

## THE

# Selected Poems

# Federico Garcia Lorca

EDITED BY FRANCISCO GARCIA LORCA

A NEW DIRECTIONS PAPERBOOK

### Copyright 1955 by New Directions

Translations by Roy Campbell, from Lorca, An Appreciation of His Poetry, Copyright 1952 by Yale University Press

Translations by Edwin Honig, from García Lorca by Edwin Honig, Copyright 1944 by New Directions; and from New Directions in Prose and Poetry, Number Eight, Copyright 1944 by New Directions

Translation by Rolfe Humphries, from The Gypsy Ballads of Federico García Lorca, translated by Rolfe Humphries,

Copyright 1953 by Rolfe Humphries

Translations by Harriet de Onís, from Writers of Our Years, edited by A. M. I. Fiskin, Copyright 1950 by The University of Denver Press

The Spanish texts of the poems from Poeta en Nueva York, Copyright 1940 by Francisco García Lorca

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 54-9872

Manufactured in the United States of America
New Directions Books and The New Classics Series are
published by James Laughlin at Norfolk, Connecticut.
New York office—333 Sixth Avenue.

#### Designed by Stefan Salter

First published as New Directions Paperbook 114, 1961

#### PREFACE

In making the present selection from the whole of the published verse of Federico García Lorca,\* the editors have sought to choose poems they consider to be most representative of the many very different facets of the poet's varied and complex work. The severe limitations of space imposed by the format of the New Classics series, together with the several obstacles in the way of successful translation of much of García Lorca's verse, have obliged them to omit a number of the poems they originally hoped to include. These factors are responsible for the most regrettable omission—the lyrics from the poet's plays. A more comprehensive volume should certainly include many verse passages from the drama.

At the same time, the editors believe that the present selection is the most comprehensive, varied, and complete attempted to date. While they regret the absence of some good translators and the meager representation of the work of others, they feel that nearly all the translations included are faithful to the text of the Spanish poems and, more often than not, to the spirit as well, insofar as this is possible in the incredibly difficult matter of translating poetry.

The Libro de Poemas, García Lorca's first published volume, included work that showed the greatest diversity in form, theme, and attitude. It is a book pregnant with themes, many of which were more fully developed in later books, while others died with the poet. A wider choice from this volume to illustrate more completely the vivid adolescent immaturity of a true poet would have forced the editors to sacrifice later poems that showed a greater maturity.

In Canciones the poet checks his first flights in order to achieve greater purification of the lyric. The atmosphere of

<sup>\*</sup> A chronology of the poet's life is given on page 180.

transcendental romantic sensibility gives way to fleeting states of mind, momentary sensations, or a disinterested humor, often imbued with a note of elegiac melancholy. A wide selection from the *Canciones* is included here because many critics have found that the poet attained the pinnacle of his lyricism in these poems.

From the Cante Jondo only one poem, "La Saeta" (the arrow), is included. The "cante jondo" (literally, "deep song") is a typically Andalusian sung lyric which critics contend comes from a very ancient tradition. They point to its peculiar structure, its melodic configuration, and the strange obsessive reiteration of a dominant note. In 1921, Manuel de Falla with García Lorca organized a competition to save this type of song from the vulgarization it had fallen into and the extinction which threatened it by giving it again the standards implied in its Andalusian heritage. Saetas are sung without guitar accompaniment while the images of Christ and the Virgin pass by in the Holy Week processions.

Of the eighteen ballads that make up the Romancero Gitano-García Lorca's most popular book-eight are included here. The ballad (romance) is a type of epico-lyric poem, which derives ultimately from the Spanish national epic. The old, traditional, anonymous, and popular ballad has grown with the spread of the language and has been nourished wherever Spanish was spoken. A series of great poets have enriched this unique type of Spanish poem, while remaining faithful to the essence of the tradition. In spite of its unchanging metrical structure, the romance has proven to be amazingly flexible in the hands of gifted poets and capable of expressing the most varied shades of sensibility. Exceptionally versatile, it is the poem of open fields and village squares, equally adaptable to the most exquisite baroque refinements, sung at times with simple, ancient, nostalgic

melodies, or to the delicate measures of court music. Lope de Vega and Góngora used the *romance* in the seventeenth century, as did the Duque de Rivas and Zorrilla in the romantic period, and many modern poets. In his *Romancero Gitano* García Lorca returned to the epic tradition of the *romance* and enriched the form with vivid new interpretations.

