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Eros, Thanatos, and Captive Lives in Federico Garcia Lorca's *Blood Wedding*

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Federico Garcia Lorca's *Blood Wedding* is considered by some to be one of the representative dramas of modernism. Reading it, however, with an eye on the real event that is said to have inspired it or the features of the cultural world it arises from, as some of the readers have tried to do leaves it hanging and unexplained in some of its phases. The work is read in what follows as a drama of consciousness in which we are looking at a specific dimension of the functioning of consciousness, namely the making of symbols. This is a need related to the creation of a centre of orientation. This need is ever present, but especially in the face of traumatic and inchoate experiences. Ernst Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms provides the tools applied here for the purpose of tracking the adjustments occurring in the consciousness of the Mother who is the chief sufferer of the traumas of this play, and who survives them in more than a physical way.

Introduction

Lorca has been called one of the 'greats' in contemporary drama (Delgado 7). But the comments on a major play like *Blood Wedding* rarely show justification for this high assessment of the dramatist. Delgado, for instance, remarks that '*Blood Wedding* foregrounds the isolation faced by rural women drawn into arranged marriages' (37), and goes on to discuss various stage and operatic adaptations. She mentions, however, that the play has major 'interpretative challenges' (104), connected to the 'symbolist terrain of ... Act 3, Scene 1' (127). In praising the play, Graham-Lujan and O'Connell also draw attention to stylistic themes. According to them,

In this play is sophistication, learning, modernity, high theatricality, mixed with naiveté, primitivism, savagery, and deeply human drama (1959: 329).

But more than a style of writing appears to be at stake in this play. We shall argue in this paper that the play builds on symbolic forms not only in the ordering of the dramatic segments but also at the psychological level, enabling the characters to construct 'complete model[s] of being' (Cassirer, 1957: 45). Those same symbolic forms enable the interlinking of the realistic trend at the level of action to an underlying mythic process to forge a totality. Symbol is therefore not analysed here as a 'semantic innovation' as such (Ricoeur, 2003: 3); rather it unfolds a process leading ultimately to the disclosing of what Cassirer calls 'the pure content of [] consciousness' (1955: 235).

In his study of symbolic forms, Cassirer has of course shown the centrality of language in human constructions of symbolic systems – myth in general, notwithstanding that 'language and myth are distinct and autonomous cultural forms' (1955: 45). But also analysis under symbolic forms helps to bring out the [missing] content of experience which necessitates the making of models to function as a centre of orientation for the individual. For:

all symbolic thinking and all symbolic perception amount to a mere negative act growing out of omission and the need for omission. A consciousness possessing sufficient scope and power to live in the particulars themselves and to apprehend them all immediately

would not require these symbolic unities; it would be wholly presentative, instead of remaining representative in the whole or in particular parts (1957: 193)

What centre or centres of orientation issue from this play and how will therefore also be a point of interest to this paper.

Bond with the Past

Blood Wedding preserves an important aspect of tragic drama of classical Greece, namely the sense of constraint unfolding with the opening of the play and the associated foreboding of disaster. Even though Aristotle speaks of a ‘change of fortune’ in his account of tragedy, highlighting a moment in the unfolding of the drama, when a tragic incident occurs (*On the Art of Poetry*, chapter 24), it is the whole play that is a tragedy. The sense of constrain and foreboding which may be implicated in the very first choric ode, the *parodos*, is often what endows the tragic incident at the point of change of fortune the aspect of inevitability.

The opening scene of *Blood Wedding* reveals the Mother in an in-between state, between consciousness and another state in which action is involuntary. The Bridegroom has asked for a knife to cut grapes with: she has registered and is acting on this request. Her consciousness remains at work in her reactions, but not fully; another force which is not under her control has weighed in:

MOTHER, [*muttering as she looks for the knife.*] Knives, knives. Cursed be all knives, and the scoundrel who invented them.

BRIDEGROOM: Let's talk about something else.

MOTHER: And guns and pistols and the smallest little knife – and even hoes and pitchforks.

BRIDEGROOM: All right.

MOTHER: Everything that can slice a man's body. A handsome man, full of young life, who goes out to the vineyards or to his own olive groves – his own because he's inherited them ...

BRIDEGROOM: [*lowering his head.*] Be quiet.

MOTHER: ... and then that man doesn't come back. Or if he does come back it's only for someone to cover him over with a palm leaf or a plate of rock salt so he won't bloat. I don't know how you dare carry a knife on your body – or how I let this serpent [*She takes a knife from a kitchen chest.*] stay in the chest.

