

# *Gypsy Ballads*

*By*  
*Federico García Lorca*

*A New Translation*  
*By*  
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## *Table of contents.*

### *Introduction.*

1. *Romance de la luna, luna.*  
1. *Lament of the moon, moon.*
2. *Preciosa y el aire.*  
2. *Pretty girl and the wind.*
3. *Reyerta.*  
3. *The fight.*
4. *Romance sonámbulo.*  
4. *Somnambulant lament.*
5. *La monja gitana.*  
5. *The Gypsy nun.*
6. *La casada infiel.*  
6. *The unfaithful wife.*
7. *Romance de la pena negra.*  
7. *Lament of the Black Sorrow.*

8. *San miguel.*  
8. *Saint Michael.*

9. *San Rafael.*  
9. *Saint Rafael.*

10. *San Gabriel.*  
10. *Saint Gabriel.*

11. *Prendimiento de Antoñito El Camborio en el camino de Sevilla.*

11. *The arrest of Little Antonio, member of the Camborio family, on the road to Sevilla.*

12. *Muerte de Antoñito El Camborio.*

12. *The death of Little Antonio, member of the Camborio family.*

13. *Muerto de amor.*

13. *Dying for love.*

14. *Romance del emplazado.*

14. *The deadline.*

15. *Romance de la guardia civil española.*

15. *Lament of the Spanish police.*

16. *Martirio de Santa Olalla.*

16. *The martyrdom of Saint Eulalia.*

17. *Burla de Don Pedro a caballo.*

17. *Joke about Lord Pedro on his horse.*

18. *Thamár y Amnón.*

18. *Tamar and Amnon.*

Every day, when I wake up, I am surprised by the stubborn insolence of the sun. Even in December or January, the sky is desperately blue, which turns our winters into ravishing springs. I like winter here: it resembles a tropical symphony! If my Andalucía looks like the Promised Land, Francisco García Lorca's is just chthonic: the friendly sun gives way to the macabre, threatening moon. Happiness is subdued by despair.

To describe man's fate, the Gypsies are a practical solution since we are in Andalusia. We must not be fooled by Lorca's choice: he does not want to describe a nation or a kind of chauvinism, for he aims to depict mankind's destiny through a group which proves that individual fates beget collective tragedies.

Consequently, barbarity is everywhere since it is the image of a soul that has not reached its true nature: humanity! Here, savagery is eternal: it appears in his biblical poem *Thamar and Amnon*, in *The martyrdom of Saint Eulalia* and, also, in the *Lament of the Spanish police*. These descriptions are more than an attempt to exorcise man's demons; they are more than a surrealist ritual aimed at achieving awareness through art. Actually, they work as a path to the definition of humanity: badness being revealed, goodness must appear in mankind's consciousness through the free exercise of sensibility. Hence, Lorca's Gypsy ballads are not

pure poetry but a quintessential fight and a necessity: to become humane human beings.

Unfortunately, very few people can understand Lorca's poems, all the more so because the sentence structure is odd, complicated, and not really Spanish! In other words, many people in Spain do not really understand what he wrote. The problem is not the use of regionalisms but rather a baroque combination of words. Gongorism might be pretty; alas, too much prettiness kills the very meaning of things.

The people who tried to translate his work into English were mainly from the United Kingdom or the United States of America. They were puzzled by his Spanish. It has to be said that when you speak Spanish all the time and when you live between Granada and Malaga, you are less puzzled but much more upset! Personally, I was surprised by his "colours": green was everywhere. It is self-evident that in Granada there are forests, whereas on the Costa del Sol you only see yellow sand and brownish mountains!

Hence, they transformed strange combinations into very exotic English. I did not choose this solution because if the readers want to understand the hidden meanings, the interpreter must remain quite discreet.

1. *Romance de la luna, luna.*

*A Conchita García Lorca.*

La luna vino a la fragua  
Con su polisón de nardos.  
El niño la mira, mira.  
El niño la está mirando.  
En el aire conmovido  
Mueve la luna sus brazos  
Y enseña, lúbrica y pura,  
Sus senos de duro estaño.  
-Huye luna, luna, luna.  
Si vinieran los gitanos,  
Harían con tu corazón  
Collares y anillos blancos.  
-Niño, déjame que baile.  
Cuando vengan los gitanos,  
Te encontrarán sobre el yunque  
Con los ojillos cerrados.

-Huye luna, luna, luna,  
Que ya siento sus caballos.  
-Niño, déjame, no pises  
Mi blancor almidonado.  
El jinete se acercaba  
Tocando el tambor del llano.

*Dentro de la fragua el niño  
Tiene los ojos cerrados.*

*Por el olivar venían,  
Bronce y sueño, los gitanos.  
Las cabezas levantadas  
Y los ojos entornados.*

*Cómo canta la zumaya,  
¡Ay, cómo canta en el árbol!  
Por el cielo va la luna  
Con un niño de la mano.*

*Dentro de la fragua lloran  
Dando gritos, los gitanos.  
El aire la vela, vela.  
El aire la está velando.*

**1. Lament of the moon, moon.**

*To Conchita García Lorca.*

*The moon has come to the forge  
With her bustle of nards.  
The child watches, watches,  
Watches her.  
In the exalted breeze,  
The lubricious pure moon*



Moves her arms in order to unveil  
Her hard breasts made of tin.

-Moon, moon, moon, run away!

If the Gypsies came,  
They would turn your heart  
Into silvery necklaces and rings.

-Child, let me dance!

When the Gypsies come,  
They will find you on the anvil,  
And your little eyes will be shut.

-Moon, moon, moon, escape!

I can already hear their horses.

-Child, leave me alone!

Do not stain my powdery whiteness.

The horseman approaches  
While playing the drum of the plains.

The child is in the forge;

His eyes are closed.

The Gypsies of bronze and dream  
Came through the olive grove.

Their heads were lifted up  
And their eyes were half-closed.

The Red-necked nightjar sings divinely!

It is perched on the tree.

Through the skies goes the moon,

*Holding the hand of a child.*

*Inside the forge, the Gypsies cry  
And moan.*

*The breeze watches, watches,  
The breeze watches over it.*

## 2. Preciosa y el aire.

A Dámaso Alonso.

Su luna de pergamino  
Preciosa tocando viene  
Por un anfibio sendero  
De cristales y laureles.  
El silencio sin estrellas,  
Huyendo del sonsonete,  
Cae donde el mar bate y canta  
Su noche llena de peces.  
En los picos de la sierra  
Los carabineros duermen  
Guardando las blancas torres  
Donde viven los ingleses.

Y los gitanos del agua  
Levantán por distraerse  
Glorietas de caracolas  
Y ramas de pino verde.

Su luna de pergamino  
Preciosa tocando viene.  
Al verla se ha levantado  
El viento que nunca duerme.  
San Cristobalón desnudo,