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## Searching for Green

Santiago Cal

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“Searching for Green”

M.F.A. Thesis

Santiago Cal

Virginia Commonwealth University

1998

**APPROVAL CERTIFICATE**

**SEARCHING FOR GREEN**

by

**SANTIAGO CAL**

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Approved: Graduate Committee

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Chair of Department

Director of Graduate Studies

Dean of the School of the Arts

Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

*October 12, 1998*  
Date

*Somnambular Ballad*

-Federico Garcia Lorca

Green how much I want you Green  
Green wind. Green branches.  
The ship upon the sea and the horse on the mountain.  
With the shadow at her waist  
she dreams on her balcony,  
green flesh, green hair,  
and eyes of cold silver.  
Green how much I want you green.  
Beneath the gypsy moon,  
things are looking at her  
and she cannot see them.

Green how much I want you green.  
Great stars of frost come  
with the fish of shadow  
that clears the way for dawn.  
The fig tree rubs the wind  
with its sandpaper branches,  
the mountain, like a thieving cat,  
bristles with sour plants.  
But who will come? And where from...?  
She lingers on her balcony,  
green flesh, green hair,  
dreams of the bitter sea.

'My friend, I want to barter  
my horse for your house,  
my saddle for your looking glass,  
my knife for your blanket.  
Friend, I come bleeding  
from the passes of Cabra.'  
'If I could, young man,  
this bargain would be closed.  
But I am not myself now,  
my house is not my house.'

`Friend, I want to die  
in my bed and decently.  
Made of steel, if possible,  
with sheets of fine linen.  
Do you not see the wound  
from my breast to my throat?'  
`Three hundred dark roses  
are on your white shirt.  
Your blood is pungent  
and oozes round your sash.  
But I am not myself now,  
my house is not my house.'  
`Let me climb up, at least,  
to the high balustrades.  
Balustrades of the moon  
where water resounds.'

Now the two friends are climbing  
to the high balustrades.  
Leaving a trail of blood.  
Leaving a trail of tears.  
On the roofs trembled  
little tin lanterns.  
A thousand glass tambourines  
wounded the dawn.

Green how much I want you green,  
green wind, green branches.  
The two friends climbed up.  
The great wind left a strange  
taste of gall in the mouth,  
of mint and basil.  
`Friend! Tell me, where is she,  
where is your bitter girl?  
How often she waited for you!  
How often she will wait,  
fresh face, dark hair,  
on this green balustrade!'

Above the tank's surface  
the gypsy was swaying.  
Green flesh, green hair.  
and eyes of cold silver.  
An icicle of the moon  
holds her over the water.  
The night became intimate  
as a small square.  
Drunken Civil Guards  
were beating the door down.  
Green how much I want you green.  
Green wind. Green branches.  
The ship upon the sea.  
And the horse upon the mountain.

Translated By  
Merryn Williams

The following essay is not meant to be an analysis of Lorca's poem but instead uses the poem as a starting point. The poem simply stimulated thoughts which relate to the thoughts I associate my sculptures with. Therefore the essay is simply a dialogue stemming from the poem.

"Green how much I want you green". When I first read through the words, I was intrigued by the vivid imagery of 'Three hundred dark roses are on you white shirt.' and the dramatic narrative of the dying soldier and its parallel to the Spanish Civil War. Something else made me reread the poem; realizing that the understanding of the word *green* was as extensive as the meaning of the word. This reminded me of Bachelard's examples of Baudelaire's use of the word *vast*.

Baudelaire uses *vast* to define the immensity of the sea's presence and thought. Bachelard defines Baudelaire's example of a ship on the sea as '...the ship, beautiful in volume resting on the waters, contains the infinite of the word *vast*, which is a word that does not describe, but gives primal being to everything that must be described'(1). *Vast* in the ships' solitude and in the 'human ambition'(2) it

contains. Green also has this deepening of meaning upon contemplation. Green is not a word that describes a specific but instead is determined by the person imagining it's usage. Therefore, in the poem, green is as vast as the human imagination it encounters.

Lorca presents us with the imagery of the solitude of green; that of ship on the sea, the horse on the mountain and the 'she' lingering on the balcony. David Sylvester (Giacometti's biographer) relates solitude, when writing about the physical interaction with Giacometti's figures, as '...the reality of a person is established through his relation to another, but that this relation reveals the solitude of each...' (3). This reflection that identifies solitude is the same as the reflection that identifies the vast. They're both words that refer to the *immensity* that lies within and that which surrounds. An element of this reflection exists in waiting, waiting for something or someone. Lorca gives us the dreamer's waiting for green, green's dreaming/ waiting for something and the soldier waiting to die. Similarly, Giacometti represents solitude in the waiting of the standing female figures. Waiting is a word that can describe an element of solitude, which in turn makes us reflect on the vast. It is my interpretation that the use of green, like Baudilaire's use of vast, causes us to reflect on the immensity of solitude and it's vehicle, waiting.