BRIDEGROOM: Have you had your say? (Act One, Scene 1)

It is probably reflex rather than choice that is at work in her complying with the Bridegroom's request. Her thinking of which her muttered words are the representation suggests that she would be acting differently if she were to make a conscious choice. There is here what Paul Ricoeur calls an ‘affective indistinctness of motives’; and this is owing to the presence of *history* in ‘the involuntary life’ of the subject (1966: 129).

All history, according to Ricoeur, has this impact on motivation; in the case of the Mother, however, we are dealing with a personal and family history which has been shaped by great traumatic events and in her consciousness the whole history is summed up in these traumas. There have been murders. Her husband had been killed after three years of marriage and two sons. The elder of the two has also been murdered, and all these by people from one and the same Felix family. To the Bridegroom's ‘Have you had your say?’ she has this answer:

If I lived to be a hundred I'd talk of nothing else. First your father; to me he smelled like a carnation and I had him for barely three years. Then your brother. Oh, is it right – how can it be – that a small thing like a knife or a pistol can finish off a man – a bull of a man? No, I'll never be quiet. The months pass and the hopelessness of it stings in my eyes and even to the roots of my hair.

This then is the history to which the Mother is held captive: this history comprises all she ever wishes to talk about. Her son, the Bridegroom, however, is moving towards the building of a new future, in which she has strong interest because of there being a chance of making her 'happy with six grandchildren – or as many as you want'.

But the bond with the departed exercises a stronger pull on her. By reason of this bond, she would not entertain the idea of moving away to where the hoped for grandchildren would be born and nurtured:

No. I can't leave your father and brother here alone. I have to go to them every morning and if I go away it's possible one of the Felix family, one of the killers, might die – and they'd bury him next to ours. And that'll never happen! Oh, no! That'll never happen! Because I'd dig them out with my nails and, all by myself, crush them against the wall.

In the Mother's view, the dead have to be protected in their resting in peace; being their protector is part of the reason why the tragic history is being kept fresh in mind, never to be forgotten or mellowed by intervening time. The Mother is the custodian of the tragic memory, a memory which is overwritten every day not by other memories, as in the normal functioning of consciousness: it is overwritten by the very remains of that tragic history by the Mother going 'to them every morning'. The memory has to be preserved at all costs. But in preserving it, she has been taken captive by it.

To the Mother living is worthwhile for the sake of preserving the memory; otherwise there had been little else to live for after the murder of her husband. Before this crime had been committed, the Mother informs her son:

I looked at nobody. I looked at your father, and when they killed him I looked at the wall in front of me. One woman with one man, and that's all.

So for her, there is nothing to look ahead to any more. All that is blocked off by her *wall*. It does not seem that the killing of her older son awakens in her a sense of reality and the future, except as to what she might yet lose:

I'll be left alone. Now only you are left me – I hate to see you go.

She has fears of being left alone – but in fact, she has always been alone since she began to look at her wall, seeing nothing else in front of her, not even her two little sons now bereaved of their father. The wall signifying nothingness as well as a point with nothing beyond it is here probably a figure of what Freud calls an intense 'death wish'. Lacan of course considers 'the notion of the death wish in Freud ... something very suspect' (1997: 212). But he does recognize that in human existence, walls do exist which are psychologically significant. He writes that,

The sphere of the good [possessions] erects a strong wall across the path of our desire. It is, in fact, at every moment and always, the first barrier that we have to deal with (230).

In her 'I looked at nobody. I looked at your father, and when they killed him I looked at the wall in front of me. One woman with one man, and that's all', the Mother is obviously not speaking of a physical wall. The wall signifies a barrier across the path to desire. There is no more marital love for her. She appears to rule out also the possibility of substitutive

satisfaction. She does not in any way *deal* with the wall: she fairly presents it to her son as her glory.

The murders are injuries personally done to her; and she almost jealously guards these injuries she would not allow to heal over. To make things worse for her, she has to run into one of the enemy family from time to time, which:

hurts me to the tips of my veins. On the forehead of all of them I see only the hand with which they killed what was mine (Act Two, Scene 3).

