CHARACTERS IN CONFLICT WITH TIME: 
THE EVOLUTION AND EXPOSITION OF TEMPORALITY IN 
HISTORIA DE UNA ESCALERA, EL TRAGALUZ, 
LA FUNDACION AND LA DETONACION

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

In the four plays examined in this dissertation—*Historia de una escalera*, *El tragaluz*, *La Fundación* and *La detonación*—Antonio Buero Vallejo penetrates the surface reality depicted in the plays' scenery, characters, and dialogue to reveal an extraordinary concern with the effect of time on these theatrical elements. The dramatist places his characters in antagonistic temporal contexts, and then he explores their reactions to the historical, social, and economic conflicts of the eras in which they exist. For example, Buero investigates the impact of the Spanish Civil War on his characters by examining their memories set against the official history of the War. He also depicts the effect of the economic deprivation of the aftermath of the War on their attempts to survive, and he focuses on their psychological suffering produced by their attempts to reconcile the present with the recent violen
This study demonstrates that many temporal elements manifested in Buero’s first play, Historia de una escalera, evolve over the course of his experimentation in the other plays. The effect of temporality on the protagonists’ psychological states in these four plays becomes more intense with each succeeding play until it reaches a climax in Buero’s interpretation of Mariano José de Larra. In La Fundación, Buero explores the effect of temporal collapse in a world devoid of many of the external cues of chronological time: nature, television, radio, and clocks. The disintegration of time in La Fundación is accompanied by an heroic attempt on the part of the protagonist to maintain contact with temporality by the psychological embellishment of space. In El tragaluz, the dramatist distances his audience from the present by psychologically transporting them to the future.

In addition, the concept of chronological time breaks down in Buero’s dramatization of primal mythological themes which emphasize the persistence of a-temporal aspects in twentieth-century life. Buero's theatrical treatment of temporality in these four plays illustrates that his dramatic art is an amalgam of literature, history, mythology, visual art, and science.
Dedicated to James F. Whittaker
I wish to thank all of those who advised me during the writing of this dissertation, especially the members of my committee: Professor Donald Larson, Professor Vicente Cantarino, and Professor Samuel Amell. I would like to particularly acknowledge the support of Professor Amell who has always encouraged me in my study of Spanish literature. Also, I would like to thank those who helped me with computer problems involving the formatting of the dissertation, especially James Buckley whose knowledge and assistance were invaluable to me. I am certainly grateful to the Department of Spanish and Portuguese for its support. Above all, I express my gratitude to Dr. Carlos Blanco for sharing the beauty of the Spanish language and culture with me.
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INTRODUCTION

Time is one of the dramatic forces in the works of Antonio Buero Vallejo. Its dynamism affects every phase of the life of his characters; generally, they suffer from the passage of time, and a lack of an understanding of its nature frustrates them. There are a few articles written on the problematic of time in some of the plays of Buero; however, there is no extensive work dedicated exclusively to a study of temporality in Buero Vallejo's plays. This dissertation adds original interpretations of temporality which are closely related to aspects of science and mythology, and at the same time it incorporates points of view of such critics as Keir Elam, Luis Iglesias Feijóo, Ricardo Doménech, José Monleón, and Robert Nicholas. This examination of time demonstrates that Buero expresses a profound concern with the effect of temporality on his characters and that much of the playwright's dramatic exposition of time can be examined using information based on scientific aspects of temporality. Frequently, temporal
information is included so subtly in the dramatic text that it would go unnoticed without close study.

The fascination with time has a long tradition in Spanish literature. Jorge Manrique (1440-1479), Francisco de Quevedo (1580-1645), José Echegaray (1832-1916), Antonio Machado (1875-1939), and José Martínez Ruiz (1873-1967), known as Azorín, are just a few of the Spanish writers who depict the influence of time in some of the following: characterizations, philosophical approaches, scientific interests, and world visions. Many of their points of view about time provide insight into some of Buero's treatments of temporality. The surface realism in Historia de una escalera conceals the underlying presence of the reversal of chronological time conceptualized by Jorge Manrique in his famous "Coplas." Buero interprets fascinating aspects of reality which can be noted in the poetry of Quevedo, such as the anguish experienced as a result of the destructiveness of time and its "ephemeralness." Many of the characters of Historia de una escalera express the same anguish about time that can be noted in the following poetic lines of Quevedo's "Salmo XIX":

2
¡Cómo de entre mis manos te resbalas!
¡Oh, cómo te deslizas, edad mía!
¡Qué mudos pasos traes, oh muerte fría,
pues con callado pie todo lo igualas! (1-4)

Also, the equalizing force of Death which Quevedo describes above is dramatically significant in Historia de una escalera and in El tragaluz.

José Echegaray raises many questions about temporality in some of his prose writings published at the turn of the century in various editions of almanacs of La Ilustración española y americana: "El tiempo y su medida" (1897 74-79), "El reloj maravilloso" (1898 75-78), "El tiempo al revés" (1900 76-79), "El conflicto de los siglos" (1901 67-69), and "El loco de los relojes" (1903 72-77). Some of the questions generated in these essays are similar to the ones which perplex Tomás in La Fundación, such as ¿Qué es el tiempo?, ¿Es una realidad?, and ¿Es una ilusión? Buerian Realism is founded on his tragic vision in which time provides the opportunity for humans to hope and fulfill their potential. A tragic vision based on hope is Buero’s unique interpretation of the modern tragedy. This optimistic attitude can be traced to a member of the Generation of 98, Antonio Machado.
His attitude towards time in his poetry is very positive. Buero instills this same spirit of hope in his dramas. Azorín, another member of the Generation of 98, noted his concern about time while he was Paris in 1938:

Entre estas cuatro paredes se aviva, lejos de España, mi amor a España. El tiempo es mi preocupación. A saber lo que es el tiempo he dedicado largas meditaciones. No ha logrado nadie descifrar el enigma. El Edipo del tiempo no ha nacido todavía... (qtd. in Clavería 4)

Buero reveals this same temporal concern in some of his plays in which he dramatizes time's enigmas.

In the plays examined in this dissertation, Buero penetrates the surface realism and discloses the existence of temporal symbolism in the props, costumes and other semiotic elements. The dramatist explores the characters' temporal concerns expressed in the dialogue. The spatial components of the plays, the characterizations, and some of the semiotic elements of the dramas--particularly the dialogue--express a level of significance which has its foundation in aspects of temporality. The characters frequently verbalize their fear of time and display a frustration with the inability to understand its nature. At other times, the temporal components of the play are artfully obscured by the
milieu of semiotic information in the dramatic text. Surface temporal information, such as chronological time, conceals much of the symbolic temporal significance of the scenery, props and the characters.

Buero maintains the unity of his dramas by the complete integration of surface realism, psychological realism, and symbolic realism which is often founded on temporal symbolism. In the process of symbolization, an object's surface reality decreases in significance as its symbolic realism and temporal symbolism increases. For example, the ordinary significance of the staircase in Historia de una escalera becomes secondary as the receptor of the dramatic text becomes aware of its temporal importance. The tragaluz in El tragaluz is "deobjetivized" in the process of symbolization.

Generally speaking, the evolution in Buero's dramatic technique can be characterized as becoming more complex with the passage of time. Many of Buero's plays contain temporal elements which impart not only dramatic significance to his dramas in relationship with the present, the past, and the future, but they raise ontological questions which enrich the experience
of reading or viewing them. The dramas generate questions about the nature of time and its relationship to human suffering.

I have selected four works on which to center my investigation: *Historia de una escalera* (1949), *El tragaluz* (1967), *La Fundación* (1974) and *La detonación* (1977). The investigation of these four plays focuses on the profoundness of the philosophy of Antonio Buero Vallejo in relationship to temporality, the temporal symbolism expressed in the semiotic signs of the play, and the concern of the characters with time. This examination intends to demonstrate that an evolutionary trend in the creative process of the writer exists. The hypothesis is that there exists such a tendency in the dramatization of the temporal components of these four plays and that each succeeding play is perhaps more intricate than the preceding one in the sense that it incorporates anterior techniques and perspectives while at the same time it introduces new ones. I will examine the temporal elements from the point of view of their total integration into these four dramas. The intention of this investigation is to provide
new insight into the study of these four works which will augment
the body of knowledge about the dramatic art of Antonio Buero
Vallejo.

In this study, I endeavor to show that the creative process
of Antonio Buero Vallejo is a dynamic one which exhibits a
marked tendency to go beyond some of the aspects already
studied by critics such as surface realism, psychological realism,
and symbolic realism by means of the integration of temporal
elements in the plays. The focus on four plays of Buero limits the
scope of the dissertation while at the same time it intensifies the
study by allowing for a closer critical analysis of a small field.

The first chapter introduces the artist, Antonio Buero Vallejo,
to the reader of the study. His life and the historical period in
which he lived provide information which is meaningful to the
study of his works. This chapter also introduces the reader briefly
to the evolution in the dramatic art of Buero based on the study of
such critics as Iglesias Feijóo, Ricardo Doménech, and Robert
Nicholas. The inclusion of an epigraph to introduce the theme of
the chapter follows the tradition of Spanish literature and will be
used with each chapter in this dissertation.
The second chapter consists of an analysis of the temporal elements in the play *Historia de una escalera*. In this play, Buero dramatizes the life of four families over a period of 30 years. The first act takes place in 1919 and reveals the personal concerns of various family members who live in a modest apartment building: prices, jobs, love, courtship, marriage and death. The lives of the characters are portrayed in encounters on the landing of the building’s staircase. The conflicts crystallize in the opposition between two young male characters, Urbano and Fernando. They both want to escape from the poverty in which they live. Urbano’s struggle centers on the working class, and Fernando dreams of life as an engineer. Love inspires them to achieve their goals. However, they neither fulfill their professional dreams nor marry the women they love. Fernando loves Carmina, yet he marries Elvira. Carmina does not love Urbano, yet she marries him after the death of her father. The hopes of their children resolve the antagonism between these two characters.

Between the three acts, the years pass swiftly; however, the concerns of the families in 1929 and 1949 remain essentially the same. In the process of temporal unfolding, the characters
grow and mature. Finally, Death claims the elderly characters one by one as Life presents new ones. Life conquers Death in the climax of the play as two members of the third generation repeat the planes of their parents to escape from the Destiny of a monotonous world which revolves around the immutable staircase.

Keir Elam's theory of the significance of temporality elucidates the importance of time in this drama. In addition to Elam's theory, mythological time and the concept of the reversal of time manifest significant temporal elements of the play. Mythological time in the works examined in this dissertation refers to a dramatic reenactment of classical and primordial mythology in contemporary times.

The critics have noted the mythological influence in Buero's plays. Ricardo Doménech points out that some of Buero plays, such as La tejedora de sueños and Mito, have obviously been influenced by mythology. He also makes note that many of Buero’s plays interpret facets of “la tríada Edipo-don Quijote-Caín y Abel” (281). These characters have been the source of many imaginative interpretations throughout the history of literature. Iglesias Feijío also addresses the expression of
mythological time in the works of Buero. *Historia de una escalera* derives its importance mainly from its place in the evolution of the Spanish theater in the years after the Spanish Civil War. Although Buero continues to focus on some aspects of the traditional theater, he produces a modern theater which dramatically probes the surface of the play exposing a multiplicity of layers of significance. In *Historia de una escalera*, history and myth merge as modern tragic heroes participate in age-old rites.

In Chapter 3, the examination centers on *El tragaluz*. In *El tragaluz*, two investigators from the 30th century use sophisticated computers to reconstruct a tragedy. They have searched through time to find evidence of a personal concern with individual identity, and they discover it in the last half of the 20th century. Frequently, the investigators intervene in the story they present to make philosophical comments. The audience experiences the play from the temporal perspective of these two time travelers-*El* (he) and *Ella* (she).

The reconstruction of *El* and *Ella* dramatizes the effect of the Spanish Civil War on the members of a family who suffered an individual tragedy at the end of the war—the death of the youngest
member of the family as a result of the action of her older brother, Vicente. He leaped through a train window onto a train (coger el tren) with the provisions of the family and apparently could not get off. As a result of his action, his little sister Elvirita died of hunger.

All of the family members except Vicente retreat into a basement apartment where they disdain the outside world. The father spends his days cutting out “paper people” from postcards and magazines while watching the pedestrians pass by the basement window of the apartment. He identifies this window with a train window. He is obsessed with the identity of his “paper dolls.” His continual question, “Who is that?” reveals his fascination with human existence and personal identity. His wife, referred to as “La Madre,” plays her traditional maternal role. His younger son, Mario, busies himself with small tasks and refuses Vicente’s offers to pursue a career in his editorial office.

As Vicente rises in the publishing world, he declines emotionally and morally, until finally at his father’s knees, he confesses that he struggled to remain on the train. In a tremendous rage, his father, like the Parcas, uses his scissors to
snip the thread of life which he helped to create. Mario, his younger brother assumes Vicente’s guilt because he feels responsible for the death of his brother. He heroically offers to marry Encarna, Vicent’s lover, who is expecting a child.

This chapter incorporates the above mentioned bases of analysis while adding new theoretical frameworks, such as a reference to Einstein’s Theory of Relativity in order to explain the scientific aspects of two of the characters who travel in time. Theoretical concepts of time add another dimension to Buero's Realism. *El tragaluz* is a modern version of the amalgamation of biblical and mythological themes, such as the Caín-Abel and the Oedipal conflicts. However, my analysis of time in *El tragaluz* clarifies some of the aspects of mythological time in Buero's plays which have not been addressed by the critics, such as the playwright's original interpretation of archetypal information.

All of the main characters are recreations of mythological models which have their origin in primordial time. The knowledge of such thinkers as Carl Jung and Mircea Eliade sheds light on the mythological aspects of the play. The variations on the temporal theme is extraordinarily rich: for example,
psychological aspects of time, simultaneity of action in various scenes, Scientific Realism associated with time, philosophical examination of time in drama, and mythological aspects of time. These temporal elements extend the analysis of the play beyond that of chapter one.

The focus of Chapter 4 is *La Fundación*. In the *La Fundación*, the protagonist Tomás mentally creates the scenery and some of the action of this drama. He transforms a dismal prison cell into a modern foundation dedicated to scientific experimentation and five men awaiting death into scientific investigators. In his imaginative world, he also creates a female investigator, Berta. His cellmates participate in Tomás’ recovery by playfully accepting his version of reality. Gradually as Tomás realizes that he betrayed his cellmates and is responsible for their condemnation to death, the scenery is transformed into a gloomy prison cell.

Conflicts arise in the cell as the remaining men realize that there is another traitor in their midst—Max. At the same time in which Tomás accepts his own impending death, various characters exit the cell. *El hombre* dies of malnutrition; the prison firing
squad executes Tulio; Asel commits suicide in order to keep their plans of escape a secret, and Lino pushes Max to his death. The two remaining prisoners, Tomás and Lino, hopefully await their transfer to special holding cells in the basement of the prison from whence they hope to construct an escape tunnel.

The grandeur of this play originates from its combination of stagecraft, characterization, language, and a theme which has universal ramifications. Elam's analysis of temporality in the dramatic text, concepts about mythological time, and references to psychological time are useful in the examination of this play. In chapter three, the Theory of Relativity provides insight into the Realism of Buero; in this chapter, the concept of Biological time explains some of the behavior of a group of inmates condemned to death.

The fifth chapter evaluates the temporal elements in the play _La detonación_. In this play, Buero Vallejo dramatizes the last three minutes in the life of the writer Mariano José de Larra. Before he commits suicide, Larra’s life passes rapidly before his eyes: his political life, his personal life, and his career. A host of characters enrich the dramatization: don Mariano de Larra (Larra’s
father), many literary figures of the historical period, Pedro (Larra’s alter ego), and the voice of Adelita (Larra’s young daughter). The chronological time which the play encompasses begins in 1826 and ends with Larra’s death in 1837. The conflicts in this tragedy center on Larra’s battle with censorship, his unfortunate marriage to Pepita Wetoret, and his love affair with a married woman, Dolores Armijo.

In the early years depicted in the play, Larra attempts to rise above the hypocrisies in his professional, political, and personal life. However, he fails. His conflicts with censorship during the reign of Fernando VII are dramatized in meetings with his colleagues in the Café del Príncipe and in the office of the various Spanish ministers who pass in and out of power during the span of 11 years—Calomarde, Cea Bermúdez, Martínez de la Rosa, Mendizábal, Istúriz and Calatrava. Don Homobono is the perennial censor who obsequiously caters to the whims of the ministers. The conflicts in Larra’s personal life focus on his discontent with a wife who, in his opinion, does not understand him and a paramour who “plays” with his affection. A short while after Dolores returns his love letters, Larra commits suicide.
Elam's theory is also the foundation of the examination of this chapter, particularly his explanation of the role of historical time in the dramatic text. Buero is known for placing his characters in their historical contexts and dramatizing their suffering within the time in which they live. Since the main character of the play, Larra, is a historical figure, the analysis focuses on the historical time of his life. Also, since Larra is a literary figure whose impact on contemporary literary thought is still vital today, the historical era of the audience in relationship to the time in which Larra lived is part of the temporality of the play.

The last chapter consists of a comparative study of the various temporal dimensions mentioned in the preceding chapters. The purpose of this last chapter is to compare aspects of temporality in the four plays in order to acquire information which indicates the development of these dimensions in the group of plays and to provide new insights into the creative process of Antonio Buero Vallejo. Also, I would like to relate all of the main temporal conceptions mentioned in this dissertation to one or two
temporal theories. A comparative study of the plays will substantiate the scope of Buero's Realism within the four plays and clarify some of his ideas about time.
Works Cited


CHAPTER 1

El agua que tocamos en los ríos es la postrera de las que se fueron y la primera de las que vendrán; así el día presente.

Leonardo da Vinci (Epigraph of El Jarama, Sánchez Ferlosio)

Introduction to the Man and Artist, Antonio Buero Vallejo

Antonio Buero Vallejo is the most eminent Spanish dramatist of the second half of the twentieth century. He entered the theatrical world at a time when playwrights who supported the Francoist regime stifled the Spanish theater with plays which avoided a critical confrontation with the human suffering of that era. Students of literature study Buero’s plays because his works
represent a return to serious drama, transcending the type of theater supported by the Dictatorship. Buero penetrated the facade of Francoist propaganda to reveal the hypocrisies and problems of modern life generated under the yoke of the Dictatorship. His plays both reflect and interpret life in the twentieth century. Throughout the years, the numerous awards and recognition which Buero received testify to his genius and his contribution to the stage. Some of the prizes which Buero Vallejo has received are the following:

Ciudad (1987), Medalla de Oro de Castilla-La Mancha (1988), Received various homages (1993), Medalla de Oro al mérito de Bellas Artes (1994). (Leyra 29-31)

Buero’s life spanned some of the most politically turbulent years in Spanish history: the dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera (1923-1930), the rise and fall of the Second Republic (1931-1936), the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), the dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1939-1975), the restoration of the monarchy (1975), the death of Franco (1975), the transition (1975-1977), the first free elections in 40 years (1977), and the creation of a democratic state. Of course, the political circumstances in which he lived compromised his talents; however, Buero never failed to rise to the challenge of the present and to creatively confront problems with censorship. In spite of censorship, Buero met hardships with a creativity which reveals the profoundness of his theatrical talent. His plays examine and interpret much of the political, social, psychological, and moral strife associated with the twentieth century, and they have been monumental in raising the political and ethical consciousness of Spain.

Antonio Buero Vallejo was born in Guadalajara, Spain on the 29th of September in 1916. As a youth, the arts, particularly
literature, painting, and the theater attracted him. His childhood heroes were Mariano José de Larra (1809-1837), Francisco de Goya y Lucientes (1746-1828), and Diego Velázquez (1599-1660). This love of the arts and literature ignited a flame that became a burning creative force which has transformed the history of Spanish theater. In an interview with Juan del Sarto in 1952, Buero recalls the beginning of his vocation in the theater. He remembers the following:

Yo he sido uno de los niños más fantochescos que haya podido haber. En mis recuerdos más lejanos me veo con el pecho cubierto de medallas de lata, sable al costado, y tricornio en la cabeza. [. . .] Leer, monologar, y dialogar incansablemente eran mis juegos. (3)

In this interview, noted by Martha Halsey in her book Antonio Buero Vallejo (16), Buero describes how he and his friends played at make-believe. They were pretend designers, stage directors, producers, actors and writers. The dramatists points out that, “Jugamos a las más diversas historias. París y los mosqueteros, una corte húngara del siglo XVIII; Egipto y los Faraones; Búfalo Bill y los indios; viajes interplanetarios, al año 2000; las hadas” (de Sarto 3).
After finishing high school in Guadalajara, the future dramatist moved to Madrid to study at the Escuela de Bellas Artes de San Fernando. In 1936, his studies were interrupted by the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. Spain became involved in a bloody struggle which had repercussions on all levels of the society. Even families were divided by the conflict. To the chagrin of his family, Buero sympathized with the Communists. However, he later supported the Republican struggle. Two of the many tragedies of this national division were the execution of Buero’s father, don Francisco Buero, before a Leftist firing squad and Buero’s imprisonment and condemnation to death by the Nationalists (Pajón 95). Eventually, the sentence of death was commuted to life in prison, and finally, Buero was pardoned. In 1946, he left the prison of Ocaña after spending six and a half years in various prisons: Conde de Toreno, Yeserías, Dueso, Santa Rita, Ocaña (Doménech, Introduction 13).

This brief introduction to the author contains crucial autobiographical elements which will appear in the four plays examined in this dissertation. Historia de una escalera (1949) depicts and probes the economic and moral stagnation which
followed the civil disaster; *El tragaluz* (1967) dramatizes the opposition between father and son; *La Fundación* (1974) explores the effect of imprisonment and condemnation to death of the main characters; *La detonación* (1977) expresses Buero’s admiration for Larra. The dramatist develops these personal elements in such a way that they assume greater significance in wider historical, sociological, and philosophical contexts. Similarly, Buero’s love for painting manifests itself in all of his plays—in the costuming, in the careful construction of the scenery, in the artistic use of lighting, and in the characterization of Velázquez in *Las Meninas* (1960), Goya in *El sueño de la razón* (1970) and the symbolic significance of Velázquez’ *Las Hilanderas* in *Diálogo Secreto*. Buero explains the importance of art in his plays by referring to *Las Meninas*. He points out the following:

Probablemente, el más antiguo motivo que determina el nacimiento de mi obra ‘Las Meninas’ es mi inicial y fallida vocación de pintor. Es difícil resignarse a su abandono, y se intenta pintar de otra manera. (*La carreta* 9)

Buero’s “pintar de otro manera” is manifested in the careful construction of the exterior expression of his characters in order to explore the significance of their inner state, and the meticulous
construction of the scenery in order to add to the plays' symbolic significance (Buero Vallejo "El teatro de Buero Vallejo visto por" 6).

The theatrical scene was very bleak during the years of Buero Vallejo’s imprisonment, from the end of the war to 1946. Many of the great dramatists died during the late thirties, such as Ramón María del Valle-Inclán (1866-1936) and Federico García Lorca (1898-1936). Miguel Hernández (1910-1942), who is known for his poetry and also his contributions to the theater in the immediate prewar years, died in prison of tuberculosis. Other artists who opposed the regime of Franco had been exiled. The best Spanish theater was produced outside of Spain in such countries as Mexico, Argentina, and Chile. This theater in exile was written by some of the most talented Spanish dramatists of the forties: Max Aub, Pedro Salinas, Alejandro Casona, José Bergamín, and Rafael Alberti. Sanz Villanueva describes the effort of these talented writers to continue their creative activities in exile as follows:

En el exilio se lleva a cabo una literatura dramática de considerable importancia y por la geografía americana--principalmente--actúan compañías que recogen la mejor y más atenta tradición de la preguerra. Todos esos esfuerzos se realizan, sin embargo, en unas
circunstancias especialmente adversas, pues los autores, en particular, se ven aislados de su público normal, al que no pueden acceder ni por la difusión de los textos ni por la práctica imposibilidad de representar sus obras en la Península. (314)

In 1946, the year in which the authorities released Buero from prison, the Spanish theater was stagnating in a miasmic commercialism and mediocrity. The theater at that time was a place to pass one’s time. During the immediate postwar years, there was no critical rupture with the plays of the war years. Rather, the type of plays which were presented was reminiscent of those popularized by Jacinto Benavente in the 1920’s. It was a theater which did not intellectually challenge the audience to contemplate the effects of a devastating war and human existence. In fact, Benavente (1866-1954), Nobel Prize winner in 1922, continued his literary activity until his death in 1954. During the war, Benavente was immersed in the Republican fervor which surrounded him; however, after the war, his drawing room comedies began to support the Francoist regime.