Most of the *Poeta en Nueva York* was composed while the poet was in residence at Columbia University during the depression of 1929-1930. These poems reveal the shock and anguish García Lorca experienced as he, the representative of a traditional culture, was confronted with the seeming chaos of a new industrial civilization. If one thing distinguished *Poeta en Nueva York* from all his earlier books, it is the total absence of irony and humor: nourished by the "bitter root," these poems speak tragically and grotesquely on a prevailing desolation.

After his return to Spain, García Lorca wrote his greatest elegy: Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías—a formal lament for his friend, the famous bullfighter, who was killed in the bull ring at five o'clock in the afternoon. The restrained yet profound emotion, the vast and almost grandiose movement of its sad music, and the great complexity of its diverse elements—almost a synthesis of all the principal aspects of the poet's verse—these make the Lament one of García Lorca's very greatest achievements.

In the Divan del Tamarit he returned again to the shorter lyric. This work, never published in book form, was written in honor of the Arabic-Grenadine poets. The title is taken from two Arabic words: divan means a collection of poems, and Tamarit is the ancient name of a place near Granada where the poets' family owned a country house. It was there

that most of this volume was written. The forms of the poems, too, owe something to the Arabic. Both the casida and the gacela are short, rhymed, fixed verse forms in Arabic poetry. García Lorca knew Arabic poetry only in translation, and his casida and gacela are free adaptations. There are, however, these similarities: the theme of the night visit which is frequent in Arabic poetry, certain chromatic images, and homage to the city as an object of love: a theme that passed into Spanish poetry from the Arabic. In this return to the shorter lyric forms there is implicit all the sublimated poetic experience of García Lorca.

The Spanish text has been collated with the manuscripts, where they exist, and with the first published editions.

This edition owes much to the thoroughness of Donald M. Allen in collecting translations, also to his critical judgment which has prevailed in all cases where several versions of the same poem were found. To him I want to express my deep gratitude.

Both of the editors regret that more of the work of well-known translators of García Lorca could not be included in the present volume. They wish, too, that other good translators might have been represented. These and other omissions they hope to rectify at a later date when a larger selection is undertaken. For the present, they wish to express their gratitude to Sr. Jaime Salinas for his fine help in the early stages of planning this volume. They are most grateful, too, to Mr. Edwin Honig for his kind assistance, and to Mr. Herbert Cahoon, Mrs. Harriet de Onís, and Mr. William Jay Smith for their generous advice. Our deep gratitude goes as well to the many other translators without whose fine work this volume would not have been possible.

F. G. L.

#### TRANSLATORS

Jaime de Angulo Ben Belitt Roy Campbell J. L. Gili Norman di Giovanni Edwin Honig Langston Hughes Rolfe Humphries Donald Jenks Lysander Kemp A. L. Lloyd Lloyd Mallan W. S. Merwin Harriet de Onís Stanley Read William Jay Smith Stephen Spender Greville Texidor

### CONTENTS

Preface	viii
From Libro de Poemas (1921): The Old Lizard	and and a special and a
Ballad of the Little Square	/ Language /
The Interrupted Concert	13
Ballad of the Water of the Sea	15
From <i>Poema del Cante Jondo</i> (192 Poema de la Saeta:	
Archers	17
Night	19
Seville	19
Procession	cheld ration 5 of 21
Paso	23
	23 Two Sallors on the Bea
Balcony	25
Early Morning	nO named and to amo 27
From Primeras Canciones (1922):	
Variations	helfelf eductorem 27
Half Moon	29
Adam	29
	onizona/ to time C and 31
From Canciones (1921-1924):	
Schematic Nocturne	31 Balled of the Spanist C
Fable	31 The Makey chom of Sale
Snail	monan A - base treated 33
	33
	and the firming to the shall 35
	75 com Childhood in Alen
Song of the Rider (1860)	37

Rider's Song	39
It Is True	41
Tree, Tree	43
The Moon Rising	45
The Street of the Mutes	45
He Died at Dawn	47
The Spinster at Mass	49
In Malaga	49
The Little Mute Boy	51
The Little Mad Boy	51
Farewell	53
Suicide	53
Narcissus	55
In Another Mode	57
Useless Song	59
Two Sailors on the Beach	59
Desire of a Statue	61
Song of the Barren Orange Tree	63
From Romancero Gitano (1924-1927):	
Somnambule Ballad	65
The Faithless Wife	69
Saint Raphael (Córdoba)	73
The Death of Antonito el Camborio	77
Ballad of One Doomed to Die	81
Ballad of the Spanish Civil Guard	85
The Martyrdom of Saint Eulalia	93
Thamar and Amnon	99
rom Poeta en Nueva York (1929-1930):	
Fable and Round of the Three Friends	105
Your Childhood in Menton	111
The King of Harlem	115