The idea of waiting is an element in the making of my thesis work. The thought of waiting for interaction, the waiting for the whole and the reflection of waiting. The endless silence that is the result of this moment. The solitude of the individual's humility. The reflection of our being caused by waiting. In the sixth century BC the Bodhidharma meet with China's Emperor Wu on his way to Japan. The emperor asked him the basis of his teaching, the Bodhidharma replied "vast emptiness". The emperor then asked "who do you think you are?" to which he replied he had no idea(4). This understanding of being human is one that I try to translate in the figures I carve. The identity of the individuals I portray are vast as the idea of being human. The activities the gestures suggest are closer to the idea of waiting, the moment of timelessness, than a symbolic reference.

'Somnambular Ballad', the song of a person existing and participating in two realities. Bachelard wrote that 'daydreaming transports the dreamer outside the immediate world to a world that bears the mark of infinity. ...We do not see it start, and yet it always starts the same way, that is, it flees the object nearby and right away it is far off, elsewhere...' (5). For the somnambular, the immensity of the dream exists until the moment of waking, which, for an instant, is another experience of immensity

through displacement. Lorca identifies both realities; the dream of green and the displacement of the friends without a home.

My interest in these two places has also surfaced in the work of Antonio Lopez Garcia. Some of his paintings depict surreal environments (fig.1) similar to dreams (by placing realistic impossibilities into a landscape or room) and others depict places of reflection (fig.2) (he creates the atmosphere of human presence by depicting the residue of a place once lived in). These places are also characteristics of the literature of Marquez. He created a complex realistic genealogy which included a cousin with the dilemma of having a pig's tail (6). He also wrote about the inner solitude of the Colonel simply of waiting for a letter of financial salvation (7).

The interpretation of these two places, in my thesis work, is presented in the conflict between what it is (wooden objects in the viewers space) and what it alludes to be (individuals existing in liminal space). The figures create their own time and place without telling when and where it is. Like the "vast emptiness" of both dreams and reality. As WILCO puts it 'there's a dreamer in my dreams' (8). This is the role of the viewer; to fall into my dream while reflecting on their reality. This is a role I participate in also while making. I am interested in the highly naturalistic renderings of figures in wood by Lopez-

Garcia, Rieminschnider and Martinez- Montanes (fig.3). Yet, I want to undermine the magic of natural representation with the simplicity of the material. This, hopefully, removes the figures from one reality and places it in another. The existence of the somnambular in the object and the viewer.

The attempt to know who I am through my work has led me to a place of green, vast and solitude. This is a place of reality and dreams, of material and what I wish it to be. This searching has taught me that I can only find green when reflecting on waiting.

## Notes

- (1) Bachelard- "The Poetics Of Space" p. 193
- (2) Ibid.
- (3) Sylvester- "Looking At Giacometti" p. 35
- (4) Gordon - "Zen and the Art of Ichiro Suzuki" p. 76
- (5) Bachelard - "The Poetics Of Space" p. 183
- (6) Marquez - "One Hundred Years of Solitude"
- (7) Marquez - "No One Writes to the Colonel"
- (8) WILCO - BEING THERE "dreamer in my dreams" 1996.
- (fig.1) Lopez- Garcia - "Atocha" 1964.
- (fig.2) Lopez- Garcia - "Room in Tomelloso" 1971 - 1972.
- (fig.3) Martenes- Montanes -"Cristo de la Clemencia" 1603.