The major mythological images that come out into the open in Act Three, Scene 1 are Death and the Moon. The Woodcutters are also important. Though they have human form, their sphere of operation is not restricted to the human level. The Moon itself 'is a young woodcutter', according to the stage direction. The *other* three Woodcutters speak with inexact knowledge concerning the whereabouts of the Bridegroom, but concerning the blood shortly to be shed, they speak with heightened knowledge as if clairvoyant:

SECOND WOODCUTTER: Cover the blood with jasmynes!

FIRST WOODCUTTER: O lonely moon!

Moon among the great leaves.

SECOND WOODCUTTER: Silver on the bride's face.

THIRD WOODCUTTER: O evil moon!

Leave for their love a branch in shadow.

FIRST WOODCUTTER: O sorrowing moon!

Leave for their love a branch in shadow.

Similarly, the Second Woodcutter shortly before the appearance of the Moon brings out a remark as abrupt as it is ominous:

A tree with forty branches. We'll soon cut it down.

With its forty branches, this tree is in all probability a genealogical tree.

These death-dealing figures that take physical form in the last scenes of the play are already implicated in the images of captivity which heavily underlie the Mother's discourse in Scene One. There is in this play a double captivity: the one the Mother has submitted herself to, which is an act of memory and another, more dangerous and universal one, to which the Felix family is constrained by reason of an evil anciently done, a kind of *original sin*. No account of original sin is complete without a father figure, hence Paul Ricoeur analyses this mythological symbol in terms of what he calls the Adamic myth. He writes that,

The Adamic myth reveals at the same time this mysterious aspect of evil, namely, that if any one of us initiates evil, inaugurates it—something Pelagius saw very well—each of us also *discovers evil*, finds it already there, in himself, outside himself, and before himself. For every consciousness which awakens when responsibility is taken, evil is *already there*. In tracing back the origin of evil to a distant ancestor, the myth discovers the situation of every man; evil has already taken place. I do not begin *evil*; I continue it. I am implicated in evil. Evil has a past; it is its past; it is its own tradition. Hence, myth unites in the figure of an ancestor of the human race all these traits we have just enumerated—the reality of sin anterior to every awakening of conscience, the communal dimension of sin, which is irreducible to individual responsibility, the impotence of will that surrounds every actual fault (1974: 284).

Accordingly, to the Mother, no one of the Felix family can be anything but a shedder of blood. It is in their blood to do so since their great grandfather had first done it. News of

Leonardo of the Felix family arriving for her son's wedding, therefore, awakens the worst of fears:

What blood would you expect him to have? His whole family's blood. It comes down from his great grandfather, who started in killing, and it goes on down through the whole evil breed of knife wielding and false smiling men (Act Two, Scene 3).

A figure like captivity, according to Paul Ricoeur, 'congeals into a so-called knowing which sticks to the letter of the image', with which 'a dogmatic mythology is born' (1974: 272). The mother is dealing with *meanings* which do not have the aspect of a point of view, but of certainty. She has been taken captive and has given herself wholly, as Leśmian would say to a memory 'that had enticed / [her] with its charms'. Her reaction to the abduction of the Bride by Leonardo of the house of Felix is based on the logic of mythic ideation. If her wall metaphor is not indeed an intense death wish focused on her own house, the action of Leonardo has only unleashed again the season of blood. She has taken command of the proceedings, committing the people of her own house and that of the Bride's to the same cause:

There are two groups here.... My family and yours. Everyone set out from here. Shake the dust from your heels! We'll go help my son.... For he has his family: his cousins from the sea, and all who came from inland. Out of here! On all roads. The hour of blood has come again. Two groups. You with yours and I with mine. After them! After them! (Act Two, Scene 2).

Pursuit of Leonardo can have only one outcome; that is the spilling of blood: all this has taken on the aspect of inexorability in her mind.

The Mother is the dominant personage in this drama, not just in terms of the force of her personality, but also because the mythological processes that shape her thinking are the same ones that ultimately drive the sequence. The other characters are mostly existing on what might be called the realistic plane. Following the Mother's marshalling of her forces, however, the forces on the other side of existence take over the space, drawing in and incorporating the realistic world at the same time. From this point on, forms antithetical to life, which are by definition 'more than man', begin to assert themselves, exerting destructive pressure on life. Unlike in Sophocles where the reference is to 'the encounters of man with more than man' (*Oedipus the King* line 31), here the humans do not contend with the *divine* forms. The latter fully dominate the space. They perform all the actions and make all the decisions. It is rather as if the humans have carelessly put themselves in the way of the impersonal forces which are out for destruction. Hence there is a sense of the 'involuntary' (Ricoeur) in the human parties caught up in 'the passionate immediacy' of their interpersonal struggle (*The Political Unconscious* 56). They achieve mutual destruction, unwittingly carrying out the design of the superhuman forces.