A study of the theatrical billboards of the early years of the forties reveals that the predominate genres presented in that era
were comedies and musicals (Sanz Villanueva 208). Santos Sanz Villanueva characterizes the theater of those years as "escapist" and "melodramatic" (211). This type of theater was reassuring to the audience in as much as it did not challenge the status quo. Villanueva refers to Monleón's assessment of this theater as follows:

Monleón (1971) pudo mostrar cómo se produce una completa disociación entre teatro y vida, entre arte y realidad, pues ninguno de los grandes problemas de nuestro tiempo y de nuestro país aparecen reflejados. Al contrario, el teatro enmascara continualmente [. . .] la realidad al preocuparse por pequeños conflictos emotivos o por asuntos no sustanciales para el hombre contemporáneo. (221)

The theater of the immediate postwar years supported the regime of Franco. It did so directly, by espousing Francoist propaganda, and indirectly, by escaping into the classical world or focusing on foreign literary productions. This focus did not conflict with the politics of the Fracoist regime in as much as the problems of the immediate reality were never presented. The critic José García Templado affirms that during the postwar years, the theater was based on the classics written by such authors as
Calderón, Shakespeare, and Molière, and on modern plays of such foreign authors as O’Neill, Chekov, Gorki, Wilder, Priestley, and Miller (19).

The tendency to avoid a critical confrontation with reality affected all of the literary genres. The problems which Buero had to confront in the theater can be best understood by considering the state of the other genres and their responses to the crisis. In the poetry of the immediate postwar years, poets romanticized the dictatorship by identifying it with elements of the life and poetry of Garcilaso de la Vega (1501-1536). This focus on the poetry of Garcilaso was very different from the poetry in the prewar years. It changed from one that was aesthetic in nature to one which emphasized Garcilaso’s military life and Imperial Spain. José Paulino, in his article “El Garcilasismo en la poesía española (1930-1950),” further indicates that the dominant tone of the poetry of the magazine Garcilaso was propagandistic (37).

Eventually, intellectual writers alienated by Francoism challenged this type of escapism. They published in such magazines as Escorial and Espadaña. In 1944, two books of poetry signaled a transformation in the direction of the poetry:
Hijos de la ira by Dámaso Alonso and Sombra del paraíso by Vicente Aleixandre (Sanz Villanueva 346). Villanueva points out that Aleixandre surpassed the escapism in conventional poetry of the early postwar years and that Alonso "ofrece [. . .] la antítesis del mundo bien hecho del 'garcilasismo’ [. . .] " (348).

However, it was the genre of the novel which vigorously challenged the Francoist regime. The novel of the forties became critical of the artificial world presented to the public in literature which championed the regime of Franco (Basanta 14). Such novels as Camilo José Cela’s La familia de Pascual Duarte (1942) and Torrente Ballester's Javier Mariño (1943) signaled a transformation in the quality of the novel which contrasted to the quality of propagandistic mire that the Nationalists usually published. The censors prohibited both novels even though they were written by authors sympathetic to the regime (Basanta 11).

In the theater, a group of Realists lead by Buero Vallejo and Alfonso Sastre challenged escapism by transforming and revitalizing the theater. The theater of this group of writers objectively reflected the harshness of the reality which they encountered. Sanz Villanueva describes this movement:
De hecho, todo un sector de creadores, amparados por un movimiento crítico de signo coincidente, buscan en esta época un teatro que sea testimonio de su tiempo, que denuncie la injusticia social y la opresión y que contribuya a la transformación política y social del país.

(262)

Of course, there was a clash between the Realists and the proponents of the theater who avoided a confrontation with the Fracoist regime, but the New Realism survived and continued into the seventies. Buero Vallejo's first dramatic productions belong to the introductory period of this movement, and many of his plays contribute to its entire evolution. The scenery in these first plays depicts the reality of daily life. The dramatist explains the importance of reflecting reality in the “Palabra final” of the first edition of *Historia de una escalera*. He points out that a play “debe reflejar la vida para hacernos meditar o sentir sobre ella positivamente; [. . .] ” (155). However, Buero elevates the reality reflected in his plays to the sublime by the totality of his dramatic art. He delves into the significance of this reflected reality by the use of symbolism, allegory, psychology, and a philosophical probing of human existence.
The first play written by Buero Vallejo was *En la ardiente oscuridad* (1946). In as much as this play did not premiere until 1950, it is logical to say that the “realistic theater” began in 1949 with the premiere of *Historia de una escalera*. In what was in fact his third play (His second was *Las palabras en la arena* (1949)), Buero Vallejo reacts to the inertia of the postwar theater by dramatizing many of the social and economic problems prevalent in Franco’s Spain, such as the cost of utilities, inadequate housing, the lack of social mobility, and other effects of the economic crisis on the lives of the average citizen. Buero also strove to touch the moral sense of his spectators in order to move them to think and, hopefully, to act to improve the state of affairs.

Notwithstanding, it must be noted that the change in the direction of the theater centered on more than just social and economic issues. The themes which Buero introduced were critical of Franco’s regime, but they also raised philosophical questions which generated thought about the quality of existence. The theater-goers had to confront themselves in the dramatization of the recent bitter civil conflict. In addition to the introduction of serious themes, Buero incorporated techniques into his theater
which contrasted sharply with those employed by the prosaic theater which was popular with the public. His use of symbolism in his dramas elevated the drabness of a realistic interpretation of the scenery to a height which embellished the dramatic quality of his works.

In an interview with Samuel Amell, Buero explains that he does not think of himself as an innovator because the techniques which he used were not new. He affirms the following:

Yo creo que el problema de la renovación en las formas debe ser siempre un problema rigurosamente unido al de la calidad. Y creo que no cometo ninguna arbitrariedad diciendo que en la mayoría de las corrientes, las tendencias y los autores que se autotitulan renovadores la calidad es escasa. La aparente novedad parece grande. Y digo ‘parece’ porque cuando se rastrea un poco la cuestión se ve que hay en realidad antecedentes a veces muy antiguos de esas supuestas innovaciones. (121)

The previous quotation informs us of the seriousness, the sincerity, and the integrity with which Buero Vallejo approaches his work. He does not hesitate to give credit to those who influenced his writing. Buero has affirmed that the inspiration for his works are “vivencias personales,” “la sociedad,” and “la historia de toda la literatura” (“Antonio Buero Vallejo” 69-70).
At this point, I would like to briefly review the literary influences on Buero Vallejo’s dramatic art so that the reader can better understand the theater of Buero Vallejo, and so that the four plays of my dissertation can be placed in their proper literary context. Also, this examination of the literary influences on Buero indicates that he is a product of the past, an interpreter of the present, and the progenitor of the future. One way in which Buero Vallejo reacted to the escapism which was ubiquitous in the other literary genres of the immediate postwar period, was to return to the philosophical profoundness of the theater of Miguel de Unamuno with a seriousness which reflected that of this master.

In an interview of Buero Vallejo conducted by Ángel Fernández Santos, Buero acknowledges that he is part of the tradition of those writers who were concerned with the problem of identity, such as Miguel de Unamuno, Soren Kierkegaard, Edgar Allen Poe, and Samuel Beckett:

Busco en esta tradición, pero no siempre como ‘curioso’ de ella, sino de una manera muy personal. Yo vivo en esa tradición. Me alimento de ella y me encuentro a mí mismo en esos escritores, porque me
In the article, “Antonio Buero Vallejo Habla de Unamuno,” Buero Vallejo expresses his love and respect for Unamuno. He also acknowledges his debt to this great writer of the Generation of 98. He refers to Unamuno as “uno de los más grandes maestros que he tenido” (19). He says that Unamuno, “sigue siendo, uno de los más grandes maestros españoles” (19). The most interesting comment supported in this article is that the philosophy of Unamuno is still vital today and will be in the future. He refers to Unamuno as an “autor dramático del mañana” (20).

Buero believes that Unamuno possesses some of the qualities of don Quijote because, like don Quijote, he said what he felt was necessary regardless of the consequences. At times, according to Buero, this appeared imprudent, but in reality Unamuno was sincere and genuine. Buero also mentions that Mariano José de Larra belongs to this tradition because he spoke from his heart and mind regardless of the consequences (20). Buero, like Unamuno, dramatizes the suffering of the common person. This tendency to examine the ordinary person is so prevalent in
Buero's plays that it is logical to assume that it is due in part to the influence of don Miguel de Unamuno. Regarding this theme, Buero says, “Pero Unamuno--y en nuestra edad masificada hay que recordarlo siempre--es quien nos revela, a través del teatro, la vuelta al hombre concreto, a la singularidad y al dolor del hombre concreto” (21).

The critics have not ignored the influence of Unamuno on the philosophy of Buero. Johnston in the article “Buero Vallejo y Unamuno: La maldición de Caín” points out how Buero has creatively inculcated the influence of Unamuno in his plays. Johnston maintains the following:

La perspectiva más profunda del teatro de Buero refleja la de Unamuno. Mejor dicho, la convierte en dialéctica teatral: la vida pública sólo se percibe en su dimensión más completa cuando el teatro arroja luz en lo que la intimidad del ser individual oculta y protege. (86)

Johnston also points out in the same article that one of the principal themes in the works of both Unamuno and Buero is that of envy. He compares this emotion in Abel Sánchez and in El tragaluz:
Para ambos escritores, el mito de Caín se convierte en una metáfora dialéctica de las relaciones humanas que no sólo representa ‘dos actitudes básicas y opuestas en la lucha existencial’, [. . .] también hace justicia a la compleja interacción de la fraternidad y la rivalidad que, en la visión de los dos escritores, yace en lo más hondo de las relaciones humanas. (87)

Buero Vallejo certainly possesses some of the characteristics of the Generation of 98. He expresses his extraordinary love and concern for Spain with a literary excellence which places him in the category of such dramatists as Miguel de Unamuno and Ramón María del Valle-Inclán. The characters of his plays are not only great artists of Spain, such as Velázquez, Goya, and Larra, but also ordinary heroes of the intrahistoria: Generosa, Paca, Asel, Elvira, Fernando, Encarna, Mario, and Urbano. One of the most important differences between Miguel de Unamuno and Buero Vallejo is that Buero is much more optimistic. His optimism contrasts sharply with the bitter anguish expressed in the works of Unamuno.

Buero imbues his plays with the same spirit of hope and regeneration which is characteristic of Antonio Machado, another member of the Generation of 98. The conflict between characters
in the struggle to survive in some of Buero’s plays is reminiscent of the bitter struggle that Pío Baroja, a member of the Generation of 98, depicts in *El árbol de la ciencia*. In the article “Antonio Buero Vallejo,” the dramatist discusses the influence of Azorín’s *Las Nubes* on *Historia de una escalera*. He indicates that the idea to depict repetition in the life of the various generations in *Historia de una escalera* originated with his reading of Azorín’s depiction of generational repetition in *Las Nubes*. He states that “Muchas veces había leído ese relato, pues en él late una inquietud por el enigma del tiempo que considero muy mía” (72). Buero’s hero, Larra, was a precursor of the Generation of 98; his master, Unamuno, was a member of that Generation, and Buero is the continuation of that tradition of literary excellence.

However, some of the literary influences in Buero’s dramatic production date back to Calderón, Cervantes, and the Greek classics. In a discussion about the influences in his works, Buero affirms that “Una es nada menos que la del propio Cervantes. Concretamente, la de *El Quijote*. [. . .] “En *La Fundación* hay alienados que tienen que llegar a la realidad. Alucionados que tienen que llegar a la verdad, como Don Quijote. [. . .] La otra es
la de Calderón, tanto por la vía social especulativa de La vida es sueño, como por la vía social de El Alcalde de Zalamea (“Antonio Buero Vallejo” 76). Certainly, the themes of reality and illusion found in both Cervantes and Calderón are crucial in the four plays of this dissertation.

As a youth, Buero was intellectually nourished on the Greek classics; therefore, it is not surprising to discover an underlying classical current in his plays. The dominant ethical themes of Greek literature, such as moral responsibility and free will, culpability, and truth, are also the principle ones in Buero's tragedies. In his concern for the ethical aspects of human life, Buero approaches the zenith of the Greek tradition. The critic Enrique Pajón Mecloy characterizes the parallel development in Greek and Spanish literature by comparing the evolution of the Iliad with that of the Poema de Mío Cid and the character Ulysses with Don Quijote. The emergence of an ethical literature reflects and interprets the emergence of the ethical life of humankind, and it appears after the previous stages in Greek literature (9-18).

The relationship of Buero’s theater to the Greek classics becomes clearer in La tejedora de sueños (1952). The dramatist
creatively transforms classical elements of the Greek tragedy into those of a modern drama. In La tejedora de sueños, Buero creates a new version of the characters of the Odyssey. In the article “Interpretación del mito clásico en La tejedora de sueños,” María Jesús Franco Durán explains the role of classical myths in Buero’s dramatic art:

Buero ahonda en estos mitos mostrando facetas desconocidas de los personajes, nos ofrece otra lectura diferente del poema homérico demostrándonos la pervivencia del mito en el siglo XX y su eficacia actual. (313)

The examination of temporality in the plays of this dissertation focuses on their mythological dimensions in relationship to time. Certainly what Durán refers to as the "pervivencia del mito en el siglo XX y su eficacia actual" is germane to the elaboration of the mythological theme in my investigation.

In regards to the mythological theme in some of the plays of Buero, Iglesias Feijóo indicates that Buero’s aim in these plays is to reveal new perspectives and dimensions of the characters and of the myths. The dramatist creates another myth by creative manipulation of an old accepted one. Other plays of
Buero which contain overt mythological references, though not necessarily Greek ones, are *La señal que se espera* (1952) and *Casi un cuento de hadas* (1953) (97). The mythological themes in Buero's plays focus on those aspects of existence which had their origin in primordial time as well as classical mythology. The repetition of these themes in works of the twentieth century affirms the continuity of modern life with the past.

Buero has conserved very little of the dramatic form of the Greek tragedy in his plays. Of course, he does not have to obey the rigid rules of Greek drama which controlled the unities of time, place, and action, the language, the type of characters, and certain dramatic elements such as *hubris* and destiny. The “spirit of tragedy,” which has been expressed in tragic dramas throughout the ages, also forms the basis of the Buerian tragedy. Oscar Mandel's definition of “tragedy” defines an aspect of tragedy that is apropos to Buero's tragedies. Mandel explains the tragedy in the following definition:

> A work of art is tragic if it substantiates the following situation: A protagonist who commands our earnest good will is impelled in a given world by a purpose, or undertakes an action, of a certain seriousness and
magnitude; and by that very purpose or action, subject to that same given world, necessarily and inevitably meets with grave spiritual or physical suffering. (20).

All of the protagonists in the plays I examine exemplify Mandel's conception of the tragic hero. Buero's heroes exist in environments which impose upon them great physical or spiritual suffering. The characters experience a lack of freedom of action in their dramatic worlds. However, Buero transforms some of the Aristotelian elements of the tragedy described by Mandel and dramatizes them within the context of the Buerian tragedy. In Historia de una escalera, time affects the destiny of the characters, and the staircase is the "concretization" of the plight of a segment of humankind trapped in what Susanne Langer refers to as time’s "tragic rhythm" (85). Langer defines the "tragic rhythm" as a deathward advance of individual lives in a process which leads to death. The process is characterized by growth, maturity and decline (85).

True, the plays of Buero that I examine exhibit what Langer refers to as "the self-consummation of tragedy" (85). In Historia de una escalera, the repeated ascent and descent of the stairs portray
the endless repetition and stagnation of four families entrapped in time. The characters express their fear of time and the lack of change. However, the movement from death to birth, indirectly alluded to in the play, expresses Buero's hope and optimism in the face of the forces of fate and contradicts Langer's "tragic rhythm" which terminates in death. Instead of concluding his plays in closure, Buero dramatizes "the potentiality and fulfillment of life" which Langer refers to in her article "The Tragic Rhythm" (86). The playwright usually closes by inviting the audience to participate in the continuation of the human tragedy. One of his goals is to motivate the members of the audience to participate in the elimination of some of the social injustices presented in his plays. The inclusion of hope in his tragedies is Buero's distinctive contribution to the genre, and it exemplifies his attitude towards life.

Vicente's characterization in *El tragaluz* manifests characteristics of the classical tragedy—-the elements of fate and the tragic flaw. Vicente failed to "get off the train" thus his fate was sealed. His subsequent execution by the Father might be conceptionalized as a version of divine justice. Larra of *La
detonación is a modern version of the tragic hero *par excellence*. His spirit clashed with the despotic power of Fernando VII. He responded by intellectually attacking the tyrannical rule which degraded his human dignity. Finally, he destroys himself when he could no longer bear the pain of living. His death symbolizes the eternal confrontation between despotism and the desire for freedom.

As has been suggested, Buero Vallejo transforms the grandeur of the Greek heroes and heroines, who were either kings, queens, princes and princesses, into Spanish artistic heroes, such as Goya, Velázquez, and Larra. Also, the ordinary man and woman in the street, the *intrahistoria* of the Civil War, are the protagonists of many of the dramas of Buero. He places his characters within historical circumstances which limit their individual freedom. Although characters such as Urbano and Fernando of *Historia de una escalera*, Mario and Vicente of *El tragaluz*, and Tomás of *La Fundación* lack the heroic grandeur of such Greek characters as Oedipus, Antigone, and Agamemnon, their human plights are not less dramatic. The conflict between father and son portrayed in *El tragaluz* is
comparable to that of the conflict between Oedipus and his father. The valor demonstrated by Velázquez and his defiance of royal decree in *Las Meninas* are comparable to the defiance and bravery of Antigone. The struggle of Urbano to climb the social and economic ladders is as frustrating as the eternal struggle of Sisyphus to roll a stone up a hill.

Of course, the concept of the Greek tragic hero and the dramatic form of the tragedy have evolved over the centuries. Transcendence and the desire for freedom are also integral parts of Buero's tragedies. The heart of Buero Vallejo's creative production is his tragic vision which expresses faith in the power of the human spirit to overcome those forces which would strip it of liberty. Even though the theater of Antonio Buero Vallejo has evolved over the years, the principles on which he began his career form the theoretical bases of all of his dramatic production. His concern for the conflict between necessity and liberty is inherent in *Historia de una escalera*, and it continued to be a theme in his subsequent works. Francisco Álvaro explains the coetaneous quality of the modern tragedy *La Fundación* as follows:
He aquí una tragedia que se estrena todos los días para demostrar que la tragedia no es historia pasada, sino actualidad permanente, hoy más honda, quizá más terrible que la suscitada por los dioses o los héroes de la leyenda y de la historia. La eterna tragedia del hombre, que resucita en cada hombre, en cada época, porque en cada hombre y en cada época el desamor, la injusticia, la incompresión enfrenta y divide a los hombres. (19)

In this statement, Álvaro recognizes Buero's contribution to Spanish literature and the importance of his role in the evolution of the tragedy in Spain.

Above all, a positive or optimistic view of the role of tragedy characterizes Buero's theater. All of his dramas are optimistic tragedies because they manifest a strong faith in the future. This hope expresses Buero’s singular attitude towards his plays. The possibility that the characters can be victorious in their struggle for liberty and dignity unifies his plays. The following words of the dramatist precisely define his conception of the tragedy:

La tragedia es, en suma, un medio--estético--de conocimiento, de exploración del hombre; la cual dificilmente logrará alcanzar sus más hondos estratos si no se verifica precisamente en el marco de lo trágico. Pues, la tragedia es la que pone verdaderamente a prueba a los hombres y la que nos da su medida total: la de su miseria, pero también la de su grandeza. (El futuro 78-79)
He further explains:

Si ante una obra de tema social de nuestros días el espectador sólo experimenta deseos de actuación inmediata y no se plantea—o siente—con renovada viveza el problema del hombre y de su destino, no es una tragedia lo que está viviendo. ("La tragedia" 67)

Although Buero recognizes human suffering, he contends that the tragedy "es el más esperanzado, aunque describa desesperaciones." He acknowledges that in all of his works "[. . .] procuré asomarme al espectáculo del hombre desgarrado entre sus limitaciones y sus anhelos" (El futuro 79). However, Francisco Abad has noted (277) Buero’s affirmation that “la esperanza” is the heart of the tragedy:

Las tragedias describen desde Esquilo el perenne conflicto entre los infortunios que nos acosan y la esperanza que los combate, ciega tal vez al nacer, más no por errónea sino por resuelta. No son las tragedias acatamientos al destino ineluctable, sino tensas discusiones de sus enigmáticas falacias. Y empezar a preguntarse por el destino es comenzar a vencerlo. Y a negarlo… . (Tres maestros 140)

Hope permeates the closings of Buero’s plays and much of the conflictive dialogue between such characters as Fernando and
Urbano in *La historia de una escalera*, Vicente and Mario in *El tragaluz*, and Asel and Tomás in *La Fundación*.

Buero has conserved the element of catharsis of the ancient Greek theater almost as it was proposed by Aristotle. In the article “La tragedia,” Buero defines catharsis:

[. . .] la catarsis es una especie de terapéutica del alma, [. . .] el método empírico de canalizar y anular la peligrosidad de nuestros más fuertes impulsos, despertándolos primero para aplacarlos después por medio de su incorporación a la ficción escénica [. . .]. Que, tras esa purga, el alma quedase simplemente apaciguada o también ennoblecida, es en realidad lo importante. (65)

However, in Buero’s works, he transcends the Aristotelian concepts of *piedad* and *terror*. The playwright considers the tragedy the form in which the modern spectator can become aware of contemporary social problems; pity or fear can elevate the psychological state of the spectators to such a level that they become more receptive to the problems of existence and human destiny. The integration of art, music, lighting effects and stage setting into Buero's plays complements the serious mood of his tragedies and challenges the interpretative skills of his public.
Other notable influences in Buero's career are the dramatists Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) and Bertold Brecht (1898-1956), and the philosophers Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). Many critics have studied the influence of Ibsen on such Spanish writers as Echegaray, Benavente, Galdós, Unamuno, Lorca, and Antonio Buero Vallejo. Both Buero and Henrik Ibsen redirected the status quo of the theater in their respective countries. They both invigorated the conventional theater by inculcating in their plays social-moral topics and philosophical issues which conflicted with the prevailing thought. Buero acknowledges that Ibsen influenced him more than any other foreign writer ("A propósito de Brecht" 200-201). In an article in *Teatro español actual*, Buero reaffirms the influence of Ibsen on his plays. He states that “fui el primero en decir que [. . .] un escritor que me había fecundado decisivamente era Ibsen” ("Antonio Buero Vallejo” 70)

Some of the theatrical techniques of these two dramatists are also similar. Robert Nicholas points out that Buero’s use of symbolism resembles the symbolism which Ibsen employed to probe the subjective depth of his characters in many of his plays.
The Norwegian dramatist delves beneath the surface of his characters to make them more psychologically convincing to the audience and to add psychological dimensions to their portrayals. Robert Nicholas refers to the technique that penetrates surface reality and probes the depths of the human personality as symbolic realism (27).

According to Robert Nicholas, this type of realism permeates the play *En la ardiente oscuridad*. He also refers to it as “psychological realism” since it explores in depth the personalities of various characters, particularly Ignacio (27). Nicholas explains that the physical blindness of the characters in the institution for the blind in which the action takes place “is symbolic of a spiritual blindness” (27). He further explains that “of the seven plays produced or published from 1952-1955,” Buero attempted to integrate a naturalistic stage setting with the portrayal of the psychological or spiritual states of the characters in five of them: *En la ardiente oscuridad, La señal que se espera, Irene o el tesoro, El terror inmóvil, Aventura en gris* (34).

Other critics also have analyzed the influence of Henrik Ibsen on Antonio Buero Vallejo. In the article “Ibsen en el teatro de
Buero: influencia y originalidad en *El tragaluz,*” Fabián Gutiérrez Flórez compares some of the characteristics of the dramatic production of Buero Vallejo to those of Henrik Ibsen. He concludes that points of view, common general solutions, symbolic realism, a preference for the tragedy, a socially committed theater, and characters in constant self-conflict with society are themes which are prevalent in the works of Ibsen and Buero (259-276).