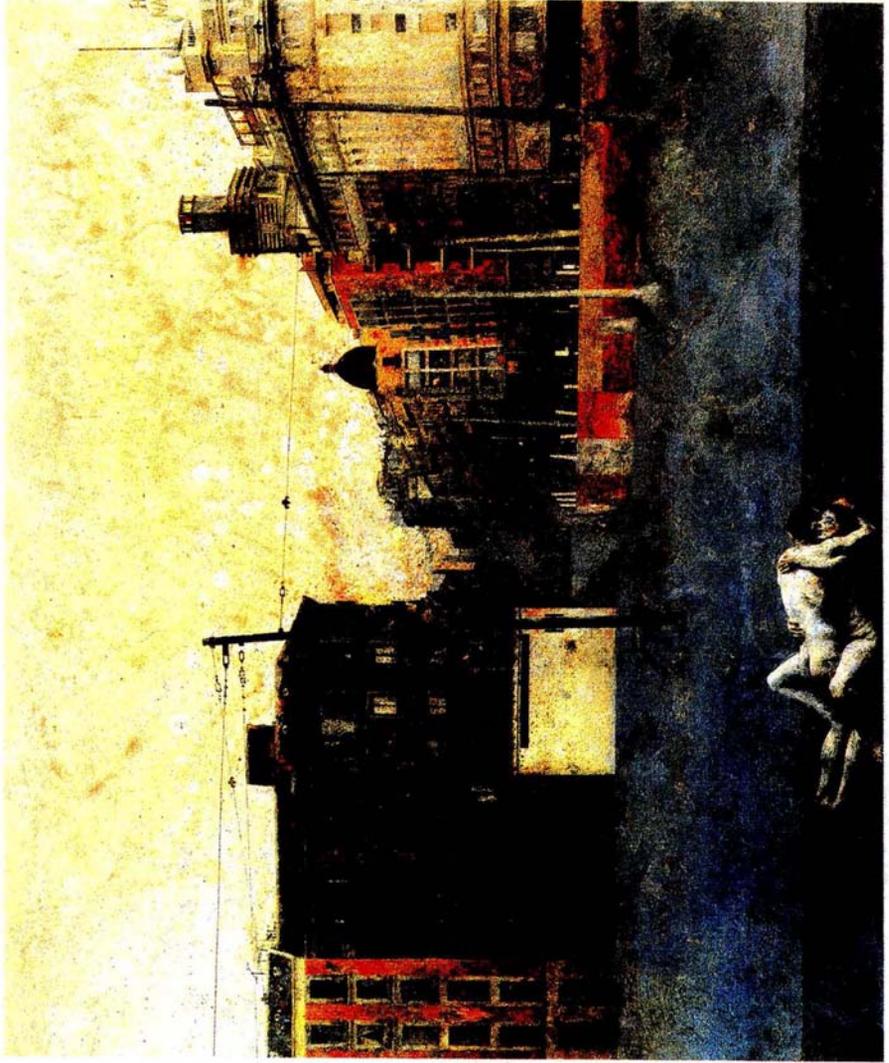


Fig.1 "Atocha" 1964 Oil on Board.



Fig 2. "Room in Tomelloso" 1971 -72 Pencil on Paper.

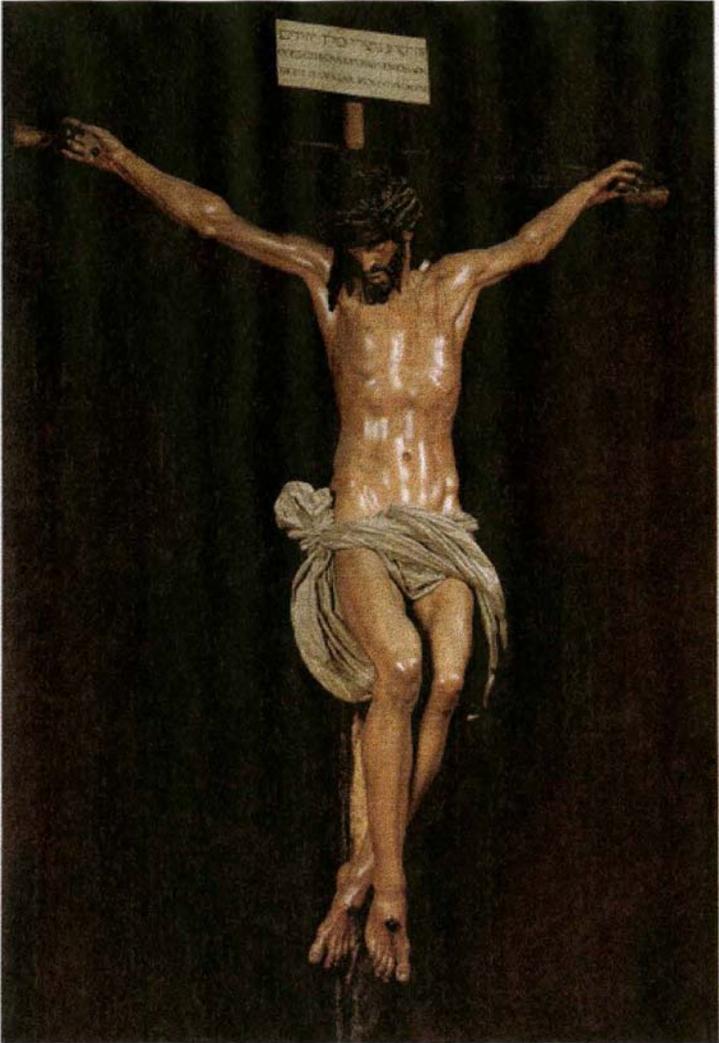


Fig.3 "Cristo de la Clemencia" polychromed wood 1603.

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