The non-human agents appear to show more interest in Leonardo's passion for the Bride than to his fate. In the case of the Bridegroom, the end they eagerly look forward to is his destruction. The Beggar Woman especially already relishes the laying out of the Bridegroom on his broad back – him whose mother has already consigned to death by force of her death wish projected on her own family, as though the hate and violence of the Felix family against them needed a way paved for it from within the victim family. The Third Woodcutter notes when he sees the Bridegroom that he 'looked the fate of all his clan' (Act Three, Scene 1). Up to this time, the Bridegroom has no emotional commitment to the memory of old wrongs and wants to hear no more of them in his conversations with his mother. But the crisis of the

abduction of his Bride has changed everything. At news of the abduction, it is as if he had needed some encouragement from the Mother to go out in pursuit of the fleeing couple (Act Two, Scene 3); when we next see him, he is much enlarged: no longer an individual who has been injured by another individual, he has become the bearer of his family history and its avenger:

FIRST YOUTH: It could have been another horse.

BRIDEGROOM: *intensely*. Listen to me. There's only one horse in the whole world, and this one's it. Can't you understand that? If you're going to follow me, follow me without talking.

FIRST YOUTH: It's only that I want to...

BRIDEGROOM. Be quiet. I'm sure of meeting them there. Do you see this arm? Well, it's not my arm. It's my brother's arm, and my father's, and that of all the dead ones in my family. And it has so much strength that it can pull this tree up by the roots, if it wants to. And let's move on, because here I feel the clenched teeth of all my people in me so that I can't breathe easily (Act Three, Scene 1).

This speech signals that a shift has occurred for the Bridegroom from *innocence* to *experience*. In the process, he has lost the dignity that comes from innocence. But he is also highlighting his courage – that is, the alternative source of dignity in poetry (Frye, 1970: 219).

Aristotle's theory of tragedy as a representation of an action which has 'a beginning, a middle, and an end', with the end as 'that which naturally follows something else either as a necessary or as a usual consequence' (*On the Art of Poetry*, chapter 7), has led to expectations in reading that a tragic event can be *explained* by linking it to what has gone before, 'from the circumstances of the plot itself, and not ... *ex machina*' (chapter 15). The killing of the Bridegroom is undoubtedly a tragic incident, but the ultimate sources of this tragedy are difficult to assign.

The action taken by him in the face of the abduction of the Bride recalls Hamlet's soliloquy in Act Three, Scene I. Faced with a decision that jeopardized his whole manner of existence, it is Hamlet's analytical powers that are awakened:

To be, or not to be: that is the question:

Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer

The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,

And by opposing end them?

By contrast, what is important in the case of the Bridegroom is what he feels: it is this felt reality that exercises a drive within him now:

Do you see this arm? Well, it's not my arm. It's my brother's arm, and my father's, and that of all the dead ones in my family.... And let's move on, because here I feel the clenched teeth of all my people in me so that I can't breathe easily.

The sudden upsurge of memory in *Blood Wedding* during the pursuit itself has the structure of a psychological drive, 'which produces a new synthesis of the ego' (Lacan, *Écrits* 141). The Bridegroom has become the family, or rather its arm ordained to exact vengeance for historic wrongs. Vengeance is successfully exacted, but at a huge cost, as the Bridegroom stumbles upon Death lying in wait. This disastrous encounter occurs in the heat of the search for the abductor:

FIRST YOUTH: This is a hunt.

BRIDEGROOM. A hunt. The greatest hunt there is. [*The Youth goes off. The Bridegroom goes rapidly to the left and stumbles over The Beggar Woman, Death.*]

Hunting a wrongdoer who must pay for his and his family's crimes against the Mother and her own, the Bridegroom finds death – almost by accident. Finally, the 'shriek standing tiptoe' in the Mother's breast which she had 'to beat down and hold in under [her] shawls' (Act Two, Scene 2), can no longer be restrained and becomes audible in 'the second shriek' at which, according to the stage direction, 'The Beggar Woman appears and stands with her back to the audience'.