In addition to Ibsen, Bertold Brecht has had a profound influence on Buero. The plays of Brecht reflect the historical reality of the time in which the author lived. By means of theatrical techniques characterized as objective and scientific, the German dramatist combated social injustices which he witnessed. Buero is an admirer of Brecht, and he does not hesitate to praise him:

Brecht figura entre los más grandes dramaturgos de nuestro siglo y el teatro posterior a él no podrá ya ignorar su lección formal y conceptual, que representa un enorme paso en la tarea de revelar críticamente la realidad social y las mentiras que la enmascaran. (Interview with José Luis Alonso 20)
This characterization of Brecht by Buero could be used to describe Buero himself. Antonio Buero Vallejo “figura entre los más grandes dramaturgos de nuestro siglo y el teatro posterior a él no podrá ya ignorar su lección formal y conceptual, que representa un enorme paso en la tarea de revelar críticamente la realidad social y las mentiras que la enmascaran” (20). In the interview in Primer acto in which Buero reiterated his admiration for Brecht, José Luis Alonso characterizes the theater of Brecht as follows:

La dimensión de su teatro es doble: pedagógica y política. Intenta siempre despertar la conciencia del espectador en lugar de adormecerla. Se yergue sobre tres planos: el simplemente realista de la peripecia argumental y de los personajes (galería admirable en donde están Galileo, Madre Coraje, el juez Azdak, Grusha), el plano lírico de la poesía y el lenguaje, y el plano del mensaje político. (19)

These characteristics are also a part of Buero’s theater. Buero “intentasempre despertar la conciencia del espectador en lugar de adormecerla.” Brecht’s influence on Buero is also reflected in the political overtones and pedagogical dimensions of the plays discussed in this dissertation.
According to Robert Nicholas, the influence of Brecht is very noticeable in three of Buero’s historical plays—*Las Meninas, Un soñador para un pueblo* and *El concierto de San Ovidio*. Nicholas explains the basic similarities between Buero and Brecht:

It is primarily the vitality and seriousness, both thematic and artistic, of Brecht’s theater that has so impressed Buero Vallejo. The Spanish playwright uses the effects of alienation, but, contrary to Brecht, he always insists upon the emotional identification of audience and characters. The most visible similarity to Brecht in this trilogy is, of course, the use of historical distance. All three of these works comment on contemporary problems through the exposition of historical situations. History not only provides the perfect format for depicting man as an organic, evolutive being, but also supplies [. . .] the exemplary force required in tragedy: [. . .]. (60)

Brecht advocated a theater that was closely allied with the time in which it was created. He believed that "su realidad exigía una escena racional, científica, precisa y objetiva" (Oliva 383). Buero objectively examines the spectators' historical time in *Historia de una escalera, El tragaluz, La Fundación* and *La detonación*. Also, in *El tragaluz*, and *La Fundación*, the playwright intensifies the plays' objectivity by the incorporation of scientific themes.
However, Buero integrates the receptor into the theatrical creation by the union of objectivity and subjectivity.

Buero acknowledges his indebtedness to Brecht, particularly regarding social responsibility in his article “A Propósito de Brecht.” However, he rejects Brecht’s theory of distancing the audience emotionally from the characters and their actions (14). Buero espouses the element of pity that can be defined as the emotional identification of the audience with the characters of a play. Martha Halsey also compares Brecht and Buero. She points out that Buero is opposed to the ideas of Brecht about catharsis. According to Halsey, Brecht rejects catharsis and advocates a theater of alienation, preaching, and persuasion, and denies that the theater can be a vehicle of perception which depends upon intuitions that cannot be rationalized. Halsey affirms that both dramatists have similar ends--the participation of the audience in the theater by means of reflection on the content of the drama and perhaps the initiation of the action if at all possible (28).

In addition to the profound influence of European drama of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries on the dramatic art of
Antonio Buero Vallejo, European philosophy has also been instrumental in shaping his dramatic art. In his article, “Sombra del siglo pasado en Antonio Buero Vallejo,” José Cortina examines the influences of Arthur Schopenhauer and Soren Kierkegaard in the plays of Buero Vallejo. Cortina summarizes the conception of life expressed by Schopenhauer in *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (1818):

En este libro, de tanta importancia para el desarrollo del individualismo del siglo pasado, expone Schopenhauer su concepción de la vida como una lucha entre las fuerzas irreprimibles de la voluntad, del instinto, en lucha sempiterna con el idealismo, entendido éste como todo lo que es fenomenológico; lo que la razón le impone al hombre por medio de la representación que éste se hace de la realidad y de su misma existencia. Para el filósofo germano la voluntad es un constante impulso en todo ser, es la esencia vital del hombre. Pero esta voluntad es incontrolable y ciega, y sólo puede ser conquistada por medio de un total dominio personal, de un abandono del deseo, cuyo zenith es el nirvana del budismo. (13)

He postulates that the contraposition between protagonists in many of the dramas of Buero Vallejo can be traced to the influence of Schopenhauer (13-19).

Some examples of this “lucha” or opposition between the dreamers and realists in Buero’s plays are portrayed by such
characters as Urbano and Fernando of Historia de una escalera, Ignacio and Carlos in En la ardiente oscuridad, Anfino and Ulises in La tejedora de sueños, David and Nazario in El concierto de San Ovidio, Esquilache and Ensenada in Un soñador para un pueblo, Mario and Vicente in El tragaluz, and Asel and Tomás in La Fundación (13-14).

Cortina also mentions the relationship between Buero Vallejo and Kierkegaard:

La idea de que el hombre al realizarse se destruye, y de la incompatibilidad entre éxito personal y felicidad es a todas luces kierkegaardiana. Para el danés esta inmolación que se le exige al verdadero cristiano es una paradoja que constituye la esencia del cristianismo. Cree, además, que es el deber del hombre anhelar, anhelar siempre, aunque sea imposible lo que se aspire a conseguir. Para Buero el meollo de la tragedia es la esperanza, que abarca tanto la fe como la duda, [. . .]. (15)

He admits that the influence of Kierkegaard and Schopenhauer on Buero may not be direct but through contact with the writings of the Generation of 98. For example, Miguel de Unamuno was an admirer of Kierkegaard and Schopenhauer. Notwithstanding, in all the plays of this study the characters manifest hope even though the possibility of fulfillment of their wishes is tenuous.
Before beginning to examine the works of this dissertation, a brief summary of the literary trajectory of Antonio Buero Vallejo's dramatic art will highlight the major characteristics in the dramatist's works. As I noted earlier, the official career of Buero began with the premiere of *Historia de una escalera* in 1949. Iglesias Feijóo in his book *La trayectoria dramática de Antonio Buero Vallejo* has divided the career of Buero into three stages in which two transitional periods bridge the time between the first and the second, and the second and the third stages. A cursory examination of the three periods will provide background information for the plays of this study.

The first period began with the premiere of the play *Historia de una escalera* in 1949. This period continues up through 1957. The other plays of the first period are the following: *Las palabras en la arena* (1949), *El terror inmóvil* (1979), *La tejedora de sueños* (1952), *La señal que se espera* (1952), *Casi un cuento de hadas* (1953), *Madrugada* (1953), *Irene, o el tesoro* (1954), *Aventura en lo gris* (1963), *Hoy es fiesta* (1956), and *Las cartas boca abajo* (1957). Iglesias Feijóo indicates that the plays of this first period continued the traditional realism of the 18th and 19th
centuries. He also points out that there are touches of Benavente, Galdós, and Arniches in the plays of this first period; however, he does not consider the influence of these writers to be the essential dramatic feature of this first period (212). Thus, Iglesias Feijóo acknowledges Buero's unique contribution to realism.

The critic, Ricardo Doménech, divides the plays of this first period into three main groups: those related to the *sainete*, those related to the naturalistic comedy, and those which manifest a strong symbolic character. It is interesting to note that Buero objects to this kind of neat classification of his works of the first period. Iglesias Feijóo reiterates Buero's objection:

Buero, por ejemplo, expresó no pocas veces su disconformidad ante la costumbre que existía en los años cincuenta de separar su producción en dos bloques, el de los dramas realistas (en el que entrarían *Historia de una escalera*, *Hoy es fiesta* y *Las cartas boca abajo*) y el de los que introducen elementos simbólicos, fantásticos o míticos. (211)

In any case, there appears to be agreement between Iglesias Feijóo and Ricardo Doménech over some of the characteristics of Buero's early works in that they contain elements of *costumbrismo* and of the drawing room comedies.
The *costumbristas* objectively depicted the customs and habits of the people, sometimes with humor and sometimes in a serious manner; thus, it is not surprising that some of the critics identify Buero with *costumbrismo* since realism is a characteristic of this genre. The opinion of the critics concerning the definition of realism is uniform, but there is some variation in their views over its "concretization" in the theater of Buero. Francisco Ruiz Ramón, in *Historia del Teatro Español: Siglo XX*, characterizes the change in the direction of the theater signaled by the debut of *Historia de una escalera* in 1949:

> En 1949, con el estreno en el Teatro Español de Madrid de *Historia de una escalera*, comienza no sólo la obra dramática de Buero, sino el nuevo drama español, fundado en la necesidad insoslayable del compromiso con la realidad inmediata, en la búsqueda apasionada, pero lúcida de la verdad, en la voluntad de inquietar y remover la conciencia española y en la renuncia tanto a la evasión lírica como al tremendismo ideológico. Buero Vallejo, desde esa su primera pieza hasta la última, ha traído al nuevo teatro español escrito dentro de España y a los jóvenes dramaturgos que lo representan no tanto la necesidad o el deber de procesar la realidad, de ‘abrir un proceso a gran parte de la existencia de nuestro país.’ (337)

José García Templado in *Literatura de la postguerra: El teatro* supports Ruiz Ramón's position concerning the emergence of a
'generación realista.' He characterizes this realism as “una toma de conciencia de la realidad circundante que, también paradójicamente, iba a ofrecer novedades” (37). The writers of this group were not homogeneous in their approach to realism. In an attempt to simplify the aesthetic of the generation, Templado associates this variant of realism with the traditional *sainete* because the authors placed the action of their dramas in typical local environments such as was done in the *sainetes*. He further points out that the scenery in *Historia de una escalera* possesses characteristics of those of the *sainetes* of Carlos Arniches. However, Templado notes that Buero's modern *sainetes* have evolved into more complex works which dramatized the social reality of its characters (38).

Buero clarified the polemic over his theater in 1950. In an article that appeared in the literary supplement of *Informaciones*, also referenced by Robert Nicholas (21-22), *Buero* described “neorrealismo” as a reaction against the conventional theater:

[. . .] yo veo un sentido de reacción contra el teatro convencional, entiendo por éste el construido con abundantes escenas de té, criados y doncellas sagaces, enredos inverosímiles, aunque ingeniosos, frías paradojas dialogadas y tranquilizadoras cuentas
corrientes de las que no se habla, pero que proyectan sobre la acción su benéfica y suave felicidad. (“Neorrealismo y teatro” no page)

Buero continues characterizing the New Realism:

Pero el neorrealismo es algo en el teatro porque ha sabido presentarse con superiores fórmulas dramáticas o trágicas. Utilizándose, ha incorporado al teatro grande muchas cosas, en cuya eficacia para tal objeto no se creía hasta ayer: el diálogo sin ‘frases,’ los lugares humildes para la acción, la ausencia de 'divos' en el reparto, la sencillez de los conflictos anecdóticos o psicológicos. (no page)

He notes that “neorrealismo” will have a positive effect on the theater:

Acaso el neorrealismo sólo nos haya dado los medios adecuados para una posterior expresión teatral más profunda, pero ya es mucho. Por lo sencillo, comprensible, y veraz de esos medios, el neorrealismo sirve hoy de vehículo de unión entre los hombres y posibilita la incorporación del teatro a éstos. (no page)

At one point in the article Buero refers to “neorrealismo” as “realismo simplemente.”

Robert Nicholas relates the realism in Historia de una escalera to Spanish Popular Realism. He indicates that Historia de una escalera is related to costumbrismo which is the foundation of the comedies known as sainetes. They were popular during the
turn of the century. Nicholas also relates the realism of *Historia de una escalera* to that of the *género chico*. He mentions that *Historia de una escalera* “depicts the customs and manners of the lives of four families over a thirty-year span. This cross section of Madrid’s poorer citizenry includes many character types made famous by the *género chico*” (23). However, Robert Nicholas also offers a more profound interpretation of *Historia de una escalera*. He indicates that Buero probes the surface realism of the play and reveals a symbolic realism in the work which deepens the significance of the surface reality (25-26).

Ricardo Doménech also takes note of the polemic over the "aspectos sainetescos" in *Historia de una escalera*. He maintains that some critics place the play within the evolution of the *sainete* while others, such as Torrente Ballester, reject this classification. Regarding the elements of the *sainete* in *Historia de una escalera*, Torrente Ballester has postulated that “la estética del sainete dista de la concepción de Buero tanto como dista lo típico de lo individual, lo accidental de lo esencial” (102). However, Doménech concludes that his interpretation of the work places it between that of the tradition of the *sainete* and the theater of Unamuno (72).
In the prologue of the play, Doménech affirms this in the following text:

La novedad más profundamente original de *Historia de una escalera* radica en que ese mismo espacio costumbrista del sainete será el ámbito de una tragedia. Sin renunciar a ciertos toques coloristas y hasta populistas, Buero proyecta un sentimiento trágico de la existencia, de indudable raíz unamuniana, que impregna escenario, personajes, acciones. (11)

Obviously, *Historia de una escalera* is not a sainete. A sainete is a short theatrical work based on customs of ordinary people. It can be comical, satirical, or in the case of Carlos Arniches’ *La señorita de Trevélez*, tragic. Buero admits that Arniches influenced him. He says that “En la zona más costumbrista de mi teatro se veía la huella del costumbrismo sainetesco de este gran autor” (“Antonio Buero Vallejo” 71). However, *Historia de una escalera* is much more. The characters are not “tipos sainetescos,” but people who were a part of Buero’s world. He refers to the them in the following quotation:

[. . .]hay cosas de las escaleras donde he vivido y de otras en cuyos barrios no viví nunca; hay cosas de gentes que me han querido y me han sufrido y a quienes he querido y sufrido, y cosas de gentes con
quienes nunca tuve que tratar. Hay personales vivencias y otros materiales muy diversos espontáneamente reelaborados. (“La palabra final” 253)

Of course, the setting possesses realistic elements--the staircase, the doors, a dirty window, etc. The play is faithful to the representation of life because Buero sets the stage very carefully and realistically. But upon examination of the text, the profound significance of each piece of scenery can be elucidated. A realistic scene assumes a deeper significance as the receptor of the play becomes aware of the symbolic value of the scenery within the scope of the work. The symbolism in the scenery acts in conjunction with the other semiotic signs, such as the dialogue, the gestures, and the costuming to give greater gravity to the play. Some examples of this symbolism in the scenery of Historia de una escalera are the light bulb covered with a wire mesh, the stairwell, the doorways at the top of the staircase, the spilled milk, and the dirty window. The significance of these objects will be discussed in my analysis of this play.

Francisco Ruiz Ramón supports the view that Historia de una escalera is not a sainete in the following quotation:
Historia de una escalera [. . .] no guarda ninguna relación esencial con el sainete, predicación reiterada por bastantes críticos españoles, pues la identidad de clase social entre los personajes de aquélla y de éste no basta para establecer dicha relación. Buero no se propone la descripción costumbrista, más o menos desgarrada, de un medio, de un ambiente y de unos tipos, pues sus personajes, a diferencia de los del sainete, significan algo que trasciende el mundo en que se mueven, a la vez que ese mundo está en función de unas significaciones que van más allá de lo que en él es pura apariencia, [. . .]. (341)

This explanation can be applied to all of Buero's theatrical productions and certainly to those of my study.

José Monleón in his article, “Un teatro abierto,” summarizes the characteristics of the realism of Buero Vallejo. According to Monleón, "realismo bueriano" is characterized by a profound probing of sociopolitical conditions of human existence, a consideration of ontological aspects of life, an exposition of a deep sense of frustration that affects members of a segment of society who fail because they want to be successful but are impeded by social and economic limitations, the examination of the role of time in relationship to human failure, and ethical considerations.
in view of the fact that the characters have to make a choice within the social and political contexts of their lives (17-21).

This first stage in the literary trajectory of Buero’s dramatic art is followed by plays of his historical period. The plays that belong to this epoch are *Un soñador para un pueblo* (1958), *Las Meninas* (1960), *El concierto de San Ovidio* (1962), *La doble historia del doctor Valmy* (1964), *El tragaluz* (1967), and *Mito* (1968). The first three plays in this period are united by a historical theme, and the last three have been characterized by Iglesias Feijóo as transition plays which represent an evolution towards the experimental period (383). The plays of the historical period are realistic in as much as they narrate historical events or focus on historical characters. In these works, the dramatist combines historical moments with fantasy, historical characters with fictional ones, and social injustices which still exist in the twentieth century with some personal events that are fictional in nature. *El tragaluz*, one of the plays which I will examine, is a transitional work which possesses characteristics of the historical period and also of the experimental period which follows it. Also,
some of the characteristics of the historical period will be seen in plays of the experimental period, such as *El sueño de la razón* and *La detonación*.

Buero explains, as noted by Robert Nicholas, the role of history which he captures in some of his plays in this quotation:

... toda nuestra historia no debe interesarnos, sólo por lo que puede enseñarnos..., sino para expresar también, a su través, algunos problemas de permanente importancia y actualidad, sea por su carácter universal, sea por su persistencia en la sociedad española. Los problemas generales del dolor humano y de las injusticias sociales; los problemas inherentes al enmascaramiento de la realidad por los tópicos y engaños vigentes; el problema de la responsabilidad del creador, del intelectual, ante todo ello. (*La carreta* 9)

In the historical period, Antonio Buero Vallejo utilizes special techniques to dramatize temporality; the distancing technique of Bertold Brecht as well as Greek catharsis unite present and past. *Un soñador para un pueblo* (1958), the first drama of this period, dramatizes the revolt of the people of Madrid in the eighteenth century against the Italian Prime Minister, the Marquis of Esquilache, a visionary and reformer. Finally, the Prime Minister,
who wanted to introduce certain progressive measures in the country, elects voluntary exile. This quells the complaints of the people.

The temporal dimension in *Un soñador para un pueblo* (1958) is twofold in that firstly the author makes a comment on the present by focusing on the past; secondly, one of the intentions of the dramatist is that the audience identifies with the characters on stage. This identification represents an emotional response which links the audience to the past. Even though Buero distances the action of the play, he still demands the intimacy of the present moment produced by the process of catharsis.

In *Las Meninas* (1960), the second play of the historical period, the action of the drama takes place in the sixteenth century during the reign of Felipe IV. The political disintegration which began with the reign of Felipe III (1598-1621) reached a climax during the reign of Felipe IV (1621-1665). Velázquez (1599-1660) lived in this age of Spanish decline. He was the court painter of Felipe IV. In spite of political decline, art and literature flourished during this period and reached a zenith in the artistic productions of such great creative spirits as Velázquez, Quevedo, and Calderón de la Barca (Cantarino 158). Buero dramatizes an unspoken friendship between Velázquez and Felipe
IV. Despite the existence of a close relationship between the two men, the artist did not hesitate to speak out against the injustices of the reign. His struggle against Felipe IV’s absolute power, the conspiracies in the court which would destroy him, and limitation of artistic expression is the thematic foundation of Buero’s interpretation of Velázquez.

As in *Un soñador para un pueblo*, Buero employs the distancing technique to make a statement about the present moment. He characterizes Velázquez as a visionary who protests the injustices which he encounters in the Court of Felipe IV. The voice of the *intrahistoria* resounds in Buero’s characterization of Pedro Briones. The machinations of such characters as Marcela, José Nieto, Herrera, Nardi, and the Marqués depict the fantastic elements in the play. Velázquez faces his accusers, and with the support of the Princess María Teresa, he emerges as a figure who represents liberty and justice. It is interesting to note that during the reign of *el Grande* (nickname of Felipe IV), art reached a pinnacle because of the greatness of Velázquez.

This play is just one of Buero’s dramas that manifest his interest in art. Some others are *El sueño de la razón, La llegada*
de los dioses and El diálogo secreto. The title, Las Meninas, is taken from the title of the painting by Velázquez. The characters who appear in the painting are also an integral part of the play. In Robert Nicholas' fascinating interpretation, he postulates that this work is more than just a play about painting and Velázquez’s theory of painting, but that the work takes on the quality of a painting(66). Nicholas explains how the play becomes a visual artifact:

The impressionistic technique which Velázquez expounds is the dramatic technique Buero employs in the first part of this drama. In the first place, the playwright only presents hints of the characters’ ambitions, failures, jealousies, etc. Many things are suggested but none explained or justified. Attention moves quickly from one character to another, from one place on stage to another, from one action to another. The result is an enigmatic kaleidoscope of purposeful confusion and suspicion. (66)

This enigmatic quality of Las Meninas is also present in the painting which has been the subject of many interpretations by experts throughout art history. In the painting, the power of Felipe IV and his wife Mariana of Austria has been reduced to mere reflections in a mirror in the background of a painting in which the central figures are the Princess Margarita, and the
Meninas (Isabel Velasco and Agustina Sarmiento). The dwarfs Mari Bárbola and Nicolás Pertusato are next to them. Nicolás seems to be playing with the dog at his feet. Marcela de Ulloa and a gentleman are in the shadow behind the dwarfs. Velázquez is at the left with his palette, brushes, and the giant canvas. José Nieto de Velázquez is in the back of the room ready to pass through an open door.

Buero’s experimental period (third period) follows his historical stage. Each play in the canon of the playwright is the result of an evolutionary process in which experimentation is the foundation. Generally speaking the manifestation of the experimentation becomes more complex with each succeeding play. A brief explanation of some of the experimental features of El sueño de la razón and La detonación will elucidate some of the features of the innovations in this third period. In spite of innovations, the themes of the plays in this period do not change drastically in as much as Buero continues to examine ideological conflicts between the powerful and the champions of dissent, such as Goya and Larra.
The third period begins with *El sueño de la razón* (1970). This play, like *Las Meninas* (1960), reflects the dramatist's love of painting. The protagonist of this play is Francisco de Goya y Lucientes. The theme of *El sueño de la razón* also is the confrontation of artistic liberty and royal power. The despotic Fernando VII repressed artistic liberty and liberty in general. Faced with the desire of Fernando to dominate him, Goya retreats into a world of solitude exacerbated by his deafness and the fear which permeated the country under the rule of *El deseado*. The experimental facets of this play center on the character of Goya. Iglesias Feijóo describes Goya in the following manner:

[. . .] un hombre que ha creído en la ‘divina razón’, ha vivido las esperanzas de una Ilustración que soñaba un país mejor y se ha encontrado de repente con los horrores y desastres de la guerra de la Independencia, la repression fernandina, los excesos del trienio liberal y el ‘terror blanco’. (407)

Buero uses imaginative scenes to immerse the audience in Goya's psychological world. Goya's fears materialize in the sound of his beating heart and the appearance of his paintings on the wall of his home. The paintings are a series of images of the *Pinturas Negras* which Goya painted on the walls of the Quinta del
Sordo between 1820 and 1824. They visualize Goya's suffering in a series of images which include the following paintings: *Aquelarre o Escena sabática, Saturno devorando a un hijo, Judith, Asmodea, Las fisgonas, La Leocadia, El Santo Oficio, Dos frailes, La romería de San Isidro, La lectura, Riña a garrotazos, Perro, Las Parcas, and Viejos comiendo sopas* (Dowling, 19-32). The series strengthens the pictorial quality of the play, and it manifests Buero's love of painting.

Goya's interpretation of a dispute between his lover, Leocadia, and his daughter-in-law dramatically unfolds as the the cackling of hens and the braying of jackasses pierce the theater. The irony of these scenes is that the perception of sound and sight are interchangeable. Does Goya hear the brawl and the sound of the beating heart? The continual appearance of winged creatures symbolizes the desire to obtain liberty. Of course the receptor of the dramatic text has to imagine the paranoia of Goya's inner world. Iglesias Feijóo conceives of the technical features of the play as an amalgam of "la distancia histórica, la participación emocionada en el mundo de una subjetividad, y animalización esesperpéntica [. . .] " (421).
Finally, the despotic king humbles Goya in a climactic scene that demonstrates Goya's political impotence as he helplessly watches the sexual violation of Leocadia. After the rape, a series of noises permeate the theater—meows, barking, and howling of dogs, and the voice of Mariquita. All these sounds attack the sensibility of Goya who finally flees in desperation to France. The audience’s immersion produced by the richness and the ingenious employment of "paraverbal" elements will reach a dramatic climax in _La detonación_ (1977) when Mariano José de Larra, the protagonist, commits suicide. The audience "dies" as it is plunged into a world of darkness when Larra pulls the trigger.