The Dawn	123
Ode to Walt Whitman	125
Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías (1935)	134
Lament for Ignacio Sánchez Mejías	135
From Seis Poemas Galegos (1935):	
Madrigal to the City of Santiago	153
Dance of the Moon in Santiago	153
From Diván del Tamarit (1936):	
Gacela of Unforeseen Love	157
Gacela of the Terrible Presence	159
Gacela of Desperate Love	159
Gacela of the Dead Child	161
Gacela of the Bitter Root	162
Gacela of the Dark Death	165
Gacela of the Flight	167
Gacela of the Morning Market	167
Casida of the Boy Wounded by the Water	169
Casida of the Lament	171
Casida of the Branches	173
Casida of the Reclining Woman	175
Casida of the Golden Girl	175
Casida of the Dark Doves	179
Riographical Chronology	100

# THE SELECTED POEMS OF FEDERICO GARCIA LORCA

#### EL LAGARTO VIEJO

En la agostada senda he visto al buen lagarto (gota de cocodrilo) meditando.
Con su verde levita de abate del diablo, su talante correcto y su cuello planchado, tiene un aire muy triste de viejo catedrático. ¡Esos ojos marchitos de artista fracasado, cómo miran la tarde desmayada!

¿Es éste su paseo crepuscular, amigo? Usad bastón, ya estáis muy viejo, Don Lagarto, y los niños del pueblo pueden daros un susto. ¿Qué buscáis en la senda, filósofo cegato, si el fantasma indeciso de la tarde agosteña ha roto el horizonte?

¿Buscáis la azul limosna del cielo moribundo? ¿Un céntimo de estrella?

#### THE OLD LIZARD

In the parched path
I have seen the good lizard
(one drop of crocodile)
meditating.
With his green frock-coat
of an abbot of the devil,
his correct bearing
and his stiff collar,
he has the sad air
of an old professor.
Those faded eyes
of a broken artist,
how they watch the afternoon
in dismay!

Is this, my friend, your twilight constitutional? Please use your cane, you are very old, Mr. Lizard, and the children of the village may startle you.

What are you seeking in the path, my near-sighted philosopher, if the wavering phantasm of the parched afternoon has broken the horizon?

Are you seeking the blue alms of the moribund heaven?
A penny of a star?

¿O acaso estudiasteis un libro de Lamartine, y os gustan los trinos platerescos de los pájaros?

(Miras al sol poniente, y tus ojos relucen, joh, dragón de las ranas!, con un fulgor humano. Las góndolas sin remos de las ideas, cruzan el agua tenebrosa de tus iris quemados.)

¿Venís quizá en la busca de la bella lagarta, verde como los trigos de Mayo, como las cabelleras de las fuentes dormidas, que os despreciaba, y luego se fué de vuestro campo? Oh, dulce idilio roto sobre la fresca juncia! ¡Pero vivir! ¡qué diantre! me habéis sido simpático. El lema de "me opongo a la serpiente" triunfa en esa gran papada de arzobispo cristiano.

Or perhaps you've been reading a volume of Lamartine, and you relish the plateresque trills of the birds?

(You watch the setting sun, and your eyes shine, oh, dragon of the frogs, with a human radiance. Ideas, gondolas without oars, cross the shadowy waters of your burnt-out eyes.)

Have you come looking for that lovely lady lizard, green as the wheatfields of May, as the long locks of sleeping pools, who scorned you, and then left you in your field? Oh, sweet idyll, broken among the sweet sedges! But, live! What the devil! I like you. The motto "I oppose the serpent" triumphs in that grand double chin of a Christian archbishop.

Ya se ha disuelto el sol en la copa del monte, y enturbian el camino los rebaños.
Es hora de marcharse, dejad la angosta senda y no continuéis meditando.
Que lugar tendréis luego de mirar las estrellas cuando os coman sin prisa los gusanos.

¡Volved a vuestra casa bajo el pueblo de grillos! ¡Buenas noches, amigo Don Lagarto!

Ya está el campo sin gente, los montes apagados y el camino desierto; sólo de cuando en cuando canta un cuco en la umbría de los álamos.

#### BALADA DE LA PLACETA

Cantan los niños en la noche quieta; ¡arroyo claro, fuente serena!