Animated Universe

Analysis of *Blood Wedding* purely as a tragedy can only yield mixed results because of the many trends in it which do not tie up in what is traditionally known as tragedy. Such is the functioning of Death in the play. The stage direction about the shrieks just quoted, which brings Act Three, Scene 1 to an end, reads in full:

The Moon appears very slowly. The stage takes on a strong blue light. The two violins are heard. Suddenly two long, ear-splitting shrieks are heard, and the music of the two violins is cut short. At the second shriek The Beggar Woman appears and stands with her back to the audience. She opens her cape and stands in the centre of the stage like a great bird with immense wings. The Moon halts. The curtain comes down in absolute silence.

Death reigns on this stage and offers no excuses for being here.

Death is the content of mythic ideation that is figured forth under a variety of symbolic forms, such as *captivity*, which we saw above, and *tragedy* too. One of the great themes of mythic thought in that as 'the curse of life and the supreme threat [to] existence' (Ricoeur, 1974: 117), Death is the most feared of the challenges facing human existence. This evil which Freud has uncovered in the very workings of the unconscious as 'the death drive', may also confront from the outside. And so even if the death drive is traceable in the actions and decisions of the Bridegroom, the account of its functioning throughout the sequence is as an evil visited against his house from an outside source, the family of Felix. Hence the Mother grasps the meaning of what is at stake immediately she learns of the abduction by Leonardo, namely that 'The hour of blood has come again'. The Bride is the fated way in which the menace of death from the outside impinges upon the house she is marrying into; for as the Mother observes early in the action,

I don't really know. Like this, suddenly, it always surprises me. I know the girl is good.

Isn't she? Well behaved. Hard working. Kneads her bread, sews her skirts, but even so when I say her name I feel as though someone had hit me on the forehead with a rock.

In this play, moreover, it becomes a present menace precisely at the enacting of marriage, turning the play into an instance of the 'great drama of Eros and Thanatos, underlying the inexorable order of nature' (459).

The Beggar Woman makes a brief appearance in the final scene, apparently to gloat over the victory:

I saw them: they'll be here soon; two torrents
still at last, among the great boulders,
two men at the horse's feet.

Two dead men in the night's splendour.

[*With pleasure.*]

Dead, yes, dead.

With this victory, the frustration of Eros and desire is complete. Leonardo's wife is instructed:

Put a veil over your face.
Your children are yours,
that's all. On the bed
put a cross of ashes
where his pillow was.

Whereas Ángel Valente holds that 'it is the two men who come together in a fight to the death, which is the only real expression of eros in *Blood Wedding*... an eros that is consumed in death, beneath the moon, "neutral moon of stone without seed", the moon of dark Adam' (see Wright, 2007: 52), I would argue that it is the Bride who is the real protagonist of Eros in *Blood Wedding*. In the frustration of the movement of Eros in her, her life also becomes twisted. She fully reveals the state of her inner life in her account of her actions to the Mother:

Because I ran away with the other one; I ran away! [*With anguish.*] You would have gone, too. I was a woman burning with desire, full of sores inside and out, and your son was a little bit of water from which I hoped for children, land, health; but the other one was a dark river, choked with brush, that brought near me the undertone of its rushes and its whispered song. And I went along with your son who was like a little boy of cold water-and the other sent against me hundreds of birds who got in my way and left white frost on my wounds, my wounds of a poor withered woman, of a girl caressed by fire. I didn't want to; remember that! I didn't want to. Your son was my destiny and I have not betrayed him, but the other one's arm dragged me along like the pull of the sea, like the head toss of a mule, and he would have dragged me always, always, always-even if I were an old woman and all your son's sons held me by the hair!

Marriage to her is unlike that of the Mother in which Eros and convention seem to blend together: her husband had smelt to her like 'a carnation'. For the Bride, marriage is only convention and social duty with such rewards as children and land, but as 'a woman burning with desire, full of sores inside and out', only Leonardo is the answer. With him, she is unable to exercise judgement: there is only an movement of power before which she is utterly helpless. In her discourse, she is only 'dragged ... along like the pull of the sea, like the head toss of a mule, and he would have dragged me always, always, always-even if I were an old woman and all your son's sons held me by the hair!' Leonardo for his own part is equally helpless in relation to her; and his wife who has no suspicion of the involvement of her cousin in the matter has already made out that she has lost him, or maybe never even had him. She gives voice to her concerns as follows:

What's the matter with you? What idea've you got boiling there inside your head? Don't leave me like this, not knowing anything (Act Two, Scene 2).