This chapter provides information which will be beneficial in the analysis of the four dramas which I examine. The background information will facilitate the placement of the four works within Buero's literary trajectory. Also, some of the crucial autobiographical information about Antonio Buero Vallejo's life has resonance in the dramatist's works: his education, his participation in the Spanish Civil War, his life in prison, his condemnation to death, familial discord, and political conflicts.
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CHAPTER 2

¡Es que le tengo miedo al tiempo, Es lo que me hace sufrir. Ver cómo pasan los días, y los años..., sin que nada cambie. (Buero Vallejo, Historia de una escalera 47).

Historia de una escalera: A Modern Tragedy in which the Intersection of Linear and Circular Time Affects the Lives of the Characters

As a child in Guadalajara, Antonio Buero Vallejo became interested in the concept of time. At the knees of his father, Buero listened to him talk about the theory of relativity and the fourth dimension, time. These conversations awoke in the budding dramatist a fascination for the temporal enigmas of the cosmos. This early curiosity did not lie fallow, but during the course of his
professional life it grew and has been expressed in his plays in myriad of ingenious ways (González-Cobos Davila 13).

The examination of the four plays in this dissertation focuses on some of their temporal aspects and the techniques which Buero Vallejo employs to dramatize aspects of temporality. Time is suspended, accelerated, decelerated, bridged, repeated and reversed by the playwright. A staircase, the materialization of a psychological state, the variation in the velocity of dialogue, and the juxtaposition of humans from the future with those of the twentieth century are just a few of the temporal manifestations in the plays of Buero.

Buero Vallejo uses a variety of dramatic techniques to develop the temporal dimensions in each work. The incorporation of temporal information in the dramatic text gives added dramatic depth to the physical, sociological, and occasionally metaphysical significance of human existence. Not only does Buero use time as a powerful tool within the context of each play, but he also uses it as a vehicle of criticism of the political and social structures of his own era.
As noted in the introduction, this investigation focuses on four plays of Antonio Buero Vallejo: *Historia de una escalera*, *El tragaluz*, *La Fundación*, and *La detonación*. These theatrical works are from various periods in Buero’s literary evolution. *Historia de una escalera* premiered in 1949, *El tragaluz* in 1967, *La Fundación* in 1974, and the last production of this group, *La detonación*, premiered in 1977. This selection represents four plays permeated with a sense of time which enhances their dramatic quality and expresses the playwright’s concern about ontological questions related to elements of human existence.

This chapter focuses on *Historia de una escalera*, a three-act play which premiered on October 14, 1949 in the Teatro Español. For this creation, the playwright received the coveted Lope de Vega prize for drama. "Temporal symbolism" and semiotic elements which are related to the representation of time, such as costumes, kinesics, and so on, augment the dramatic quality of the work. I use the term "temporal symbolism" to postulate the "concretization" of temporality by means of various sign systems which possess a multiplicity of significance apropos to the dramatic text. The characters of the drama move and converse within
scenic and contextual frames of reference which are governed by
time. The scenery, props, costuming, lighting, tone, kinesics, stage
directions, and dialogue express aspects of temporality. (Kinesic
signs refer to facial and body movements.) The greatness of the
play is based on the total integration of characterization, staging,
language, symbolization and Buero's dramatization of his concept
of tragedy. Many critics have referred to *Historia de una escalera*
as a realistic play because it portrays facets of everyday life in an
authentic setting; however, Buero transcends a superficial realism
by the incorporation of symbolic, temporal, psychological, and
philosophical elements in the dramatic text.

The employment of a rich sign system composed of a host of
visual and auditory information enhances the entire theatrical
experience--the communication between actors and the spectators.
Props, lighting, decor, costumes, and sound effects enhance the
discourse text. The major sign systems in the play are the dialogue
and stage directions (linguistic signs), the scenery, the movements
and gestures of the characters (kinesics), the costuming, and the
lighting. Even though the scenic code is just one of a system of
multiple codes which communicates the message to the audience,
it is dramatically powerful in *Historia de una escalera* due to the omnipresence of the staircase and its complementary signs. The stagecraft of *Historia de una escalera* is not simple, and it demands the full attention of the receptor. Buero transforms a seemingly insignificant rickety staircase into a world which is rich in symbolic significance.

In his article “Elementos paraverbales en el teatro de Antonio Buero Vallejo,” Luciano García Lorenzo refers to Kowzan’s thirteen sign systems that are important in a dramatic production: “la palabra, el tono, la mímica del rostro, el gesto, el movimiento escénico del actor, el traje, el accesorio, el decorado, la iluminación, la música, el sonido e incluso el maquillaje y el peinado” (103). Some of Kowzan's signs have temporal importance in *Historia de una escalera* because they contribute to the development of the central theme of the play--the power of the human spirit to endure and hope in spite of the overwhelming power of the passage to time to conquer each generation. Various objects acquire extra signification which they do not ordinarily possess. For example, the covered light bulb which hangs over the stairwell of the apartment building not only functions to light
the staircase, but it symbolizes a lack of liberty. This is just one of many props which has symbolic significance in the play; others will be explored later.

Above all, *Historia de una escalera* is a play in which time plays a significant role. Time and space are linked in a temporal-spatial system. Temporal dimensions are sometimes defined by the use of space. For example, the staircase represents a sense of stagnation in a temporal period in which there is no change. The action of the play takes place in the twentieth century. The condensation of space and the passage of thirty years serve as the spatial and temporal background of an intense examination of the lives of a segment of society. Monotonous repetition of everyday life is embedded in a sequence of past, present, and projected future. Within the passage of thirty years, three moments represent the crystallization of time in the present of the discourse: 1919, 1929, and 1949. Even though *Historia de una escalera* does not belong to Buero’s historical plays per se, it is a historical work as it studies modern society in contemporary times. In his historical plays, Buero commented on present injustices by focusing on the past. In *Historia de una escalera*, he
dramatizes the impact of the passage of various historical decades on the lives of the characters of the staircase. Certainly the interpretation of the play from the perspective of the twenty-first century adds to the historicity of this monumental work which premiered at the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century.

My analysis of temporality in *Historia de una escalera* utilizes the dramatic text, and the performance text serves as a reference when it will clarify a point of view or a subject. According to Keir Elam, these two texts possibly belong to different fields of investigation (3). Of course, the main difference in the reception of the two texts is that the reader has to imaginatively create the dramatic context while the spectator has to integrate, in a strictly defined time limit, a variety of sign systems controlled and interpreted by the director, the performers, and the myriad of people who work behind the scenes. In the case of the reading of the dramatic text, the receptor of the play has to makes sense out of the script by interpreting a variety of verbal signs. The reader is an imaginary director who interprets the words of the dramatist.
One of the basic functions of a sign in the dramatic text is narrative in as much as the sign systems can all act together to advance the plot. However, the sign acquires a second-order signification. According to the critics, the understanding of this second order varies from spectator to spectator. Elam indicates that the denotative function of the theatrical sign can take on secondary meanings which are associated with community values and cultures in general. An example of this would be the costumes in *Historia de una escalera*. They signify the social status of the characters, and at the same time they have temporal significance.

The connotative meaning of the sign can result in the symbolization of an object. Elam points out that a given vehicle may bear not one but n second-order meanings at any point in the performance continuum (a costume, for example, may suggest socioeconomic, psychological and even moral characteristics) (10-11).

The dramatic text is the foundation of this examination; therefore, the spatial components of the play are mentally constructed from the instructions of Buero. He is known for his very detailed and artistic description of the stage setting. The
scenery constrains all of the other sign systems of the play. The overwhelming static features of the play are the staircase, the dirty window, the staircase landing, the imprisoned light bulb, and the four doors at the top of the stairwell. The decor in the plays of Buero is not a background against which the action takes place; it is part of the action which interacts dynamically with the other sign systems of the play to increase the dramatic tension. The economy of the sign system is that each object or piece of scenery in Historia de una escalera has several meanings that are basically complementary, for example the light bulb dimly illuminates the scenery while also adding to the symbolic significance of the entire scene. Moreover, the scenery and props impart temporal significance to the play.

According to Keir Elam, there are four temporal levels that are important in the construction of the dramatic world. There is the fictional now which dramatizes the present moment or the temporal order in which the action takes place. It is known as the discourse time. In the performance text, the spectator participates in the present moment of the fictional action. Another level is plot time. This is the presentation of the dramatic events of the play
without concern for chronological order. The next level is known as chronological time which is the ordering of the events of the dramatic world. According to Elam, this level is mentally constructed by the audience from the temporal information presented in the performance text or by the reader of the dramatic text. Another level of time is known as historical time which Elam identifies as the background of the play. The integration of all these levels makes the association between the dramatic world and the real world more concrete (117-119).

Buero has used all of Elam’s levels in the temporal construction of Historia de una escalera. In addition to Elam’s temporal levels, mythological time, periodicity, and psychological time are dimensions of temporality which I will examine in this dissertation. These temporal parameters are variations on Elam’s main levels. Principally, Buero is faithful to the constructs of chronological time in this play. The basic temporal model is linear; the dramatist depicts the passage of chronological time as movement and change. This manifestation of time is in agreement with the concept of time held by many prominent thinkers such as William James, Edmund Husserl, and Thomas Mann. Peter
Hartocollis has noted the contribution of these three men to the concept of time in his book *Time and Timelessness* (3-4). William James explains time as change and movement:

> Objects fade out of consciousness slowly. If the present thought is of ABCDEFG, the next one will be of BCDEFGH, and the one after that of CDEFGH—the lingerings of the past dropping successively away, and the incomings of the future making up the loss. These lingerings of old objects, the incoming of new, are the germs of memory and expectation, the retrospective and the prospective sense of time. (571)

Clearly James’ explanation refers to aspects of chronological time. The present moment is related to the past and to the future so intimately that the relationship produces a sense of movement and change which are important characteristics of chronological time.

The phenomenologist Edmund Husserl describes time in the following manner:

> The actual *now* is necessarily something punctual and remains so, *a form that persists* through continuous change of content. It is the same with the continuity of the just vanished; it is a *continuity of forms* with contents ever new. (218)

Husserl’s explanation of time adds a new dimension to James’ elements of movement and change. Husserl appears to focus on
the present which changes due to the movement of a variety of spatial forms. Equally apropos to the concept of the passage of chronological time is the description of Thomas Mann of the passage of time.

Time is the medium of narration, as it is the medium of life. Both are inextricably bound up with it, as inextricably as are bodies in space. Similarly, time is the medium of music; music divides, measures, articulates time, and can shorten it, yet enhance its value, both at once. Thus music and narration are alike, in that they can only present themselves as a flowing, as a succession in time, as one things after another, and both differ from the plastic arts, which are complete in the present, and unrelated to time save as all bodies are, whereas narration—like music—even if it should try to be completely present at any given moment, would need time to do it in. (541)

This last definition of time is an extension of the two previously cited ones because it represents time as a flow through space instead of a series of concrete points. All of the above definitions are pertinent to the representation of time in Historia de una escalera in which a series of “no points” connected to the past by the lingering of old events in the memory of the characters and the hope for a better future represent the present. The movement of “objects” up and down the staircase concretizes the concept of time without the need of elaborate explanations. In
other occasions, the narrative depicts time as a flow along a continuum imposed by cultural constraints.

The tempo of daily life, the passage of the years, and the stage directions which refer to time are facets of chronological time in *Historia de una escalera*. Much of the present action or discourse time refers to previous actions in years not directly included in the play but referred to in the dramatic text. The following quotation is an example of reference to time in the stage directions. “Han transcurrido diez años que no se notan en nada: la escalera sigue sucia y pobre, las puertas sin timbre, los cristales de la ventana sin lavar" (62).

The memories of the characters in *Historia de una escalera* preserve the past in a continuum with the present. The conceptualization of this continuation of past and present is the passage of chronological time. A good example of this technique is the exposition of the memories of Fernando in which he reminds Urbano of the days of their youth:

Ayer mismo éramos tú y yo dos crios que veníamos a fumar aquí a escondidas, los primeros pitillos… ¡Y hace ya diez años! Hemos crecido sin darnos cuenta subiendo y bajando la escalera, rodeados siempre de los padres,
que no nos entienden; de vecinos que murmuran de nosotros y de quienes murmuramos... Buscando mil recursos y soportando humillaciones para poder pagar las casa, la luz... y las patatas. (48)

In the conversation between Fernando and Carmina, he reminds Carmina of their relationship in the past:

¿Por qué no me tuteas ahora? (Pausa.) ¿Ya no te acuerdas de aquel tiempo? Yo era tu novio y tú eras mi novia... Mi novia... Y nos sentábamos aquí (Señalando a los peldaños), en ese escalón cansados de jugar..., a seguir jugando a los novios. (59)

In addition to memory, Buero also employs the technique of past reporting to create the notion of temporal linearity. Elaine Aston and George Savona explain this technique:

Past reporting between characters is a convention common to the tragic genre, where dramatic plots are centered on a particular moment of anxiety, and where the past is an inevitable and inescapable force weighing heavily upon the characters. (25)

Some textual examples of past reporting are the following:

SEÑOR JUAN. No hija. ¿Para qué? Ya he visto arrancar muchos coches fúnebres en esta vida. (Pausa.) ¿Te acuerdas del de doña Asunción? Fue un entierro de primera, con caja de terciopelo... TRINI. Dicen que lo pagó don Manuel. SEÑOR JUAN. Es muy posible. Aunque el entierro de don Manuel fue menos lujoso.
TRINI. Es que ése lo pagaron los hijos (63).

This text contributes to the temporal linearity of the entire play. As the elders exit the play, the survivors comment on their absence.

In Act III, Paca uses past reporting to inform the receptor of the deaths of her husband, Juan, and of Generosa. She states: “En cambio, mi Juan la subía de dos en dos... hasta el día mismo de morirse” (83). Later she utters, “¡Pobre Generosa! ¡Ni los huesos quedarán!” (84). This information fills in the gaps of the chronology between Act II and Act III. "The fictional layers of the past are interwoven with the concerns of the dramatic present" (Aston and Savona, 25). This interweaving of the past into the present in Historia de una escalera creates the illusion of the chronological flow of time over the course of thirty years.

Spatiotemporal unity creates the illusion of stagnation because the same scenery occupies the dramatic space in the three acts. The staircase is the static structure which acts as a spatial reference point in which chronological time will unfold. The days come and go; months and years pass. The parallel between linear time and linear progress is negligible. Life goes on towards a
future that never materializes--a future that is associated with the hope of obtaining economic prosperity, a future that is a dream for Fernando and a challenge for Urbano.

One way in which Buero elucidates the passage of chronological time is by transforming the physical appearance of his characters and by allowing them to express their concerns about aging. In Act I Generosa is “una pobre mujer de unos cincuenta y cinco años” (38). In Act II, she has “encanecido mucho” (62), and in Act III, she is dead. By the time the third act begins, Paca is “Una viejecita consumida y arrugada, de obesidad malsana y cabellos completamente blancos [. . . ]” (83).

The characters exit chronological time one by one as the hand of Death intervenes in the repetitive tedium of the staircase to devour the inhabitants like Cronos, the Greek god of Time, devours his children. During the thirty years which pass between the first act and the third, Time claims many victims--the elders of the staircase and the victims of the Civil War. Azorín describes the incarnation of time in the god Cronos:

Hay una deidad, invisible y terrible, que se llama Cronos. Es un dios que nadie ve y que todo el mundo siente. Debe
Azorín's conceptualization of Cronos explains the transformation in the characters of the staircase. The costuming, the make-up, the gestures, and the dialogue all act in unison to evoke a sense of the passage of time by means of its "devouring" effects on the characters.

The second act begins with a mourning scene; Gregorio has died, and Carmina consoles her mother who feels absolutely alone. There is reference to Death in the first act also (the mourning dress of doña Asunción and that of her son, Fernando); however, in the second act, Death becomes more palpable as we read the words of Generosa; "Solas, hija mía. ¡Solas!" Señor Juan, the father of Trini, exclaims, "¡A todos nos llegará la hora! “ (63-64). Even the last scene between Carmina hija and Fernando hijo possesses a somber tone because the omnipresent hand of Time will devour them as it did Generosa, Gregorio, the husband of doña Asunción, don Manuel, and doña Asunción. Yet, the departure of five
characters does not break the monotony of the play; life continues to revolve around the static feature of the staircase.

Chronological time is reversed in *Historia de una escalera* as time is directed not only towards the future but also towards the past. The characterization of Fernando *hijo* and Carmina *hija* exemplify the reversal of time. At the same time that these two descendents of the staircase dream of a future in a more optimistic setting, they are constrained by time and culture to repeat the lives of their parents.

Linearity begins to take on aspects of circularity as the children of the staircase renew the cycle which their parents began twenty years earlier. The promises of Fernando *hijo* echo those that Fernando made to Carmina:

> Escúchame. Si tu cariño no me falta, emprenderé muchas cosas. Primero me haré aparejador. ¡No es difícil! En unos años me haré un buen aparejador. [. . .] Ganaré mucho dinero y me solicitarán todas las empresas constructoras. [. . .] Tendremos nuestro hogar, alegre y limpio..., lejos de aquí. Pero no dejaré de estudiar por eso. [. . .] Entonces me haré ingeniero. Seré el mejor ingeniero del país y tú serás mi adorada mujercita... . (104)
Fernando *hijo’s* litany continues as life revolves around the staircase in a humdrumness which deadens the imagination.

The temporal concept in which the present and the future terminate in the past appeared in the Middle Ages in Spanish literature. This concept of time is expressed by Jorge Manrique in his magnificent “Coplas.” In fact, there are many temporal parallels between this poem of Manrique and *Historia de una escalera* which reveal the orientation of Buero within Spanish literature. The following words of Jorge Manrique express eloquently the concept that the future and the present are both a passageway to the past.

Pues si vemos lo presente
como en uno punto s’es ido
e acabado.

si juzgamos sabiamente,
daremos lo non venido
por passado.

Non se engañe nadi, no,
pensando que a de durar
lo que espera

más que duró lo que vió,
pues que todo a de passar
por tal manera. (13-24)
The temporal dynamism in the "Coplas" is controlled by continuous movement towards the past. Octavio Paz describes this concept in his book *Los hijos del limo: Del romanticismo a la vanguardia*:

[. . .] el arquetipo temporal, el modelo del presente y del futuro, es el pasado. No el pasado reciente, sino un pasado inmemorial que está más allá de todos los pasados, en el origen del origen. Como si fuese un manantial, este pasado de pasados fluye continuamente, desemboca en el presente y, confundido con él, es la única actualidad que de verdad cuenta (25).

Paz refers to a past conceptualized as the immutable tradition on which many cultures are founded. However, the temporal movement in *Historia de una escala* reveals a conflict between past and present which is resolved by a slow movement towards a future which is constantly constrained by the past. The scenery in the play visually metaphorizes this almost imperceptible temporal "progress." The lack of substantial change in the environment imparts a sense to the play that time does not exist or that it does not flow; the past is a memory, the present is eternal, and the
future is an illusion. However, contrasting with an immutable present, the stage directions indicate that “Pasaron velozmente veinte años más.” (83).

Another temporal aspect which Buero develops in Historia de una escalera is that of the equalizing force of the passage of time which terminates in death. In the poem, Jorge Manrique metaphorizes life as a river and death as the sea in order to demonstrate the equalizing characteristic of death. He philosophizes over the following:

Nuestras vidas son los ríos
que van a dar en la mar,
qu’es el morir;
allí van los señorios
derechos a se acabar
e consumir,
    allí los ríos caudales,
allí los otros medianos
e más chicos,

allegados son yquales
los que viven por sus manos
e los ricos. (25-36)

In Historia de una escalera, Death takes the inhabitants one by one regardless of their social position. Where is Gregorio? Where is
doña Asunción? Where is don Manuel? They have all descended the staircase for the last time and passed through the doors of eternity. The words of Señor Juan echo the equalizing effect of time. "¡A todos nos llegará la hora!" (Buero Vallejo, Historia 63-64). Their lives are like the rivers poeticized by Manrique which go to the sea, thus indirectly noting the regenerative aspect of the relationship between rivers and the sea. In the resolution of Historia de una escalera, hope is regenerated by the expectancy of new life.

The "Coplas" also refer to the human conception that the past was a better time: "Cómo, a nuestro parescer, cualquiere tiempo passado fue mejor" (10). In Historia de una escalera, memories are more precious than the present and the future. Buero portrays the past as being a time of happiness. Fernando says to Carmina: "Carmina, aquel tiempo es el único recuerdo maravilloso que conservo en medio de la sordidez en que vivimos. Y quería decirte... que siempre ... has sido para mí lo que eras antes" (59). This brief comparison between Historia de una escalera and the “Coplas” reveals that Buero is a writer who
respects tradition while at the same time is innovative in his approach to the dramatization of temporality.

*Historia de una escalera* is not only a dramatic work in which many of its temporal components are identifiable features of the external world, such as its treatment of historical time, but it also examines the psychological effect of time on its characters, particularly in the characterization of Fernando. A comparison of the two characters, Urbano and Fernando, sheds light on the difference in their attitudes toward time. Fernando resigns himself to the stagnation which surrounds him while Urbano reacts against the constraints of time, especially time without change. The words of Fernando express his "interiorization" of time. He asserts, “¡Es que le tengo miedo al tiempo! Es lo que más me hace sufrir. Ver cómo pasan los días, y los años..., sin que nada cambie” (47).

Considering the historical context in which Fernando lives, he is a character who is alienated from the historical current of the exterior world. Spain entered the twentieth century late. The country neither took part in the First World War nor directly in the revolutionary movements of the second decade of the
twentieth century because it was occupied with resolving problems of the nineteenth century (Cantarino 264). Even though the historical pace of Spain was different from the rest of Europe during the first decades of the twentieth century, it was an exciting era in which the foundation of power that would result in the Spanish Civil War in 1936 was being laid.

The twentieth century began with the ascension of Alfonso XIII to the throne at the age sixteen. Political opposition to his dynasty was manifested by those who were adverse to his reign and wanted to institute a Republican form of government. The Carlists were also still strong in the country; in addition, the Socialist party was gathering strength, and Communism was making inroads in Cataluña and Andalucia (Cantarino 342). By the year 1919, which is the year in which Act I takes place, disturbances were being felt which would have an impact on history. The following newspaper clippings taken from Crónica del siglo XX attest to the following events in 1919:

“'La Canadiense' en huelga” 21 de febrero—

La vida en Barcelona está paralizada, tal como se temía por los últimos acontecimientos. El pasado día 5 la
Barcelona Traction, Light and Power, más conocida por 'La Canadiense', redujo el salario a sus empleados. [. . .]

El día 8 se inició la huelga en 'La Canadiense', a la que siguieron la del sector textil, el 18, y agua, gas, electricidad y transporte, a partir de hoy. [. . .].

(237)

"Estado de guerra en Barcelona " 18 de marzo —

El Consejo de ministros ha levantado el estado de guerra en Barcelona, una vez se da por finalizada la huelga general iniciada el pasado febrero. Los servicios de agua, luz y tranvías funcionan con normalidad, aunque hasta dentro de un par de días no se espera la total reincorporación al trabajo de los huelguistas. [. . .].

(239)

"Llega la jornada de ocho hora" 9 de octubre—

Los trabajadores españoles han conseguido una gran victoria en sus reivindicaciones. De acuerdo con lo acordado en el real decreto del 20 de abril, desde el día 1 del presente mes se ha implantado la jornada de ocho horas en todo el país. Aunque la medida no supone ninguna alegría para el sector patronal, a lo largo de estos días no se han detectado incidentes de importancia durante su establecimiento. (246)

"Conflictos laborales en toda España" 3 de noviembre—

Lo que se temía ha sucedido. La patronal española, con la barcelonesa a la cabeza, tiene miedo de los avances sociales. Hoy, la patronal barcelonesa ha decretado el lock-out, hasta que consiga de las asociaciones obreras y del gobierno plenas garantías de que la libertad sindical no cohibirá la plena libertad e independencia del trabajo. Al mismo tiempo, espera que se publique un real decreto que regule los acuerdos que puedan tomarse entre patronal y sindicatos. [. . .]. (247)
These newspaper clippings illustrate that the year 1919 was one in which many history-shaping events were taking place in Spain. There were numerous strikes and altercations between employers and employees. Labor relations became so violent that a state of war was declared in Barcelona. The disorders in Barcelona spread throughout the country. Fernando and Urbano "lived" in this atmosphere of political clashes, labor disputes, and the exodus of thousands of Spaniards from rural areas to the chaos of the city.

