gypsies  
Who could see you and not remember you?  
May they seek you in my forehead,  
a game of the sand and the moon.