The man himself will explain what has been happening to him to the Bride:

What glass splinters are stuck in my tongue!
Because I tried to forget you
and put a wall of stone
between your house and mine.
It's true. You remember?
And when I saw you in the distance
I threw sand in my eyes.

But I was riding a horse
and the horse went straight to your door,
And the silver pins of your wedding
turned my red blood black.
And in me our dream was choking
my flesh with its poisoned weeds.
Oh, it isn't my fault –
the fault is the earth's –
and this fragrance that you exhale
from your breasts and your braids.

'Mythical animation of the universe' (Cassirer, 1955: 289), is profoundly at work in metaphorizing in both the discourses of the Bride and Leonardo. This is also basically true of the Mother's discourse. Moreover, she views the present catastrophe as part of a series – and had anticipated it precisely because of past disaster that had befallen from the house of Felix. This is mythical thinking. In her view, she is a victim of the universe – the sole victim. She cannot tolerate anyone else making the same claims, particularly the Bride, even though by invoking a force that overrides her reason, this young lady is offering for all explanation the operation of a mythical process.

But the status of a victim-sufferer is only a stage to be surpassed by the Mother; and she does this once again, by means of mythic ideation, perceiving in an instant the 'final cause' of this history of suffering in the order of nature under the sanction of the will of God and divesting herself in the same movement of the physical and emotional aspects of her suffering:

What does anything about anything matter to me? Blessed be the wheat stalks, because my sons are under them; blessed be the rain, because it wets the face of the dead. Blessed be God, who stretches us out together to rest (Act Three, Scene 2).

The raw images of experience have been processed into a huge symbol as they point to the mysterious workings of *God* – Nature and God being 'forms in which meaning is intelligible so that they are "symbolic forms" in virtue of their part in the symbolizing function' (Hendel, 1955: 52). The play may not reflect any particular religious confession, but Eric Southworth's comment (2007: 146), that 'religious allusion is almost wholly absent from *Bodas de sangre* [*Blood Wedding*]' seems not to do justice to the mythical theology reflected above. It is by means of this mythical theology that the Mother has attained a state of reconciliation. Experience processed under mythical thinking has brought her to this new state of consciousness.

It is not only the Mother that attains this state of consciousness. Reconciliation is in fact the general state of affairs in the closing scene of the play. Here again we see that the symbolic forms are the guide. Some of the symbolic forms recurring in the final scene are the cross, which is a symbol from tradition; the knife, which is a special symbol in this play; and the flesh which moves in the scene from a mere image to a symbol, with the capacity to be 'astonished'. The knife that 'barely fits the hand', sliding clean 'through the astonished flesh / ... stops there, at the place / where trembles enmeshed / the dark root of a scream' reflects a summing up of the play's action from the opening where fear of this implement is announced, through the mutual destruction of the two men 'on their appointed day', to the devastating pain visited on the survivors. These symbolic forms are now circulated and mutually

exchanged, without animosity, in the closing discourses of the survivors, including the Mother and the Bride.

Conclusion

The long-suffering Mother in *Blood Wedding* is the central figure in this play; and Graham-Lujan and O'Connell are certainly right to highlight that the play brings to mind Synge's *Riders to the Sea*. The husband and the sons are sacrificed, but it is the mother who suffers the pain. But as often with this play, significant action is taking place beneath the surface. Through her sufferings the Mother is subtly changing. In our reading here, the material objects connected to her suffering play a very important textual role, particularly the knife. It is first encountered in the play as a material image when the Bridegroom asks for it. To the Mother, however, it is not merely a material image, but a symbol, since she has connected it with meanings. It has become a symbol of the tragic history of her family; and it arouses fear and hate. As she declaims to the Bridegroom,

Cursed be all knives, and the scoundrel who invented them.... And guns and pistols and the smallest little knife-and even hoes and pitchforks.... Everything that can slice a man's body. A handsome man, full of young life.... I don't know how you dare carry a knife on your body-or how I let this serpent [*She takes a knife from a kitchen chest.*] stay in the chest.

These terrible inventions will be loaded with still more meanings with her experiencing the violent destruction of her last son when the cross crops up in her lamentation. With this word there is sudden disclosure of meaning. The moment of mythical perception is hereby signified:

MOTHER: It's the same thing.
Always the cross, the cross.
WOMEN: Sweet nails,
cross adored,
sweet name
of Christ our Lord.

If the Mother has become reconciled to the universe, it is really because her ordeal has freed her from her former captive state, by virtue of freedom becoming the 'pure content' of her consciousness.

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