Fernando and Urbano are the crucial characters in relationship to the temporal elements in the drama. Their individual attitudes towards the nineteenth century and their present historical moment and their orientation towards the future are different. The conflict between these two characters is symbolic of the growing conflict in Spain between the conservative elements and the more progressive ones. This political struggle will eventually lead to a crises which will only be resolved by war. Fernando is a character who is not only the product of the nineteenth century but is one who refuses to face the reality of twentieth century life. He is alienated by the crisis in the
contemporary world, and like a true romantic, he takes refuge in his imagination. He suffers from the malaise known as *abulia* which plagued many Spaniards at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The following citations illuminate the psychological dilemma of Fernando. His sense of duration, the passage of chronological time, and a cyclic pattern which produces a hellish stagnation contribute to his psychological conflicts. Duration is the most elemental sense of time explored in *Historia de una escalera*. Henri Bergson in his book, *Duration and Simultaneity* describes duration:

> There is no doubt but that for us time is at first identical with the continuity of our inner life. What is this continuity? That of a flow or passage, but a self-sufficient flow or passage, the flow not implying a thing that flows, and the passing not presupposing states through which we pass; the thing and the state are only artificially taken snapshots of the transition; and this transition, all that is naturally experienced, is duration itself. (44)

Bergson has conceptualized an innate sense of time without which the perception of duration in the outside world would be impossible. When we are completely isolated our consciousness is
directed towards our inner world. The stimuli from the outside world can be reduced, and yet one is still aware of a passage of time even though there is little physical change in the outer world. This perception is synonymous with our consciousness of life itself. Bergson postulates that we pass from "inner time to the time of things" by the gradual extension of our consciousness to include the duration of objects outside of us. He maintains that it is a state of consciousness directed inward and outward at the same time (45).

In contrast to Fernando, whose psychological dilemmas are examined by Buero, Urbano is depicted as a character who doesn’t reveal much of his sense of duration in the discourse; however, in terms of his perception of the exterior world, he is voluble. He says to Fernando:

Los pobres diablos como nosotros nunca lograremos mejorar de vida sin la ayuda mutua. Y eso es el sindicato. ¡Solidaridad! Esa es nuestra palabra. Y sería la tuya si teodieses cuenta de que no eres más que un triste hortera. ¡Pero como te crees un marqués! (46)

Urbano wants to ascend by the means of an intense personal effort and his association with the proletariat. His cry is "Luchar" and
"Solidaridad." He is aware of his historical moment and the importance of the labor movement in the early twentieth century in Spain. The previous excerpts of *Crónica del siglo XX* noted some of the labor disturbances that were making the headlines in the year 1919.

In addition to the previously discussed temporal topics--the chronological passage of time, the reversal of time, time and duration--*Historia de una escalera* examines periodicity, i.e. the repetition which occurs in the natural world as the seasons follow each other. Carlos Gurméndez in his book, *El tiempo y la dialéctica*, alludes succinctly to the importance of periodicity in the life of a Spaniard:

> En realidad, para el español, el Tiempo es una etapa, una estadía del ser dentro del proceso universal en el que se siente incluido, un mero tránsito por el Mundo. Es la estación del año, la flor de la primavera, los frutos del invierno, el temporal, el pasatiempo del Tiempo universal. (27)

This passage firmly links Spanish life with the reoccurrence of the seasons and the expectations which are associated with seasonal transformations in nature.
In much of the literature of Western culture, rebirth is associated with the New Year and Spring, maturation with Autumn, and death with Winter. The constant ascent and descent of the stairs impart to the text or to the dramatic performance a cyclic pattern that mimics aspects of periodicity found in nature. All the dialogue takes place on the stairs or the landing. The characters emerge through their doors to converse, and then they exit. The repetition of traditional rituals--birth, courtship, marriage, and the cycle of life and death--produces periodicity. Birth is Spring, love and courtship are Summer, marriage and maturation are Autumn, and old age and death are Winter.

The regenerative character of Carmina hija’s and Fernando hijo’s love echoes aspects of periodicity in the natural order. The regeneration of time in Historia de una escalera is not a cosmic one in which the opportunity to begin anew is reborn, but a type of renaissance in which tradition and history are transformed into the future. All these direct and indirect cyclic references in the play create a sense of periodicity and movement in time. The attitude of Buero towards time and humanity is always positive as temporal regeneration represents the hope of the future.
Another aspect of periodicity is that of “eternal return.” Pedro Laín Entralgo in his article, “Casi veinte años después,” refers to a sense of eternal return in Historia de una esclara when he characterizes the plays as follows:

Ese doméstico y opresor eterno retorno que constituyen el nacimiento de la esperanza y su ulterior fracaso en la mediocridad y la monotonía de la vida que la engendró [. . .]. (7)

It is worth clarifying the idea of eternal return because it is a phrase commonly used to characterize the temporal aspects of Historia de una escalera. The following definition of "eternal return" was taken from The Encyclopedia of Philosophy which defines “eternal return” as follows:

[. . .] the doctrine that every event in the universe, in all its details and in its whole cosmic context will recur an infinite number of times in exactly the same way that it has already occurred an infinite number of times in the past. The doctrine must be distinguished from the belief in the general periodicity of nature, according to which the main features—but not the specific details--of human and cosmic history recur. (Capek, 61)

Clearly, what the critics refer to as "eternal return" in Historia de una escalera is periodicity. The dynamic relationship between
hope and failure, between life and death, and between degeneration and regeneration represents this periodicity.

References to mythological time also appear in *Historia de una escalera*. Buero guides the reader into a fictional world that is realistic on the surface but profoundly symbolic. Some of the symbolism has its origin in mythological time, such as the staircase and the movement of the inhabitants of the apartment around this structure. The author penetrates the realistic scene and magnifies its significance through the revelation of symbolic aspects of the setting. Symbolic significance can also be extracted from the window on the landing, the four doors that loom over the scene, and the mesh enclosed light bulb. The critics have commented profusely on the significance of the various symbols in *Historia de una escalera*. Mariano de Paco in his article "*Historia de una escalera* veinticinco años más tarde" theorizes over the significance of the staircase in the play:

La escalera como símbolo abierto es uno de los más importantes hallazgos de *Historia de una escalera*. […] todos siguen unidos a los viejos peldaños, subiendo y bajando para volver a bajar y a subir de nuevo, su más
This explanation of the symbolic importance of the staircase is in agreement with the opinion that it is the principal scenic sign which represents time in the play. Its omnipresent, monolithic structure is the "concretization" of the words of Fernando: “Ver cómo pasan los días, y los años..., sin que nada cambie” (47). It is the structural backdrop on which the passage of time will be played. In an environment of stagnation, boredom, repetition, failure, the lack of freedom, and the lack of hope, its monumental construction contrasts with the passage of chronological time. The two temporal models of time, circularity and linearity, often become blurred because there are no significant changes in the conditions of the apartment dwellers.

Some of the other explanations of the symbolic significance of the staircase noted by Mariano de Paco are the following. Alfredo Marqueríe conceives of the staircase as one of the protagonists in the play who doesn’t speak but is a mute spectator to the rites of
passage of the inhabitants; García Pavón perceives of the staircase as a symbol of social immobility. Joelyn Ruple affirms that “the stairway in Historia, de una escalera for example, can symbolize the government, poverty, human personality, fate, society, or all these things’ ”(397-398).

Mircea Eliade in his book Myths, Rites, Symbols: a Mircea Eliade Reader also notes the frequent appearance of a stairway in dreams in which the staircase symbolizes the passage from one state to another. Certainly in Historia de una escalera, the staircase is the principal symbol of passage from life to death, from love to marriage, and from childhood to adulthood. These are states associated with the passage of chronological time and temporal repetition in each generation. The story of the staircase may be interpreted as a modern version of the mythological struggle of Sisyphus to roll a stone up a hill only to have it fall when he approaches the top. The repetition of the act represents the entrapment in a hellish situation in which he must repeat his act. Also the following explanation of Antonio Álamo adds a positive interpretation to the concept of the repetition of time. He explains the concept in the following manner:
Los griegos concibieron un tiempo circular y perfecto, dominado por el dios Cronos: un tiempo que efectivamente se va pero que a la postre vuelve a ser lo que ha sido. El tiempo fluye en un determinado sentido, como las agujas de un reloj, y luego en sentido contrario. En *El político*, Platón nos dice que los muertos saldrán de sus tumbas, nos dice que los viejos rejuvenecerán, nos dice que los niños se convertirán en bebés, y volverán a los úteros de sus madres. El tiempo va y viene, sin cesar, sin descanso, del pasado al futuro y luego del futuro al pasado, eterno y perfecto. (40)

Buero echoes this positive attitude towards time at the end of *Historia de una escalera* in the allusions to the repetition of life. This repetition manifests the hope that is part of the Buerian concept of tragedy.

The window on the landing of the staircase is another important temporal symbol because it complements the temporal significance of the staircase. Juan Eduardo Cirlot states the following in respect to its symbolic meaning:

Por constituir un agujero expresa la idea de penetración, de posibilidad y de lontananza: por su forma cuadrangular, su sentido se hace terrestre y racional. Es también un símbolo de la conciencia(56), especialmente cuando aparece en la parte alta de una torre, por analogía de ésta con la figura humana (462).
The symbolic characteristic of the window described by Cirlot above is transformed in the text. Dust covers the window on the landing, thus producing a sensation of closure and isolation. The dust covered opening acts in conjunction with the staircase to increase the sense of stagnation. This window is just one of many which appears in the plays of Buero. Variations of the window are repeated in *El tragaluz* and *La Fundación*. Perhaps the window is a subconscious reference to the windows in the prisons in which Buero spent many years.

Another important symbol is that of the doors at the top of the staircase. Cirlot makes the following comment about the symbolic significance of the door: “Psicoanalíticamente símbolo femenino que, de otro lado, implica todo el significado del agujero, de lo que permite el paso y es, consecuentemente, contrario al muro” (379). The doors described in the text certainly possess the quality of agujeros as the characters continually exit and enter the portals. The doors represent an entrance into an intimate space which is protected from the eyes and the ears of the reader or spectator.
In addition to the mythological allusions in the symbolic world of the staircase, popular myth adds another dramatic dimension to the play. Fernando speculates on the future in the following temporal chant, “desde mañana,” “en un año,” “tres años,” and “dentro de cuatro años” (61). After Fernando’s temporal litany reminiscent of that of the milkmaid in Félix María Samaniego’s "Lechera", Act I reaches a climax with the spilling of the milk. The importance of the tipping over of the milk container derives its importance from the association of an ordinary object which has traditional significance with a sense of frustration and failure which permeates the play. The story of the lechera takes on universal dimensions because it expresses the frustration of modern humanity faced with uncertainty.

Historical time is another aspect of temporality which appears in the dramatic text. Keir Elam indicates that historical time makes the association between the dramatic world and the real world more concrete. As noted in the Introduction, Buero is concerned with the place of modern women and men in history, and many critics have commented on the exposition of the theme of history in Buero’s dramas. Robert Nicholas examines
temporality in the play by alluding to the different meanings of the word “historia” in the drama. He states:

Hay que reconocer que en esta historia convergen diferentes 'historias': 1) la de la guerra civil cuyos efectos se sobreentienden, aunque no se enuncien abiertamente, 2) la generacional que se repiten a través de los años, 3) la individual que se encara con la inevitabilidad existencial, y 4) la de la escalera misma, permanencia amenazante. (18)

Clearly the different stories associated with Historia de una escalera have temporal significance: the Civil War, the cyclic repetition of the generations, the problems engendered by the passage of time, and the staircase which symbolizes the plight of the four families who live from day to day while years becomes decades.

Pedro Laín Entralgo refers to the “historia” of the play in his article “Casi veinte años después.” He states:

Dos parecen ser los planos principales de esa historia, el social y el personal, el colectivo y el biográfico. En su plano social o colectivo, la historia de Historia de una escalera es el paso del tiempo que tan elocuentemente expresan la conversión de la falda larga en falda corta y la aparición de antenas de televisión sobre el horizonte. La constante caída de las hojas del calendario ha traído consigo cambio y progreso.” (192)
In the “Palabra final” of the first edition of *Historia de una escalera*, Buero describes the conception of time in the play and relates it to the recovery of personal history.

“‘Historia de una escalera’” se desenvuelve dentro de una línea de preocupación por el tiempo y el espacio como límites del hombre, común al teatro contemporeanes. (156)

Buero indicates that the “escalera” is the following:

la entidad patética constituida por el retorno, la fugacidad y el cambio de las cosas humanas--tiempo--, sobre la yerta sordidez de un estrecho escenario casi inmutable—espacio. (156)

Buero depicts time as destructive in the play; people age and die, dreams are shattered, and loves are lost. The dreams of Fernando and Urbano vanish as they are vanquished by time. The plights of the characters are made more acute as they suffer the pangs of mismatched marriages, economic deprivation and Death. However, the playwright’s attitude towards time remains basically positive. Buero has indicated that *Historia de una escalera* is a search for "nuestro tiempo perdido." Buero’s statement describes the fundamental role of time in *Historia de una escalera*; it is based on the recovery of what the dramatist refers to as a “tiempo
perdido." Fernando *hijo* and Carmina *hija* reestablish order as they dream and seek to recover the dreams of “nuestro tiempo perdido.” Time provides them with the opportunity to recover the dreams of youth in a future that is uncertain. Time does not allow the characters to recapture the past; however, it provides them with the opportunity to dream and to hope.

*Historia de una escalera* acquires much of its importance from its historicity. The text examines some of the economic and political situations during the first years of the dictatorship and its step towards a modern society in which little by little some of the problems of the aftermath of the war are resolved. The characters of the play depict the plight of those who had endured the upheavals of history and suffered economic deprivation under the yoke of the Francoist dictatorship.

Many significant events touched Spanish lives during the thirty years that passed in the play. In 1923, the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera began. The duration of his rule was characterized by dramatic changes and upheavals. Finally in 1930 when King Alfonso XIII withdrew his support of the dictatorship, Primo de Rivera renounced his position. In 1931, Alfonso XIII was exiled,
and the Second Republic was instituted (1931-1936). The years of the Republic were turbulent ones marked by uprising, riots, frequent changes in government, and finally by the Spanish Civil War. The War lasted three years (1936-1939), and it left the country exhausted and demoralized. Many of the prominent men of letters were exiled as the Dictatorship exerted its control over every facet of life. The Civil War ended ten years before the premiere of *Historia de una escalera*.

The audience has to intellectually integrate all of Keir Elam’s temporal levels in order to understand the discourse. However, the accessibility of the dramatized world of *Historia de una escalera* does not represent a major impediment to the members of the audience in as much as Buero’s interpretation of many of the problems in the play is based upon their experiences. The dramatized world becomes reality without any difficulty because there is a considerable degree of correspondence between the two spheres: the dramatic world and the contemporary world.

*Historia de una escalera* premiered to a Spanish audience which was controlled and isolated by the dictatorship of Franco. The play was monumental because it marked the end of one
decade and the beginning of a period of readjustment to the political situation in Spain and to that of the rest of the world. Since the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939, Spain had suffered economically from what Carr and Fusi label a “rundown economy” (49-50): roads were in disrepair, transportation was unreliable, industry had degenerated, and agricultural products were scarce (50). Coupled with the critical state of the economy, Francoist rhetoric exerted control over the media and artistic works resulting in a sense of boredom that permeated the society. In this play, Buero comments on contemporary history and criticizes the dictatorship of Franco by focusing on the near past, 1919 and 1929, and the present, 1949. The three acts of the play represent three moments which are the acme of the passage of thirty years. This last year (1949) is significant because not only is it the year of the discourse time, it is also the year of the historical moment of the audience.

The presentation of the lack of change in space dramatizes the plight of the inhabitants of the staircase. The text of the first act informs the receptor that "El espectador asiste, en este acto y en el siguiente, a la galvanización momentánea de tiempos que han
pasado" (37). The scenery of Act I is very dismal and depressing. It is 1919, and the housing represented on stage is typical of poor apartment houses of that era. The scene is dirty, and a dusty light bulb encased in a kind of wire mesh through which light shines hangs over the scenery. The staircase, which dominates the stage, is delimited by an old stair railing crowned by a worn iron handrail. The play opens with a myriad of complaints, insults, and threats over the perennial problem of bill paying: “¿ Ha visto usted la subida de la luz?, ” “¿Y la leche?, ” “¿Y las patatas?” (43). “¡Menuda ladronera es la Compañía! ” (38).

The problems of the characters of the play in 1919 are the same ones that the population was experiencing in 1949, thus increasing the proximity between the fiction and reality. By the late forties, electrical power was still in short supply in Spain; factories and homes suffered frequent cuts. Carr and Fusi indicate that the poverty of the decade was made more conspicuous by the wastefulness of a few (52). This economic reality also appears in the play. In the opening scene, the variation in the amount of the electric bills manifests the economic situation of the families whose lives revolve around the staircase. Señora Generosa pays
dos pesetas; Paca pays four pesetas ten céntimos; doña Asunción owes 3 pesetas 20 céntimos, and Elvira pays 6 pesetas 75 céntimos.

Act II takes place in 1929, and the same scenery creates the setting: “Han transcurrido diez años que no se notan en nada: la escalera sigue sucia y pobre, las puertas sin timbre, los cristales de la ventana sin lavar” (62). However, the characters have changed as indicated by their costumes, make-up, gestures, and physical agility. Throughout the first act, the stage directions—in relationship to the characters and costuming—refer to the effects of the passage of chronological time. The stage directions at the beginning of Act II refer to the fact that even though the costumes are still poor, they are more modern than the previous ones. The effect of the chronological passage of time begins to take its toll on the physical appearance of the characters as they age and die. In contrast to the transformation in the characters, the staircase looms like an eternal symbolic space around which a tragedy is being enacted. The first two acts are historical moments in relationship to the third act which depicts the contemporary scene.

Act III takes place in 1949. In relationship to time, the text points out the following:

Pasaron velozmente veinte años más. Es ya nuestra época. La escalera sigue siendo una humilde escalera de vecinos. El casero ha pretendido sin éxito, disfrazar su pobreza con algunas(algunos)nuevos detalles concedidos despaciosamente a lo largo del tiempo: [. . .]. (83)
In the twenty years that have passed since the end of Act II, the changes in the physical environment have been superficial: the installation of a doorbell, painted walls, and decorative glass in the window (83. However, in contrast, the passage of twenty years has exerted its effects on the physical appearance of the characters and on their lives. The integration of time, space, and the transformation in the characters all act to criticize postwar Spain. In the period of ten years which passed after the Civil War, the changes in the scenery have been minimal. The drama realistically depicts the plight of the average citizen, and it contrasts with the bland escapist literature which was approved by the fascist censorship. José Monleón, in his article "Un teatro abierto" affirms the following:

En un orden más alusivo al momento español inmediato, también hablaba Buero al final de su obra de los hijos atemorizados por los padres, de la gravitación del pasado sobre el presente y--con carácter coactivo y condicionante--sobre el futuro. (18)

The frustration and sense of failure in *Historia de una escalera* is therefore a part of the consciousness of a nation recuperating from
the effects of a war which was still fresh in the memory of the audience. The past of the characters of the play and their memories are those of the members of the audience.

The tragedy of *Historia de una escalera* is paradoxically optimistic and pessimistic. The characters of the intrahistoria suffer from economic deprivations which affect their environment and their attitudes towards life. Yet, they transcend despair because time is both their enemy and their consolation. In the presence of a life of doom and gloom, time provides a temporal stage which allows four families to hope. The inhabitants of the "casa de vecindad" are aware of the finiteness of their existence; nevertheless, they hope that the next generation will escape from the world of the staircase. In *Historia de una escalera*, Buero surpasses commonness in a play which deals with the transcendence of the effects of time on human existence. It is for this reason that Buero clarifies the following characteristics of the tragedy:

La tragedia no surge cuando se cree en la fuerza infalible del destino, sino cuando, *consciente o*
inconscientemente, se empieza a poner en cuestión al destino. La tragedia intenta explorar de qué modo las torpezas humanas se disfrazan de destino. (“Sobre teatro” 14)

Therefore, it is evident that Buero is teaching his audience that even though time will "devour" the individual, collective survival, or collective destiny as a nation is within their hands. By allusion to the continuity of the cyclic aspect of the play, Buero includes the audience in the closing of Historia de una escalara.


Nicholas, Robert L. "La 'historia' de *Historia de una escalera."


CHAPTER 3

What, then, is time? If no one asks me, I know; if I want to explain it to someone who asks me, I do not know. I can state with confidence, however, that this much I do know: if nothing passed away there would be no past time; if there was nothing still on its way there would be no future time; and if nothing existed, there would be no present time.

Now, what about those two times, past and future: in what sense do they have real being, if the past no longer exists and the future does not exist yet? As for present time, if that were always present and never slipped away into the past, it would not be time at all; it would be eternity. (Saint Agustine 295-296)

*El tragaluz*: Human Existence in Time

The linear time of *Historia de una escalera* breaks down in *El tragaluz* (1967) as Antonio Buero Vallejo dramatizes time's elusiveness and the Judaic-Christian mysteries and perplexities of
The text of *El tragaluz* examines the relationship between the past, the present, and the future. Buero gives special attention to the present which he transforms into the future and into the past. In *Historia de una escalera*, the principal temporal components of the play center on circular repetition and chronological development. However, *El tragaluz* is much more complex in its elaboration of temporality, and it also examines critical ethical issues, such as the impact of war on the family, the loss of individual identity due to the “mediatization” of society, and the erosion of patriarchal power within the family structure. Buero explores the ethical development of human beings of the twentieth century set against a background in which aspects of temporality accentuate certain problems peculiar to modern society.

The significant temporal periods of *El tragaluz* focus on the end of the Spanish Civil War (1939), the middle of the sixties, and the twenty-fifth century or thirtieth century (The critics are not in agreement about the exact century of the time travelers). The characters of the play are contemporaries of the members of the audience. Buero intends to transport the members of the audience
to the future so that they might watch "their contemporaries" on stage. *El tragaluz* premiered on October 7, 1967, in the Teatro Bellas Artes in Madrid to the acclaim of critics and the public. Of course, the play had its detractors. Emilio Romero in his article "Un sótano y el tren," criticized the play for its vengeful attack on those who won the war; those who "caught the train." In this article, he points out that Buero “ha triunfado en el tren” (2). Despite these allegations of this critic whose political ideology was to the Right, *El tragaluz* brought the public face to face with the present, and it was designed to stimulate the members of its audience to observe their lives critically. Although today's reader participates in the play's action from a spatial and temporal distance, the didactic purpose of the play is clear.

Buero subtitled *El tragaluz" un experimento en dos partes."* Buero's categorization of the play was significant because in the year 1967 experimentation in the theater was in vogue. Two weeks after the premiere of *El tragaluz* in Madrid, Jean Paul Sartre's *La Putain respectuese* and *Huis clos* made their debuts in Barcelona on October 21, 1967. A few weeks later in November, an American theatrical group made its appearance in Spain. The
following newspaper article published November 10, 1967, describes the theater and its importance in Spain and other countries:

Gran revuelo ha producido en España la primera actuación del grupo teatral estadounidense 'Living Theater' con la puesta en escena de Antígona, obra perteneciente al denominado 'teatro de la crueldad' e inspirada en la tragedia de Sófocles. Después de su presentación en Barcelona, la compañía se trasladará con la misma obra a Valladolid, Bilbao y San Sebastián. Antígona, objeto de grandes discusiones, por su heterodoxia, ha sido rápidamente aceptada, y hasta aclamada, por los jóvenes, que ahora se aproximan a la actividad teatral y se interesan sobre todo en el experimentalismo. No es España el primer país en que la actuación del 'Living Theater' se ve acompañada del escándalo, y no es necesario ser profeta para adivinar que sus métodos serán en seguida imitados. (Torres Fepsa 996)

Even though Buero’s subtitle, “un experimento en dos partes,” indicates that El tragaluz is an experimental play, Iglesias Feijóo classifies it as a transitional work in the evolution of the dramatic art of Buero Vallejo (383). In fact, El tragaluz belongs to the end
of the historical period in the evolution of Buero’s dramas. The play possesses characteristics of Buero’s historical period and also of his following experimental period. The plays of the historical period narrate historical events or focus on historical characters. However, the dramatist transcends historical realism by combining historical moments with fantasy, historical characters with fictional ones, and social injustices in the twentieth century with fictionalized personal events. In *El tragaluz*, the narrators, *El* and *Ella*, unfold "history" to a real audience in the future. Regardless of the period, Buero Vallejo’s approach to his art is experimental; it is the foundation of each play in the canon of the playwright. Buero’s experimentation becomes more complex with each succeeding play.

Due to the importance of time in many facets of *El tragaluz*, for example the structure, the content, and certain ethical concerns, an examination of temporal elements in the play can be fruitful. *El tragaluz* is one of Buero's most complex dramas, and an examination of the work is germane to the hypothesis of my dissertation in as much as it may manifest useful information about the evolution of the dramatic art of the playwright and
about the evolution in the complexity of the exposition of time in the plays of Buero Vallejo. The experimental features of *El tragaluz* are closely associated with how the playwright develops and dramatizes time in the text; the structure and the content of the work are also closely associated with time. In *El tragaluz*, Buero amplifies or modifies some of the same techniques discussed in the analysis of *Historia de una escalera* and adds experimental features which result in a temporal dynamism which sets it apart from his earlier plays.

The analysis of *El tragaluz*, focuses on Keir Elam's four temporal levels (discourse time, chronological time, historical time, and the dynamic interplay between history and the present) which elucidated much of Buero's approach to *Historia de una escalera*. Furthermore, a study of mythological time and a reference to Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity in relationship to certain temporal elements of *El tragaluz* will clarify and support the hypothesis of this dissertation. There have been many studies which focus on the immersion effects in Buero's plays, but few have examined scientific aspects of the drama. I argue that the fusion of science and dramatic art produces a play which
exceeds surface realism by the incorporation of such scientific themes as time travel, holography, and the reconstruction of sound. The play also probes the sociological and existential consequences of scientific progress.

This study of *El tragaluz* begins with an analysis of historical time, the temporal foundation of the play. The historical periods which are directly related to *El tragaluz* are the Spanish Civil War and the postwar years of the sixties. At the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939, Spain was demoralized as a consequence of the bloody slaughter of Spaniards on both political sides. In the decades prior to the debut of *El tragaluz*, Franco’s regime sought to establish political and economic stability in a country which was torn asunder by strife between the Nationalists and the Republicans. The text of *El tragaluz* examines the effects of the Spanish Civil War on a segment of the *intrahistoria* and the memories of the bloody combat.

The examination of the Spanish Civil War in *El tragaluz* is much more direct than it is in *Historia de una escalera*. Buero's exploration of history in this play is a valuable contribution to his dramatic evolution in as much as he dramatizes the direct effects
of the war on the *intrahistoria*, both the victors and the vanquished. The playwright also dramatizes some of the problems of the postwar years, especially 1967. Buero subtly teaches the reader and the spectator by dramatizing sociological problems--such as the transformation of the familial structure--by suggesting an existential universe, and by dramatizing non-dogmatically the ethical development of humans in the face of technological encroachment. Regarding the educative purposes of the play, John Kronik maintains that “Buero has given time dimensionality so that history can take on that educative potential which it is said to contain and which man is said to ignore all too often” (387). For Kronik, human determinism and individual choice are the important issues dramatically developed in *El tragaluz* (372). He concludes that the text of the play indicates that humans are free to choose; therefore, they can be influenced but not determined (387).

Certainly, Buero's characterizations in *El tragaluz* exhibit the opposition between free will and the forces of history. The resolution of this opposition varies with each character. Vicente erred when he "caught the train," that is he took his first step
towards independence which resulted in the death of his little sister, Elvirda. However, it was during the war, and he was young. Subsequently, he continues to victimize those around him, for example Encarna and Beltrán. Yet, he is not completely corrupt for he provides economic support to his family. On the other hand, the Father is a victim of the forces of history. The critics have debated his culpability in the sacrifice of his son. At times, though, the Father does exercise his free will and rejects the transformation in his historical circumstances, for example the scene in which he destroys the television set which Vicente gave him. Mario reacts to the power of history over his existence by refusing to participate in contemporary life. He remains indecisive while history unfolds around him. In *El tragaluz*, Buero dramatizes the constraints on human liberty within a very specific historical frame of reference and examines the effects of the Spanish Civil War almost thirty years after it terminated.

The division of the structure of *El tragaluz* by the critics into inner play and outer play facilitates an analysis of its temporal aspects. The outer play involves the characters *El* and *Ella*, two beings from the future. These two time travelers enter the back of
the auditorium, present themselves to the members of the audience, and "transport" them to the future. The spectators are thus compelled to contemplate their lives depicted in the inner play from the perspective of El and Ella many centuries in the future. This is the first part of Antonio Buero Vallejo's experiment—the psychological transportation of the audience from the present to the future. He accomplishes it by the presence of El and Ella and the immersion of the audience in the dialogue of these two beings. At the same time that the audience is distanced from the action, they are immersed in their own lives which is also part of Buero's experiment. Mary Rice includes a quotation of Ricardo Doménech in her book, Distancia e inmersión en el teatro de Buero Vallejo, which explains Buero's technique and its effect on the audience:

La finalidad de esta ficción radica en que, a través suyo, podemos ver más objetivada nuestra realidad contemporánea. Al invitársenos a contemplar esta historia de nuestro tiempo desde un tiempo futuro, ese ejercicio imaginativo nos sitúa en un nivel desde el cual podemos, más fácilmente vernos y juzgarnos: enfrentarnos cara a cara con nuestra responsabilidad individual y colectiva. (9)
At the discursive level, the play dramatizes some of the dehumanization which accompanied Spain’s entrance into the twentieth century. The playwright immerses the members of the audience in their present from the perspective of the future; thus, they are able to examine the effect of space and time on their existence. The resonance of the aftermath of the bloody civil war permeates every aspect of the drama: the semiotics and the interpersonal relationships.

The construction of the scenery of the inner play reflects the results of the War. Buero transforms the humdrumness of three scenes into a web of complex interpersonal relations between the members of the family on whom the play focuses. At the same time, he penetrates the surface realism of the basement apartment, the office, and the cafe by revealing the symbolic significance of the scenery. The scenery communicates the relationship between the winners and the losers of the War. The vanquished are relegated to a basement apartment (the pozo) while Vicente, who deserted his family carrying the provisions for Elvirità, has joined the ranks of the victors in his elevated office. The contrast
between the heights of these two scenes compares the position of these two segments of society without the need for elaborate discourse.

The sidewalk cafe is a zone which complements the action in the two well-defined areas of the office and the basement apartment. The title of the play takes its name from the principal symbolic object in the scenery, the *tragaluz*. It is the basement window of the apartment that exists only as a shadow which divides two spatial worlds (the apartment and the outside world) and two temporal spaces (the pre-war years and the post-war years). The temporal interplay between these three areas will be discussed in another section of this chapter.

In the theatrical production of the play, José Osuna, the director, very rarely deviated from the instructions of Buero in the creation of the characters and the scenery. He used lighting which emphasized the realism of the scenes and *El* and *Ella*. Osuna emphasized his attitude towards the time traveler's characterization in the following words:

Siempre había imaginado a los personajes como elementos espaciales y no tenía otro instrumento más apropiado para configurarlos como tales que la luz. En
el aspecto de las convenciones de ciencia-ficción y realismo, debían conjugarse de modo prudente armónico. [...] El resultado de todo este planteamiento fue colocar todos los focos dentro del escenario, algunos de ellos visibles, la mayor parte detrás de los personajes y ninguno en la sala, salvo para los dos experimentadores. Toda la luz, blanca. (106)

Nevertheless, in the dramatic text Buero refers to "ráfagas de luz" (213) which are related to an appearance of El and Ella in the first part of the experiment. This type of lighting certainly distinguishes the temporal displacement of El and Ella, and it helps to mentally distance the audience from the twentieth century and to approach the future. However, Osuna felt that the audience would be visually exhausted by three hours of oscillating light; thus he reduced the "ráfagas de luz" to a minimum.

Part of the inner play focuses on a small segment of the intrahistoria: a family suffering in postwar Madrid from the effects of the Spanish Civil War. The action of the drama takes place in the sixties. This era was a time in which there was an improvement in the economy. The middle class was growing, and the working class was beginning to reap some of the economic harvest of the nation. The country was evolving towards a
consumer society; appliances such as washing machines, refrigerators and television sets became available. The building industry began to expand, thus providing employment for a large working class segment of the society and homes for many citizens (Carr and Fusi 56). Set against this background of a developing economy, the study of the family in El tragaluz depicts the long term effect of the War on its members. One member of this family, Vicente, has achieved some success in the publishing business while the other members languish in their modest basement apartment. Mario, Vicente’s brother, appears to suffer from the abulia which affected many young Spaniards at the turn of the century. He rejects the contemporary world in which he lives and lacks the will to participate actively in contemporary society.

Raymond Carr and Juan Pablo Fusi make a point in their analysis of postwar Spain in their book Spain: Dictatorship to Democracy which is relevant to an examination of the family of El tragaluz. They explain that “With rapid, dramatic economic change the socializing function of the family and the role of the Father become less important” (96). The life of the family in the
play depicts some of the turmoil which exists in the society at large: the conflict between traditional values and the rejection of these values by the younger generation. Nonetheless, in a time of shifting familial standards, the family of *El tragaluz* maintains the traditional values. Even though a familial tragedy which took place in a railway station at the end of the Spanish Civil War obsesses the Father, he does not hesitate to maintain his established position and exert his authority as head of the household. The Mother is the traditional kind and self-sacrificing figure, who in the face of hardships and familial conflicts seeks to keep the family united. The two young male members of the family are dutiful sons; Vicente visits the basement apartment occasionally and gives financial support to the family, while Mario stays at home where he carries out the role of an affectionate son who is spoiled by his mother and reflects to a large extent the behavior of his father.

All the characters of the inner play, as has been noted, are part of Unamuno’s *intrahistoria*. John Kronik points out that “The lives of these people thus are sketched in a historical context” (372). The family is a victim of its historical circumstances. Elvirita is the sacrificial lamb who gave up her life in the confusion.
at the end of the War. The Father is a victim of the past and the present; he is "locked into" the past due to his "memories." The Mother, like the Father, is a victim of the War who silently suffers the deprivations which accompanied the economic instability of the aftermath of the civil conflict. In the face of cultural transition, she strives to maintain stability in the family. Mario is a victim who belongs to the vanquished of the War. Even when given the opportunity to improve his economic situation and participate in contemporary society, he refuses to act because this is repugnant to him. Vicente is both victim and victimizer. He was a victim caught up in the turmoil of his historical moment at the age of fifteen when he belonged to the losers of the war, but destiny thrust on him the role of the winners. At the same time that life improves for him economically, Buero depicts him as experiencing moral decay. In its entirety, *El tragaluz* is an affirmation of the power of the human spirit to confront the aftermath of the horrors of war and to survive in a world shattered by conflict, confusion, and a paucity of human communication.

In addition to the direct effects of the Spanish Civil War on the lives of the characters of *El tragaluz*, the bitter memories of the
war years play a crucial role in the play. By means of the selective memories of each family member, the past is maintained or recovered in the inner play. Francisco Larubia Prado analyzes the three dramas which Buero wrote between 1964 and 1974: La doble historia del doctor Valmy (1964), El tragaluz (1967), and La Fundación (1974). He explains that “la segunda característica común a las tres obras citadas es el crucial uso de la memoria: ésta se pone al servicio de la vida; sin memoria no hay posibilidad de redención, sólo un páramo de desesperanza” (318). In fact, Larubia indicates that "El tragaluz se configura como acto integrador de la tensión entre memoria y olvido" (319). He emphasizes that the results of the tension between memory and forgetfulness is the vindication of memory.

Certainly, the characters in El tragaluz dramatically reveal the struggle between memory and forgetfulness of a family caught up in the misery of the aftermath of a bloody confrontation which not only divided a nation, but also a family. Memory is the reason for much of the suppressed suffering which the various characters experience. Vicente represses his memories as he struggles to be successful. The discourse subtly reveals his anxieties over the
incident in the train station which caused the death of his little sister. Even though Mario was very young during the civil disaster, he remembers the event in the train station which altered the familial relationships. He utters to the amazement of his mother, “No se pierde el tren todos los días. Nosotros lo perdimos sólo una vez” (253). The Mother endures the pain produced by her suppressed memories in silence, and she implores her son Mario to forget the past with the following admonition: “No hay que complicar las cosas...¡y hay que vivir”! (255).

The Mother conceives of the past as history and focuses on the family's present survival. However, it is the Mother and the Father who suffer the most from the consequences of their memories: the Mother in resignation and the Father in a state of debility related to the incident in the train station. It is in a moment of confrontation between memory and forgetting that the Father in a rage plunges his scissors into the body of his son Vicente. Now, Time has symbolically devoured the Son as it did many of the characters in Historia de una escalera. The Father,
like the God of Time, Saturn, in Goya's renown painting, has consumed his son and perhaps some of his self-guilt for the death of Elvirita has been eradicated.

In *El tragaluz*, as in *Historia de una escalera*, two young male protagonists attempt to recover the past. Vicente "caught the train," but for Mario, time has stopped; he failed "to catch the train," and now years later, he has no desire to do so because success represents a form of life which is abominable to him (Iglesias Feijóo, 359). He lives secluded in his *pozo* where he wishes to return to the past. In one of Vicente’s visits to the apartment, Mario expresses the desire to recover the days of their youth when he asserts, "Sólo intento volver un poco a nuestro tiempo de muchachos" (261).

Mario’s wish is to return to a Golden Age of innocence before the Spanish Civil War when he and Vicente played the game which involved the *tragaluz*. His desire to evoke his childhood is one way in which he can forget the war and the incident in the train station, reject the present, and obliterate the future. The Golden Age described by Mario was followed by an Iron Age which plunged the nation into a bloody battlefield. Thirty-five years of
silence imposed by the shackles of the Dictatorship followed the War. Now in the silent postwar years, Mario lives in an eternity in as much as he refuse to “catch the train.” The national disaster is the background of the family’s personal tragedy; the one cannot be separated from the other. The historical forces of their time impose on them a system which conflicts with their human desires, and thus they suffer.

In his second level, Keir Elam refers to the development of chronological time in the dramatic world. Analepsis in the inner story in _El tragaluz_ structures the passage of chronological time. The first scenes take place on a Thursday and continue to the next Thursday when the first part ends. The second part begins eight days afterwards and concludes eleven days later (Iglesias Feijóo 353).

Antonio José Dominguez also reinforces the short duration of chronological time in _El tragaluz_. He maintains that the first scenes in the office of Vicente and the basement apartment occur in chronological order in very little time. Seven days later, the main scenes take place in the office of Vicente and also in the basement apartment. Eight days later more scenes take place in
the basement apartment. Twenty-six hours later the Father assassinates Vicente in the basement apartment. The final scenes in the sidewalk cafe and the apartment occur eleven days later (26-27). The temporal miniaturization in the inner play intensifies the dramatic action when compared to the temporal amplitude of the outer play.

The temporal relationship between the discourse of the inner play and memories of the war serves to order the events of the play in a larger temporal framework. The inner play, according to the critics cited above, depicts just a few days in the life of the family. The miniaturization of temporal duration in the inner play becomes more profound as the present is transformed into the future. From a distant time in the future the audience contemplates the present, which is history. It is important to note that the space in the future-present and past-present is the same. The past-present occurs in Madrid, and the future-present also occurs in the same place, though centuries in the future.

*El tragaluz* manifests all of Keir Elam’s temporal levels. As noted earlier, the temporal relationships in *El tragaluz* are much more complex than they are in *Historia de una escalera*, as there is
a dynamic interplay between historical time, contemporary history and the future. The audience has to intellectually integrate various temporal levels and their transformations in order to experience the totality of the play. The accessibility of the dramatized world in the inner play does not represent a major impediment to the audience since it is part of the reality of the sixties. Also the memory of the traumatic defeat and the empty glory of victory still linger in the consciousness of the Spanish public almost thirty years after the end of the war.

The accessibility to the future depends on the characters El and Ella. Their entrance into the auditorium mentally transfers the audience to the future, and their narration of the inner story returns the audience again to the twentieth century as it becomes immersed in the plight of the family of the inner story. The members of the audience are the "destinarios implícitos" of the discourse text in the inner play, actors in the outer play, and spectators of the entire drama (Iglesias Feijóo 346).

The dramatic world of the future in the outer play becomes accessible to the audience as El and Ella describe the scientific advances made in the interim between the end of the twentieth
century and the twenty-fifth century. They explain how they recreate the past by the use of “calculadores electrónicos,” and “computadores, o cerebros” (213-214). The modern audience is familiar with scientific language in many mediums of communication; therefore, these references facilitate its entrance into the highly imaginative aspects of the outer play.

The inclusion of the sound of the train in the play is noteworthy. Buero integrates the noise of its locomotion with the psychological state of some of his characters, for example Vicente and Encarna. En explains that “Oiréis además, en algunos momentos, un ruido extraño [no pertenece al experimento y] es el único sonido que nos hemos permitido incluir por cuenta propia” (214). Ella continues:

Es el ruido de aquella desaparecida forma de locomoción llamada ferrocarril [y lo hemos recogido de una grabación antigua]. Lo utilizamos para expresar escondidas inquietudes que, a nuestro juicio, debían destacarse. Oiréis, pues, un tren; o sea, un pensamiento. (214)

The result of the union of human thought and sound intensifies the discourse text by giving it psychological depth which exceeds verbalization. During the sacrifice of Vicente, the sound of the
train intensifies until the words of the Father and Vicente are lost in the "fragor del tren" (308). The repeated stabbing of Vicente reaches a climax, and he collapses.

Moreover, the association of "inquietudes" with the sound of the train assumes historical importance. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the train represented scientific progress and a passage from a world of material stagnation to one which offered a diversity of cultural and economic improvements. However, the price of so called progress is the disassociation from traditional values which results in dehumanization. The dialogue of El and Ella reminds the audience that the future is not perfect. Individual identity and the lack of human liberty still are a problem in the future. El and Ella use a variation on the metaphor of the tree and the forest to explain this problem which still exists in the twenty-fifth century. Ella advises the audience that "debemos mirar a un árbol tras otro para que nuestra visión del bosque […, como entonces se decía…,] no se deshumanice. Finalmente, los hombres hubieron de aprenderlo para no sucumbir y ya no lo olvidaron" (213). The philosophical perspective of El
and Ella helps *El tragaluz* to transcend historical time (the Civil War, memories of the conflict, and its effects in the postwar years).

In addition to the preceding temporal motifs, there are references in the text to a primordial time of mythic societies in which paradigms of behavior were established. The play is replete with associations to mythological time. In his book *Myths, Rites, Symbols: A Mircea Eliade Reader*, Eliade presents the reader with a functional definition of myth. He says that “Myth narrates a sacred history; it relates an event which took place in primordial time, the fabled time of the ‘beginnings’ ”.(3). Eliade links the mythological with reality. He makes it clear that the mythological world is not a fantasy of the mind but explains reality. The realism of Buero is enriched as the surface realism collapses to reveal mythological aspects of the setting, props and language. Eliade’s concept of "sacred time" elucidates the significance of many of the mythological aspects of *El tragaluz*. Eliade describes some characteristics of this temporal concept in the following explanation:
by its very nature sacred time is reversible in the sense that, properly speaking, it is a primordial mythical time made present. Every religious festival, any liturgical time, represents the reactualization of a sacred event that took place in a mythical past, 'in the beginning.' Religious participation in a festival implies emerging from ordinary temporal duration and reintegration of the mythical time reactualized by the festival itself. Hence sacred time is indefinitely recoverable, indefinitely repeatable. [...] It is an ontological, Parmenidean time; it always remains equal to itself, it neither changes nor is exhausted. (33)

Buero has recovered this 'sacred time' in a modern myth which interprets life in the second half of the twentieth century. He dramatizes the reenactment of aspects of the sacred myth which contains a symbolism based on primordial time. Some of the elements of the sacred myth in *El tragaluz* are the Father image, the Mother image, the scissors as an instrument of creation and death, the sacrifice, the Child, and the characters *El* and *Ella*.

The Father in primordial time is the creator who existed before the beginning. By his act of creation in union with the Mother, the Sons were produced. Buero extends his interpretation of the Father in the text by the inclusion of the sacrifice of Vicente. The Father not only gives life, but he also
destroys it. The "mythification" of the Father reaches a climax during the rite of confession in which Vicente acknowledges his guilt in Elvira's death. The Father transcends his humanness and assumes the posture of a supernatural figure who punishes his son with the very instrument of creation, his scissors. The scissors are the distortion of the cross, and like the cross, they are associated with death, thus making them a powerful symbol in the play. The irony is that they are also the instruments of creation.

Clearly, much of the action that takes place in \textit{El tragaluz} is based on models of behavior established in primordial or ancient times. Eliade points out that "Myth assures man that what he is about to do has already been done [. . .]" (8). Linda Solish Sikka, in her article "Caín, Mario and me; Interrelatedness in \textit{El tragaluz}," examines the biblical elements in the play and concludes that the Judaic resonance is noteworthy. Certainly, the relationship between the Father and Vicente, Vicente's assassination, and the fraternal opposition between Mario and Vicente can be associated with the Old Testament. There are many biblical references to
child sacrifice. In Genesis (22:1-13), Abraham, in an act of faith, was willing to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, to God when he was stopped by an angel (Sagrada Biblia 22). Child sacrifice is also associated with the Ammonite god Moloch. The Sagrada Biblia defines Moloch in its "Diccionario de la Biblia":

Deidad cananea que correspondía al dios Melcom entre los ammonitas. Se le ofrecían sacrificios humanos, sobre todo niños. [. . .] Salomón edificó un templo a Moloch (3 Reyes 11:7), y por eso Dios hizo profetizar que quitaría el reino de las manos de la posteridad de Salomón (3 Reyes 11:31). (90)

Ahaz the (Southern) king of Judah sacrificed his sons as burnt offerings between 735-and 719 B.C. In time of distress, the Canaanites would sacrifice their best humans to help win a war; for example, the King of Moab took his eldest son, his successor, and sacrificed him as a burnt offering (2Ki.3:26-27). (Bedrosian 1)

The mother figure in El tragaluz is an expression of Carl Jung's mother archetype. According to Jung, archetypes are the content of the "collective unconscious." Jung's celebrated hypothesis posits a "personal unconscious" and a "collective
unconscious." He defines the latter as "a deeper layer" of the unconscious which is the same in all humans, archetypes that have been expressed in the human psyche as myths and fairy tales. Jung notes that humans have a need to explain the external world by means of archetypal information contained in the "collective unconscious' (Four Archetypes 3-5). Of course, the archetype of the Mother has many variations in literature, but there are common characteristics which all the various manifestations have in common. For example, the Mother is always protective and fruitful. Jung includes the Virgin or the Mother of God in his concept of the mother archetype (15).

The basement apartment in El tragaluz visually interprets and metaphorizes the protectiveness of the Mother. Jung notes that "hollow objects such as ovens and cooking vessels are associated with the mother archetype, and, of course, the uterus, yoni, and anything of a like shape" (15). The shape of the pozo resembles in some aspects a hollow, protected object. In addition to its visual representation of the social strata in postwar Spain, the basement apartment is a place of retreat from the cares of the world. For Vicente, the apartment becomes a place of protection.
and repose from the conflicts experienced in his office. For Mario and the Father, it is a retreat from the conflicts of the real world which penetrate its inner sanctum by means of the television, the *tragaluz*, and the presence of Vicente.

As the above analysis suggests, the role of the Mother is clearly complementary to that of the Father. The Mother seeks to nourish and bind the family together, even mothering the Father as well as the rest of the family. Buero's attitude towards her is always positive; he also portrays her as wise, forgiving and as an instrument of hope. She is not tainted by conflicts which occur between the other members of the family. Regardless of the point of view of the other family members, she is always supportive. As *El tragaluz* develops, Encarna also assumes a maternal role; Buero's attitude toward her remains positive.

Jung's theory of archetypes also elucidates the "mythification" of Vicente and Mario. According to Jung, the child motif seems to be almost universal in mythology. He states that “*The child motif represents the preconscious, childhood aspect of the collective psyche*” (*Essays on 111*). It appears in various guises in literature; in folklore it is dwarfs and elves and in ghost
stories, it is a boy illuminated and radiant. The child motif is also a common figure which emerges from the subconscious in psychoanalysis (108). The “child hero” according to Jung is a variation on the child motif. The psychologist associates the “child hero” with abandonment and gradual evolution towards an independent state (119-122).

The “child heroes” in El tragaluz are Elvita, Vicente, and Mario. Elvirita is the child heroine par excellence; she dies of starvation after Vicente leaps onto the train carrying her food. Although she never appears in the play, her presence is felt throughout. She is frequently referenced in the discourse and becomes the raison d’être of the work. Paradoxically, Vicente is both villain and victim in the play, while displaying characteristics of the "child hero." Vicente’s momentous passage through the train window represents his step towards independence from the family. His action was an unconscious one dictated by circumstance; nevertheless, his unconscious guilt surfaces dramatically little by little during the entire play until it suddenly explodes in a dramatic climax in which he confesses to his father. His confession represents his conscious confrontation
with truth. His bloody sacrifice is heroic in nature as the question of his culpability is never resolved absolutely in the text.

In contrast to Vicente, Mario remains ensconced in the apartment under paternal and maternal protection. He does not take a step towards manhood until he assumes the role of father of the unborn child of Encarna. Mario's selfless act transforms him also into kind of hero in the play in which he transcends the punitive character of the Father by his love and forgiveness.

Archetypal references signal the movement towards hope in the play. Jung emphasizes that the child anticipates the future (Essays on 115). This aspect of the child symbolizes hope in Historia de una escalera, and it is important in understanding the role of the child in El tragaluz. The unborn child of Encarna takes on aspects of the “child-hero,” representing the hope associated with the future. Jung also affirms that “Life is a flux, a flowing into the future, and not a stoppage or a backwash “ (115). Although there are tragic nadirs in the play, the hope of new life transcends the Civil War's horror, Elvira's death, Vicente's sacrifice, and the Father's “locura.” The awaited child is the hope and promise of a new beginnings in which the quality of life will
improve. This sense of hope is omnipresent in all of Buero Vallejo's plays, and it appears in various guises.

In *Man and his Symbols*, Jung explains the role of cultural symbols in the human psyche. According to Jung, "a symbol is a term, a name, or even a picture that may be familiar in daily life, yet that possesses specific connotations in addition to its conventional and obvious meaning. It implies something vague, unknown, hidden from us" (20). In a religious context, some examples of symbols which Jung cites are the eagle, the lion, and the oxen, representing three of the four Evangelists. Also, according to Jung, cultural symbols that express eternal truths have become collective images which still exist in modern society. Jung also points out that many of our cultural symbols have undergone transformation as life is dehumanized in the modern world (93).

Keeping Jung's taxonomies in mind, an investigation of symbolism in *El tragaluz* is crucial because Buero deepens the surface realism of this play by the inclusion of dramatic symbols. The train and the train window are two of the most powerful symbols in this modern myth. These two objects fuse historical
time and mythological time in the discourse text. They exemplify how Buero dramatizes and communicates to his audience the symbolic significance of each object which he employs in the dramatic text. As has been noted, the train is a sign of material progress, while at the same time it is a symbol of dehumanization in the play.

The symbolization of the train becomes more profound as the image of the window extends the sense of dehumanization alluded to above. Vicente’s passage through the train window separates him from his family in a modern rite of passage which represents his forcible transition to a world traumatized by war. In *El tragaluz*, the image of the train and its window divide the victors, the Vicentes, from the vanquished, the rest of the family. Those who lost the War helplessly watch the "Vicentes" of Spain divide the spoils of war. As noted, Vicente began his rite of ascension with the victimization of his sister Elvira, and later that of Encarna and Beltrán. As a child he was a passive victim of his historical circumstances; as an adult, he actively participates in the victimization of those around him. However, the victor is also
victimized in the process of climbing; finally, in a bloody sacrificial ritual, the Father repeatedly plunges his scissors into the body of his dying son, Vicente.

All of the principal variations of openings in *El tragaluz* portray discontent with the status quo: the train window, the *tragaluz*, the television screen, and the stage itself. The train window, as noted above, is the aperture which separated Vicente from his family and is the portal through which he passes into "manhood." The television screen is the window through which the conflicts of the modern world disrupt the protective environment of the apartment. It is not surprising that the Father shatters the screen in a rage. History takes on life in "the window" of the stage, as Buero critically examines the members of his audience through the portrayal of their contemporaries.

Reflecting its importance in the title of the play, the most powerful visual image in the work is the shadow of the *tragaluz*. Its ubiquitous presence pervades the space and time of the basement apartment, symbolizing discord and descent in the family. The Father frequently confuses it with a train window, thus relating it to the catastrophic event which took place in the
train station. It is a time tunnel which connects two temporal worlds (the time before the War and the time after the War) and two spatial worlds (the inner sanctum of the apartment and the turmoil of the outside). The *tragaluz* is the window through which the outside world penetrates the sheltering environment of the family. In addition to allowing the outside world to enter into the intimate sphere of the family, the *tragaluz* is an imaginative escape route. As children before the War, Mario and Vicente imaginatively rejected the squalor of their environment by using the *tragaluz* to flee into a fantasy world related to the people passing outside the apartment.

Through sustained use of symbol and allegory, *El tragaluz* establishes in drama the vitality of what Eliade refers to as sacred myth. In this play, Buero imbues age old myths with modern perspectives and themes. He studies the effects of the Spanish Civil War, the economical aftermath of the War, the personal relationship between the victors and the vanquished, and the transformation in familial relationships within a society traumatized by fraternal enmity. While the problems examined in this play are those of a modern society, the exposition of sin,
confession, sacrifice, forgiveness, redemption, and regeneration in *El tragaluz* suggests a relationship to biblical tradition. Sin is punishable by death, and forgiveness is the precursor of redemption and regeneration.

The sin of Vicente, even though he was very young when he transgressed the will of the Father, was punished by death. In fact as has been noted, the very instruments of creation used by the Father are transformed into instruments of death in order to punish Vicente. The harshness of the judgement of Vicente is based on the ethos in the Old Testament, particularly that found in Genesis. The judgment and death of Vicente are harsh. At the same time that the punishment of Vicente seems unduly cruel, the self-sacrifice of Mario, and the promise of new life balance this atrocity with a sense of hope. Even as Vicente's ritualistic passage through the train window possesses negative overtones, the play casts the members of the audience into a participatory frame, allowing them to hope and to share in the redemption of their characters on stage.

In contrast to the primordial thematic of *El tragaluz*, the autobiographical resonance in the play is of contemporary origin.
Buero spent many years in prison in which the only opening to the outside world was (probably) a window. He could not physically escape through the window of his dungeon cell; however, he did succeed in preserving and developing his creative forces so that in this play and in Historia de una escalera and La Fundación, the receptor can discern the importance of openings to the outside world, to the plays' structures, and to their content. The shadowy bars of the tragaluz loom over the scenery reminding the audience of the wall between the family and the powerful forces of the Dictatorship. Other autobiographical elements in El tragaluz are the enmity between Vicente and his father and between the two brothers.

In the inner play of El tragaluz, Buero investigates a temporal dimension which depicts the materialization of the consciousness of some of the characters. The psychological crisis which Vicente undergoes and Encarna's uncertainty about the future are metaphorized in the scenery. One such scene emanates from the imagination of Encarna who is in Vicente's office. She is disturbed about her ability to survive in an "androcentric" world without his assistance and fears that she
must resort to prostitution in order to survive. Her self-deprecation becomes concrete with the appearance of a prostitute in the spatiotemporal world of the sidewalk cafe. Encarna's anxieties are revealed in the integration of two scenic spaces in which dramatic actions take place simultaneously. Buero describes the scene:

Ella lo mira cavilosa. El se concentra en la lectura. Ella deja de mirarlo y se abstrae. El primer término se iluminó poco a poco. Entra por la derecha una golfa, cruza y se acerca al velador del cafetín. Tiene el inequívoco aspecto de una prostituta barata y ronda ya los cuarenta años. Se sienta al velador, saca de su bolso una cajetilla y extrae un pitillo. Un camarero flaco y entrado en años aparece por el lateral izquierdo y, con gesto cansado, deniega con la cabeza y con un dedo, indicando a la esquinera que se vaya. Ella lo mira con zumba y extiende las manos hacia la mesa, como si dijese: ‘Quiero tomar algo!’ (219-220)

The above text depicts the powerlessness of the female character in a male dominated world. The scene takes place in silence, but the gestures communicate the helpless situation of the prostitute. The use of lighting enhances the immediacy of the action and Encarna's plight. The reference to the age of the prostitute in the stage directions adds a sense of the passage of chronological time and the fear of aging. The entire scene reveals Buero’s
compassion for this feminine character in a reality which is harsh and pervasive. He uses time and space in this scene to dramatize her predicament and his sensitivity to her plight.

Iglesias Feijóo notes an example of the "concretization" of Vicente's imagination which takes place in the basement apartment. He indicates that the dialogue between Mario and the Father could simply be such a "concretization" (354). 'Ya en este momento queda demostrada la relación de dependencia que existe en Encarna respecto a Vicente. Pero de él dependen todos' (355). Certainly, the temporal union of the following scene with that which takes place in the office subtly suggests that Vicente is experiencing guilt for the death of his little sister Elvirita. In the basement apartment the Father and Mario converse:

(Se abstrae. Se oye el ruido de un tren remoto, que arranca, pita y gana rápidamente velocidad. Su fragor crece y y suena con fuerza durante unos segundos. Cuando se amortigua, El padre habla en el cuarto de estar. Poco después se extingue el ruido en una ilusoria lejanía.)
EL PADRE. (Exhíbe un monigote que acaba de recortar.) Este también puede subir. (Mario interrumpía su trabajo y lo mira.)

MARIO. ¿A dónde?
EL PADRE. Al tren.
MARIO. ¿A qué tren?
EL PADRE. (Señala al frente.) A ése.
MARIO. Eso es un tragaluces.
EL PADRE. Tú que sabes.

While in the office Encarna says to Vicente:

ENCARNA. (Desconcertada por el silencio de Vicente.) No nos vamos? Abstraído, Vicente no contesta. Ella lo mira con curiosidad. (222)

In the two scenes mentioned above (that of Encarna and the prostitute, and that of the interplay between the office space and the apartment), the visualization of the characters’ concerns intensify their anxieties. Encarna is apprehensive about her physical survival, and Vicente subconsciously suffers guilt about the death of Elvirita. This last scene has autobiographical implications. Vicente's sense of guilt might be Buero’s own regarding the death of his father before a Leftist firing squad. The bloody sacrifice of the Son, therefore is perhaps a means to eradicate some of the guilt which Buero might feel for the death of his father.
In addition to historical time, mythological time, and the temporal and spatial aspects of the relationship between the exterior world and psychological processes, the plurality of times in *El tragaluz* is based on the dramatization of the present moment which Buero conceptualizes as the past, the present, and the future. The outer play contradicts the concept that time is linear and emphasizes the simultaneity of past, present, and future. In the play, it is possible to pass from one temporal plane to another. For example, the play begins with the members of the audience in the present; they are transported to the future in order to observe their present moment which becomes the past in the future, at the same time in which the future becomes the present.

The famous twin paradox often associated with Einstein’s theory of relativity suggests some exciting conjectures about space-time travel. In this paradox, one twin stays on Earth while the other one travels away from the Earth at an incredibly fast speed. When the traveler returns, his brother has aged years and he only two. The two years indicated by his watch are equal to many years on Earth. If he left in 1900, his watch upon return would
indicate 1902, while the watch of his twin would indicate that many years have passed. In order to psychologically synchronize himself to Earth time, in my opinion, the traveler would have to reset his watch and make a psychological adjustment to the changes which had occurred during his two year absence. In *El tragaluz*, the presence of El and Ella helps the audience to make a psychological adjustment to the 30th century. Also, the members of the audience exist both in the twentieth century and in the future. This simultaneity is precisely what Buero intends for his audience to recognize. The author presupposes an absolute time in which the past, the present, and the future exist simultaneously.

Of course, it is necessary to have the appropriate theoretical and technological knowledge and apparatuses to travel from the past to the present, from the present to the future and back to the past. Neither the appearance of *El* and *Ella* in the twentieth century nor the transportation of the audience to the future is surprising. The two characters who enter the auditorium in the first scene are travelers in time who introduce the science fiction motif to the text. Their elastic movements and "crude" manner of speaking indicate that they do not belong to the century in
which they appear, i.e., the latter half of the twentieth century. They also refer to “detectores,” or apparatuses which are capable of recovering the past, perhaps in the form of holograms or digital representation of visual space. They refer to electronic brains and computers. These electronic brains are employed to infer the content of speech which cannot be reconstructed by observing the movement of the lips. There are many other such references.

The possibility of time travel is a controversial issue. However, some scientists believe that there is nothing in the equations of the special theory of relativity to prevent the existence of tunnels through space and time. Professor Nahin of the University of New Hampshire, author of *Time Machines: Time Travel in Physics, Metaphysics, and Science Fiction*, deals scientifically with the puzzles and paradoxes of time travel (Stuart 1). Nahin affirms that “'Time travel to the future comes right out of Einstein's theory of special relativity, which has been verified experimentally '” (qtd in Stuart 1). Stuart explains the following:

[. . .]time slows down (in relation to time back on Earth) for a person traveling on a super high-speed rocket ship. So a traveler could fly far out into the universe
and then come back to Earth at a time hundreds or thousands of years in the future. Traveling to the past is a much more difficult proposition. But in 1949 physicist Kurt Goedel worked with Einstein's theory of general relativity to produce equations suggesting the possibility of time travel to the past. (1)

Time travel fiction is not new. H. G. Wells, Frank Tipler, and many other less familiar authors have portrayed adventures in time of the nineteenth century which are the prototypes of time travel fiction. Such fiction is said to have inspired the imagination and provided direction to scientific research. It has also been the precursor of the future. I use the term "Scientific Realism" to posit a non-fantastic dimension for Buero's use of the future in which present problems may have realistic resolutions. Bonnie Shannon McSorley affirms my conclusion: “In the case of El tragaluz, Buero uses a technique somewhat akin to time travel to show a distant future where problems of existential identity and alienation have been diminished, if not resolved” (81). She concludes the following concerning El tragaluz:

The unknown is envisioned not as something finite that decreases with scientific advances, but infinite and rapidly expanding as the interface between knowledge
and ignorance increases. To reach out, in spite of the impossibility of our quest, is a message which Buero's theater attempts to instill in us. (*Science Fiction Studies* 4)

Taking the preceding information into consideration, the characters *El* and *Ella* cannot be “passed off” as merely science fiction characters. Their historical function and the possibility that the imagination of Buero may one day become reality impart to them an importance beyond their dramatic roles. In an interview with Fernández Santos about *El tragaluz*, Buero’s explains the inclusion of *El* and *Ella* in the play:

Para mí, *El tragaluz* sería inconcebible sin estos personajes. No entiendo esta obra, me resulta literalmente incomprensible despojada de los “investigadores’. E incluso diría algo más *raro*; casi son para mí más importantes los investigadores que los demás elementos de la obra, a pesar de la importancia que la parte narrada en nuestro presente tiene dentro de ella. Quiero decir que, a efectos de lo que en realidad es *El tragaluz*, los investigadores son insustituibles y la historia investigada no lo es, ya que pueden encontrarse otras historias de significado semejante al de ésta. No siendo los investigadores personajes propiamente dramáticos, en el sentido de participantes en la acción que vemos desarrollarse, sin embargo, en el más hondo sentido de la palabra 'drama', son precisamente los investigadores quienes justifican la existencia del 'drama' en cuanto tal, en cuanto obra de teatro. (10)
El and Ella are beings who belong to an advanced technological society which has not yet solved the problems of dehumanization and "deindividualization." Their presence refutes the linear concept of time and supports that of a simultaneous future in which the problems of humankind may be solved. Their temporal search to find "la pregunta," is the pretext which Buero employs in order to criticize certain phenomena of the second half of the twentieth century--the political situation in the decade of the sixties, the erosion of traditional values by the intrusion of technology, and the diminution of familial unity. The modern enactment of ritualized behavior in El tragaluz clearly attests to the universality of the play which is based on myths that are universal in scope. This is a human drama which is concerned with dehumanization in the twentieth century. El tragaluz is an eloquent dramatic warning against the dangers of so called progress and the lost of personal identity.

Buero alludes to the fact that there are many stories based on "deindivualization" in the twentieth century; however, the roles of El and Ella are unique. Furthermore, El and Ella are not the only characters suffering an identity crisis. The Father and the Mother
lack personal name and use names based on their roles in life. The Father dramatizes his concern with personal identity by cutting out paper people from magazines and postcards. His question, "¿Quién es?" is one of the isotopic elements in the play. The question, "¿Quién es ese?" has a more personal meaning, ¿Quién soy yo? Also it is the question which concerns El and Ella in the beginning of the play. "La pregunta" appears throughout the text, and it reveals the concern that Buero has for individual identity.

*El tragaluz* is an ontological play which examines a reality of the twentieth century in which individual human identity appears to be lost in the name of highly technological progress. *El* and *Ella* had to investigate many epochs in order to find references to "la pregunta." *Ella* says:

Como sabéis *la pregunta* casi nunca se encuentra en las historias de las más diversas épocas que han reconstruido nuestros detectores. En la presente historia la encontraréis formulada del modo más sorprendente.

*El* continúa,

Quien la formula no es una personalidad notable, [nadie de quien guardemos memoria.] Es un ser oscuro y enfermo.
Finally Ella focuses on the essence of the problem:

\[\ldots\text{] la mirada a los árboles impedía ver el bosque. Y durante largas etapas llegó a olvidarse que también debemos mirar a un árbol tras otro para que nuestra visión del bosque }\[\ldots, \text{como entonces se decía}\ldots\text{]} \text{ no se deshumanice. Finalmente los hombre hubieron de aprenderlo para no sucumbir y ya no lo olvidaron. (213)}\]

The appearance of El and Ella present the tone and theme of the play which are expressed by "la pregunta." It was in the latter half of the twentieth century that the question was formulated by one who was characterized as "Un ser oscuro y enfermo" (213). The science fiction motif is the background of Buero's examination of alienation in the twentieth century. After many centuries, the question of identity is still pertinent as the problem of dehumanization still exists in the 30\textsuperscript{th} century. Ella explains the problem using a metaphorical language based on the cliché of the forest and the trees:

La importancia infinita del caso singular. Cuando estos fantasmas vivieron solía decirse que la mirada a los árboles impedía ver el bosque. Y durante largas etapas llegó a olvidarse que también debemos mirar a un árbol tras otro para que nuestra visión del bosque \[\ldots, \text{como entonces se decía }\ldots\text{]} \text{ no se deshumanice. Finalmente, los hombres hubieron de aprenderlo para no sucumbir y ya no lo olvidaron. (213)}
Time is the temporal stage which allows humankind to hope. In *Historia de una escalera*, the hope of the future is metaphorized in the unborn child of Fernando *hijo* and Carmina *hija*. The commentators emphasize Buero's dramatization of hope in *El tragaluz* in spite of an infinite expansion of knowledge. Bonnie Shannon McSorley theorizes that Buero uses science fiction to dramatize the realization of hope (81-86). The characters *El* and *Ella* represent the hope of the future in which the problems of humankind can be resolved in time. *El tragaluz* is an amalgamation of history, mythology, science, and fantasy which is always at the service of realism. It is a modern myth which examines the alienation of humankind in modern civilization and the continuing effect of a technological society on dehumanization in modern and postmodern eras. The fantasy in the play is not escapist; on the contrary, through the utilization of fantasy the author examines problems which existed in Spanish society during the latter half of the twentieth century. The fictional
exposition of scientific themes in the play can be related to many of the theories of modern physics which are in the process of investigation.
Works Cited


CHAPTER 4

There are many events in the womb of time which will be deliver'd.

(Shakespeare, *Othello* 1.3 369)

*La Fundación*: Temporal Disintegration and Psychological Manipulation of Space

In a far away unknown land, a group of scientists labor incessantly to improve humankind. They live and work in a modern Foundation which houses magnificent laboratories and apartments that contain all the accoutrements necessary to make life relatively comfortable. The Foundation nestles in a rolling countryside filled with light and surrounded by the beauty of the
natural world. The authorities pipe classical pastoral music into the institution in order to produce an environment which is stress free.

In contrast to the tranquility of the Foundation, images of a dark dungeon of a modern prison intrude progressively into the scenery, until ultimately the Foundation completely vanishes, and the scientists are transformed into inmates who are awaiting death. In this chapter, I will examine how Buero employs various experimental techniques based on the manifestation of time in order to transform a scientific institution into a prison or vice versa.

*La Fundación* is a textual tapestry of temporal components: historical time, chronological time, biological time, psychological time or personal time, time as memory, time-space relationship, and mythological time are woven into its fabric. In *La Fundación*, Buero delves into the "womb of time" and illuminates the darkness of an authoritarian world which would destroy those who oppose it. In this temporal tapestry, it is the dramatization of psychological time circumscribed in a suffocating physical space which reveals the power of the human spirit to survive in the most degrading of human conditions.
In order to fully understand *La Fundación*, it must be set against the historical background of Francoist Spain (Birrell 3). Neil Birrell points out that some of the great European literary works of this century were written to undermine authoritarian regimes, such as Camus' *La Peste* and Sartre's *Huis Clos*. Furthermore, Birrell indicates that rarely has he encountered a play in which the denunciation of Fascism is so powerful as it is in *La Fundación* (3).

The condemnation in *La Fundación* is part of the plot of the play; the dialogue of the five cellmates denounces the prison system. The play also censures indirectly contemporary Spain. Jose Monleón, in the following excerpt from his analysis of *La Fundación* which appeared in *Primer acto*, explains this point:

[. . .] Buero habla de una historia sucedida años atrás, y, a la vez, de nuestro presente; de lo ocurrido en un lugar y, a la vez, de lo que ocurre en otros muchos lugares; de un caso concreto y, a la vez, de un conflicto que descubre y condena todo un proceso sociocultural, son los méritos que ensanchan 'La Fundación' y hacen de la obra una especie de crónica además de una amarga reflexión sobre la vida contemporánea. ("La Fundación de Buero" 69)
The effect of the Dictatorship on the lives of the characters of *La Fundación* is without question depicted much more explicitly than it was in *El tragaluz*. Not only does Buero denounce tyranny and the lack of liberty by the employment of a plot based on a group of prisoners condemned to death for their political activities, but his accusations are much more eloquent than any part of the dramatic text of *Historia de una escalera* or *El tragaluz*. Clearly, the following quotation taken from a dialogue between Asel and Tomás attests to the expressiveness with which Buero censures oppression:

> Poco importan nuestros casos particulares. Ya te acordarás del tuyo, pero eso es lo de menos. Vivimos en un mundo civilizado al que le sigue pareciendo el más embriagador deporte la viejísima práctica de las matanzas. Te degüellan por combatir la injusticia establecida, por pertenecer a una raza detestada; acaban contigo por hambre si eres prisionero de guerra, o te fusilan por supuestos intentos de sublevación; te condenan tribunales secretos por el delito de resistir en tu propia nación invadida... Te ahorcan porque no sonríes a quien ordena sonrisas, o porque tu Dios no es el suyo, o porque tu ateísmo no es el suyo... A lo largo del tiempo, ríos de sangre. Millones de hombres y mujeres... (105)

The condemnation of totalitarianism becomes more forceful as the subject of victimization shifts from adults to children. Buero refers
to child sacrifice which took place in the Old Testament, e.g. the Ammonites sacrificed their children to the god Moloch. Now, children are sacrificed to the god of War. Asel continues his cry against the injustice perpetrated by a civilized world:

Y niños... Los niños también pagan. Los hemos quemado ahogando sus lágrimas, sus horrorizadas llamadas a sus madres durante cuarenta siglos. Ayer los devoraba el dios Moloch en el brasero de su vientre; hoy los corroe el napalm. Y los supervivientes tampoco pueden felicitarse; niños cojos, mancos, ciegos... A eso les hemos destinado sus padres. Porque todos somos sus padres... (Corto silencio.) [. . .]. (Buero Vallejo La Fundación 105)

The irony and emotional impact of the preceding text within its historical context is a passionate plea which reminds the receptor to reflect on the dangers to human liberty. Many of the symbols in the play exemplify aspects of the lack of human control over its destiny, for example the numbers on the shirts which identify the prisoners, the lack of personal names of the prisoners--the inmates are numbers not people--the white laboratory mouse, and the Foundation itself. The ramifications of temporality in the play are associated with the limitation of human freedom;
historical time, psychological time, mythological time and even chronological time restrict freedom.

The historical message of the work is based on the role of the *intrahistoria* in the struggle for liberty. However, *La Fundación* transcends the historical time of the audience and of the play and examines an ideology based on a dialectic opposition between the desire to be free and the lack of freedom. The cyclic structure of the work suggested in the last scene resolves this opposition by the allusion to hope and human action. The play is an artistic legacy which Buero has left to humanity. In 1974, Francosim was waning; however, Buero's message is clear. Those who support the desire of humanity to obtain freedom must be forever vigilant. Also, they must accept the responsibilities and obligations which accompany liberty. In the resolution of the play, Buero places the future in the hands of the audience as he invites the members to participate in the continuation of the tragedy. The scenery of the first act reappears and the tragedy begins anew.

The inclusion of the audience in the future repudiation of totalitarianism and all of its variations in the world exemplifies the hope which is inherent in all of Buero's tragedies. The circularity
of temporality which was introduced in *Historia de una escalera* by the constant ascent and descent of the staircase and by the plans of Fernando hijo and Carmina hija, is made more powerful and more grandiose by the inclusion of the members of the public in the cyclic aspect of the drama. The play begins and ends in the same way, thus suggesting the continuation of the story with different characters. The music of Rossini which could be heard at the beginning of the play is repeated again in the final scene.

This is a drama in which the resolution is converted into a climax in which hope is regenerated with each temporal cycle. Buero makes it clear that the fundamental significance of *La Fundación* is that the succession of Foundations is endless; the survivors of the Foundation will have to face another Foundation, and yet another Foundation, and another, etc. (Monleón, "Buero: de la repugnante" 6).

The dramatic text begins with the disclaimer *En un país desconcido*, thus imparting universality to the text. This technique of universalizing the setting mitigates the severity associated with a direct criticism of Spain and places the drama in the annals of a play which speaks to humanity. However, the reader of the text...
cannot forget that this is a drama which attacks authoritarianism and expresses the hope that totalitarianism will be abolished and that humanity will be able to choose its destiny. The search for liberty which is inherent in the first two plays of this dissertation becomes even more urgent in *La Fundación*.

The historical time of the debut of *La Fundación* was auspicious. In less than one year after the premiere, the dictatorship of Francisco Franco would terminate with his death on November 20, 1975. The demise of Franco "demostró que las estructuras políticas del régimen mantenido durante tantos años ya llevaban en sí las semillas de una transformación pacífica" (Cantarino 426). On the fifteenth of January of 1974, the play premiered in the Teatro Fígaro in Madrid. The drama contains some of the experimental elements which are characteristic of Buero’s previous dramas, and at the same time, it introduces innovative techniques which differentiate it from the earlier plays. The public and the critics praised the work. In fact, Buero received the prize *El Espectador y la crítica 1974* for the quality of the drama.
The auditorium was full, and at the end of the production, it received an enthusiastic ovation. However, between acts the members of the audience discussed the perplexing aspects of the work. (Álvaro 7-17) Perhaps, the immersion which Buero introduces in La Fundación was puzzling during the first part of the play; gradually the scenery of the Foundation changes as reality conquers imagination. However, in the second part, many enigmatic aspects of the scenery and the dialogue become clear. Also, the manner in which Buero treats time in this play indirectly includes the audience in the plot. All of these techniques are intellectually challenging to the audience. Mariano de Paco summarizes this aspect as follows:

Un aspecto de indudable interés es el modo de utilizar el tiempo dramático con relación al del espectador. En El tragaluz a través del futuro (investigadores) se juzgaba el present (sucesos del escenario y tiempo del espectador) y el pasado (acción de Vicente que originó la tragedia). Ahora una acción actual nos lleva a una visión crítica de nuestro inmediato pasado. A su vez, unos sucesos anteriores (los que en la obra se narran) proyectan su luz hacia el presente del espectador, hacia su vida en una 'Fundación' y hacia el análisis de la condición humana. ("'La fundación,' en el teatro de Antonio Buero Vallejo" 8)
In addition to temporal aspects of the play mentioned by Mariano de Paco, Buero's examination of psychological time in *La Fundación* is intense. In *El tragaluz*, Buero examines the psychological state of some of his characters, such as Vicente, the Father, and Encarna; in *La Fundación*, he explores and develops this dimension of his characters more profoundly; the totality of the drama reveals the transformation in the psychological state of the protagonist Tomás. All of the semiotic elements of the script manifest the psychological subjectivity of Tomás.

The reception of the text enriches the dramatic experience because the audience unknowingly participates in Tomás' psychological transmogrification. The surface reality of the scenery is in constant change which perplexes the receptor, as noted by Álvaro's comments. By the beginning of the second part of the fable, the preponderance of semiotic signs clarify the confusing facets of the production. The psychological aspects of the theater of Buero are well known; however, it is imperative to note the dramatist's attitude toward the usefulness of psychology in the theater. Buero explains his position in a meeting of the *Centro de Estudios Psiquiátricos, Psicológicos y de Relaciones*.
Buero certainly does not disdain the psychological state of the protagonists in La Fundación. On the contrary, he explores the inner reality of Tomás, thus creating a more complex image of this character. The dramatist also explores the psychological reaction of the other inmates to the suffering of Tomás.

As noted previously, the examination of psychological time in La Fundación is based on the complete immersion of the audience in the psychological world of Tomás. At the very beginning of the play, the audience views Tomás' perception of the world; all of the scenery represents the "concretization" of his subjectivity:

La habitación podría pertenecer a una residencia cualquiera. No es amplia ni lujosa. [. . .] Los muros son grises y desnudos: ni zócalo, ni cornisa. Muebles sencillos pero de buen gusto: los de una vivienda
"La sensación de angostura" expresses the anguish and sense of entrapment which Tomás experiences. This part of the text is filled with descriptions of such objects as "la rejilla redonda de un altavoz," "una flamante escoba," "una cama sencilla y clara de línea moderna," etc (27-29). This enumeration is important because as Tomás' perception of the world normalizes, different props will replace those of the Foundation. Some of the objects in the living quarters appear to be incongruent, such as metals shelves filled with fine glassware, thus reflecting the flux in Tomás' mental state. The receptor to the play will participate in Tomás' perception of the passage of time by viewing the transformations in the scenery from a scientific foundation to a dark prison and by the reception of dialogue which indicates his psychological evolution. This psychological evolution takes place in a chronology of a few days; there are no temporal flashes. The passage of time is closely connected with the biological needs of the inhabitants, particularly, the need for sustenance, According
to Iglesias Feijóo, the first scene occurs in the morning after a meal and ends after the serving of the *rancho*. This critic calculates the passage of time in this part of the play by relating it to the emission of a horrible stench from the cadaver in the cell and to the number of times the dead man's rations are shared by the inmates.

The second scene occurs the same day, four hours before the *cena*. At the end of the day, the jailers discover the cadaver which has been in the cell for six days. The third scene occurs three days later while the prisoners are finishing their evening meal as night is approaching. Very little time passes in the last scene. After considering all the textual clues in the text, Iglesias Feijóo concludes that the action of the play encompasses only four days (446-447).

As I indicated earlier, the passage of chronological time is accompanied by the manifestation of biological time. In *La Fundación*, there exists an imaginative interplay between biological time and the fantasy of Tomás who imposes his imagination on the reality which he confronts. The mental
creations of Tomás represent an attempt to diminish the effect of deprivation in the environment in which the six inmates live.

The reference to food and water in the dramatic text reflects the paucity of sufficient sustenance in the prison. Tomás' concern with the physical state of *El hombre* is significant in as much as this character is not affected at all by the deprivation which affects the other five. Scientific research has shown that participants in food deprivation studies exhibit a variety of behavior changes. In one study, subjects deprived of food for 6 hours or 24 hours demonstrated "subjective and psychophysiological reactions to food pictures. The subjects rated the pictures being very pleasant " ("Food Deprivation” 1). In order to obtain more food, the cellmates tolerate the stench of the cadaver; they also appease Tomás with references to drinks served in elegant glassware: *agua, cerveza, vino* and whiskey. Moreover, the *Encargado* joins in this imaginative play by offering the inmates “exquisitos entremeses,” “champiñones,” and “una tarta de manzana” (*La Fundación* 54).

There are numerous references to the time in which meals are served. All of these concrete references to food demonstrate
Tomás' need to overcome the environmental deprivation imposed upon him by the prison authorities. Upon considering the paucity of external stimuli in the sparse and degrading environment of a prison cell, it is not surprising that Tomás manipulates his physical space by the force of his imagination. It is worth investigating other manifestations of biological time in relationship to the response of Tomás to the inhumane ambiences of the prison.

There is an abundance of scientific evidence related to aberrations in the behavior of humans, other animals and plants deprived of certain stimuli from the outside environment. An important physiological mechanism related to mental distortions is the biological clock; it is based on a 24-hour day. Scientists in the life sciences frequently refer to biological time. They hypothesize that animals and even plants possess biological clocks that manifest their control in circadian cycles. A paucity of stimuli from the environment can disrupt the working of the clock proteins. For example, the reduction of light entering the eye of humans and other mammals triggers a series of physiological reactions in a group of clock proteins designated with names such
as Period, Timeless, and Clock. Scientists are now studying the synchronization between the internal clock and the environment (Davis 1).

The character Tomás certainly reveals his insight when he conceives of himself as an experimental mouse in a scientific Foundation. His concern for the eyes of the mouse is monumental because scientists have identified a pigment called cryptochrome found in the eyes and brains of mice and humans. It plays an important role in the functioning of the biological clock (Davis 1).

Also, the deprivation of light within the prison cell is noteworthy in relationship to the mental state of Tomás, and therefore it should be examined. Firstly, the references to light are abundant in the text. Secondly, some of the following references manifest Buero's conception of the light in the Foundation. Perhaps they are autobiographical since the playwright knew intimately the effect of the deprivation of light on the human psyche. In other words, the character of Tomás could be autobiographical. The other references manifest the concern of the prisoners with the lack of light in the prison environment. The following is a list of some of the references to light:
...globo de luz... (27), La misma claridad irisada en el aposento; al fondo, inmutable y radiante, el paisaje. (55), La luz del interior cambia instantáneamente. A las feéricas tonalidades irisadas que lo iluminaban las sustituye una claridad gris y tristona. (72), (La iluminación cambia de golpe: gana claridad y crudeza. Sólo en los rincones--el chaflán, la lámpara--se mantiene una borrosa penumbra girisácea.) (La Fundación 72),

The phrases which follow are the words or the reactions of the prisoners:

De todos modos encenderé la lámpara. Es muy potente. (64), ¿Tienes bastante luz? (64), Después contempla el brillante paisaje. (81)

These are just a few of the references to light in the dramatic text. Certainly, the allusion to light is not unusual in a play; however, what is unusual in this text is the psychological effect which this deprivation has on Tomás' mental state. The dramatic text provides evidence that a deprivation exists; all these direct references to light are statements that subtly indicate that the lack of light in the prison environment may be one of the causative factors of Tomás' tendency to create a world that compensates for the "darkness" of the prison. He compensates for the lack of light in the foundation by creating a scenery in which light plays a significant role. In the first part of the play, Tomás frequently
looks out of the "window" and comments on the beauty of the day. The scenery through the large window in the setting is resplendent. The description includes such phrases as “límpido cielo, “la fulgurante plata de un lago,” and “la risueña luz de la primavera inunda el paisaje” (280). Gradually as the Foundation is transformed into the grimness and desolation of a prison environment, the lighting is also transformed. The beautiful imaginative world of the countryside illuminated by the luminosity of Spring dims into the darkness of a modern chamber of horrors. Light and darkness are metaphors. Light represents the search for truth and is symbolized by many objects in the play such as lamps, crystal glassware, and a grand painting which depicts a luminous outdoor scene. Darkness represents the injustice of a system which destroys any voice of dissent. It is interesting to note that as Tomás accepts the reality of his condemnation, that is to say when he becomes "enlightened," "darkness" inundates the prison thus creating a dramatic tension that emphasizes his struggle.

The disruption of temporal perception in a prison setting has been expressed in Spanish literature as early as the Middle Ages.
The ballad "El prisionero" recreates the importance of nature to a captive who is cut off from light. He remembers a day in May "cuando hace la calor" and "están los campos en flor." However, he laments the killing of "una avecilla" that "cantaba al albor." The bird was one of his last links with the natural world. This poem provides some insight into the characterization of Tomás in La Fundación. As a result of the slaying of the little bird, the prisoner sinks into a world of solitary darkness which unites day and night. The illumination in the natural world provides temporal information which is essential to a prisoner’s well being. The Overture of Rossini's William Tell Pastoral is heard intermittently throughout the drama; it is an aesthetic link to the natural world which Tomás cannot directly experience. Adelardo Méndez Moya's comments in the prologue of the La Fundación about aspects of the role of music in the play. He takes notes of the following:

En La Fundación, 'La Pastoral' de Rossini resulta motivo fundamental para el planteamiento contradictorio que se presenta en el espectáculo; así lo reconoce el propio Buero, quien destaca lo que 'tenía de contraste, irónico, con la verdadera situación que estaba viviendo el protagonista'. Tomás es el único personaje que escucha las notas de 'La Pastoral', y nosotros, receptores, con
él. Cuando nos llega la melodía--aunque no sólo entonces--percibimos que se nos traslada a ese ámbito del mundo creado por la imaginación del personaje, un mundo opuesto al real; el ficticio se nos enfatiza en su oposición al real, merced al efecto musical. (19-20)

Specifically in *La Fundación*, Rossini’s music is a lyrical invitation to the audience to enter into Tomás' psychological manipulation of space and time in the dialogue, props, lighting, costuming, etc. Luciano García Lorenzo clarifies how music functions in a theatrical text. According to him, music is a theatrical sign that performs the following functions:

[. . .] en primer lugar, sacar al espectador de su mundo para introducirlo en el tiempo y el espacio de la obra [. . .] la música será utilizada con el fin de subrayar una situación determinanda a la cual sirve de acompañamiento o, como se dice normalmente, 'de fondo'; [. . .] . (113)

Buero has united various art forms--painting, music and drama--which have temporal messages that depict the suffering of one deprived of many of nature's ordinary stimuli.

The references to light and the progressive darkening of the prison environment symbolize the desire for freedom, the lack of compassion, cruelty, and the inhumanity which is part of the
process of stripping the human spirit of its will to oppose authoritarianism. The inhumane socio-political processes to which the inmates are subjected while corralled into a small unsanitary space, and the torture which they undergo, should remind the audience that the lack of freedom transcends the time and space in which one is touched by it and that it is ubiquitous.

The allusions to light metaphorize the author's concern with time as an illusion. In *La Fundación*, the playwright develops the concept of the hologram to illustrate the unreal aspect of life in the prison. “A hologram is a three-dimensional image formed by interference between a coherent laser beam and the light scattered by the object being imaged, and recorded on a high-resolution photographic plate; viewable when illuminated with the same light that formed the image” (Antia 1). Emilio Bejel postulates:

> En *La Fundación* se sugiere que tal vez la vida no sea más que una constante holografía. En esta concepción los humanos serían unas especies de proyecciones mutuas. De esta manera, la 'realidad' está muy lejos de ser una cosa concreta, es más bien un constante juego de relaciones [. . . ] . ("El proceso” 242-243)
Bejel's theory cited above can be amplified to suggest that the hologram is the symbolic representation of Illusion which conflicts with Truth. The reference to the hologram first appeared in *El tragaluz*; it represented the illusive aspects of the characters which *El* and *Ella* recovered from the past. The dramatic treatment of reality (Truth) in *El tragaluz* becomes more critical in *La Fundación* as the dramatic text generates questions about the nature of reality, sanity, and insanity. Iglesias Feijóo expresses this very succinctly:

> Ya no se puede creer ni en lo que en escena aparece como más tangible y corpóreo, pues acaso no sea todo ello sino una ilusión óptica, un 'holograma', como también se dice en la obra. (442)

In this quotation, Iglesias Feijóo approaches the essence of Tomás' rejection of reality and illuminates features of his personality. Perhaps everything that Tomás' does not understand or that he can't tolerate is unreal, an optical illusion, a hologram?

The following conversation between Tomás and Asel provides the reader of the text or the spectator with an insight into the psychological state of Tomás and his struggle to accept reality.
TOMAS. ¡Asel!
ASEL¿Qué?
TOMAS.¿Nunca te has preguntado si todo esto es... real?
ASEL. ¿La cárcel?
TOMAS. Sí...
ASEL. ¿Quieres volver a la Fundación?
TOMAS. Ya sé que no era real. Pero me pregunto si el resto del mundo lo es más...También a los de fuera se les esfuma de pronto el televisor, o el vaso que querían beber, o el dinero que tenían en la mano... O un ser querido... Y siguen creyendo, sin embargo, en su confortable Fundación... Y alguna vez, desde lejos, verán este edificio y no se dirán: es una cárcel. Dirán: parece una Fundación... Y pasarán de largo.
ASEL. Así es. (La Fundación 124)

The above dialogue reveals how Tomás begins with the rejection of the prison as real and extends this rejection to all of reality. Clearly, this is a means to reduce the anxiety which he experiences over a situation that he can't change. The conversation between Asel and Tomás leads to a conclusion in which Tomás even questions his own existence. The text also generates a question which is fundamental in La Fundación; is freedom an illusion? The author clarifies the illusive aspect of the Foundation in an interview with José Monleón which appears in Primer acto ("Buero: de la repugnante" 6). He argues that even if the freedom at the end of the tunnel is an illusion—that is, if there exists a series of Foundations--the receptors of the play should continue to hope.
The repetition of the invitation to the receptor to participate in the fable of the Foundation represents the hope that is inherent in Buero's theory of the modern tragedy.

Specific concerns about the nature of time appear in the second part of the fable. Tomás speculates about the present, the past, and the future when he says to Asel that "el tiempo es otra ilusión" and regarding the future he notes that "si creemos en ese futuro es porque, de algún modo, existe ya. [. . .] Recordamos lo que va a suceder." In this fragment Asel refers to time as "el presente eterno " (92). Certainly the present may be eternal, but not its content. Some of our illusions(hopes for the future) enter the present, and certainly our memories fill the present with a wonderful nostalgia. The present may be conceived as the receptor of the past and the future; its content is not eternal but is in constant flux. By means of references to holography the text questions spatial reality in the play, and such a statement as "Recordamos que no existe el tiempo..." breaks down the temporal realism of the play. The repetition of statements which indicate a lack of time emphasizes the anxiety of the five inmates about time and their impending death.
Memories play a critical role in the content of the play and the dramatization of time in *La Fundación*. Autobiographical elements contribute to the elaboration of the drama. Buero lived and acted in a personal drama in which he was condemned to death. He knew intimately the horrors of prison life and the psychological suffering associated with years of incarceration. Some of the events of the drama parallel some of the events which Buero experienced in the various prisons in which he spent more than six and a half years. Mariano de Paco, in his article "*La Fundación en el teatro de Antonio Buero Vallejo*," points out the role that memory plays in this drama:

> Los distintos aspectos de la vida en prisión de estos cinco personajes que esperan morir hacen pensar en lo que la pieza puede tener de autobiografía de Buero. *Historia de una escalera* encerraba elementos autobiográficos más o menos velados y *La Fundación* los explicita con suficiente claridad, como su autor ha confirmando. (7)

Buero confirms that *La Fundación* contains substantial autobiographical material. In response to a question of José Monleón about the autobiographical content of the play during an
interview published in *Primer acto*, of April of 1974, Buero affirms:

*Por supuesto, en la obra hay abundante material autobiográfico. Yo no la hubiera escrito sin una experiencia personal y muy directa. O acaso la habría escrito sin esa experiencia, pero de otra manera. Y entonces sí que me hubiera preguntado escrupulosamente si el hecho de meter a cinco a seis personas en una celda de castigo era o no posible. Como yo conozco bien esas cosas, no vacilé en absoluto, pues sabía muy bien que pueden meterlas. ("Buero: de la repugnante" 6)*

However, in this interview, Buero denies that Tomás is an autobiographical character. He affirms unequivocally that "Yo no soy el señor que ha delatado" (6). Nevertheless, he makes it clear that the description of the prison and the tensions between prisoners are authentic ones taken from his memory. He further affirms that many of the events and descriptions in the drama are variations on his memories, embellished in order to increase the dramatic quality of the play. Buero maintains that "Se persigue una elaboración artística que, cuando falta, reduce las obras a mero documento y suele restarles alcance y calidad" (6).

*Another temporal motif which appears in *La Fundación* is mythological time. In *Historia de una escalera* and *El tragaluz*,*
mythological time is significant in elucidating the continuity of the contemporary world with the past. The text of *La Fundación* also camouflages aspects of mythological time: events which have their origin in primordial time and have been repeated in many cultures throughout the ages. Mythological time was defined more explicitly in chapter two. The principal symbols of mythological time in the play are the tunnel and rebirth from the depths of the Earth.

Beyond the surface realism of its image, the tunnel contrasts sharply with the illusory and deceptive character of light which is expressed in the image of the hologram; the tunnel is a symbol of the harsh reality of life which the condemned men have to confront. It is not a hologram which has no substance; it is real, risky and wretched. José Monleón in the interview cited previously, has extended the metaphor of the tunnel with the following question; "Supongamos que los dos condenados que quedan salvan su vida ¿A qué mundo salen? ". Monleón continues by noting unique temporal and spatial qualities of *La Fundación*. He hypothesizes:
Un aspecto clave de 'La Fundación' es lo que pudiéramos llamar su bitemporalidad y su biespacialidad. El tiempo es, a la vez, el de los personajes y el de los espectadores, el lugar, la cárcel y el mundo físico de quienes ven la obra. (6)

Certainly the text of *La Fundación* explores "bitemporalidad" and "biespacialidad." However, it should be noted that Buero has united these two spaces--that of the audience and that of the characters, and also two temporal spheres--by means of the immersion of the audience in the setting and the time of the characters of the play. Even though the members of the audience are immersed in the space and temporal aspects of the play, their own time and space still influence their perception of the world.

In addition to his commentary over space and time, Monleón asks a crucial question which destroys all the idealism of the tunnel. He asks, "¿Qué sentido tiene hablar de salvarse si el túnel acaba en una nueva Fundación? " (6). Buero's answer as always maintains an attitude of hope. He affirms that he does not know what is going to happen to Lino and Tomás; perhaps they will be executed or perhaps they will escape. Alone they cannot achieve
anything, but together they possess the possibility to conquer, which in this world of consumerism is very difficult (6).

Although *La Fundación* is a play which contains characters and circumstances which appear to be contemporary on the surface, upon further analysis, it can be shown that the circumstances and the five characters of the Foundation camouflage their mythological origin. The critic Leopoldo de Luis explains Buero’s attitude toward the reenactment of mythology in contemporary society. He postulates the following:

Buero sabe que los mitos condicionan aún el comportamiento humano. Sabe que cuanto tienen de ejemplo y de estimulación late en el subconsciente, hasta dar forma a comportamientos individuales y colectivos. Desde los intentos de salvación de las derrotas que infiere el tiempo, hasta el ansia de supervivencia de signo escatológico o la liberación de la injusticia por la revolución permanente. [. . .] El peso de lo mítico gravita sobre las civilizaciones y el ser humano lo lleva palpitando en su mundo psíquico. Todo ello se mueve como un viento trágico que agita las bambalinas y circula entre los espectadores, como soldados que son de los oscuros regimientos de la condición humana. (2)

An examination of this play from a mythological perspective brings to light concealed references to mythology. Some of the stages of the hero which Joseph Campbell delineates in his book
The Hero with a Thousand Faces, can be used to examine the experience of the inmates of the Foundation. Juan Villegas in his book *La estructura mítica del héroe en la novela del siglo XX* has already made extensive use of Campbell's theories in his examinations of three modern novels: Luis Martín-Santos' *Tiempo de silencio*, Carmen Laforet's *Nada*, Pío Baroja's *Camino de perfección*. Villegas has demonstrated that a modern work can reestablish aspects of the mythological past.

In *La Fundación*, the tunnel possesses origins in mythological time. The image of the tunnel has frequently appeared in many mythologies and literature, and in contemporary times. In Middle Eastern Mythology, the tunnel is the route to eternal life (Bedrosian 1). In the world of Classical Mythology, the labyrinth of the Minotaur in Crete is a challenge to those who would brave its tortuous passageway. The beautiful maiden Arethusa of Roman mythology was chased by the river god Alpheus; Artemes helped her to escape. The goddess transformed her into a river which carved a tunnel between Greece and Sicily (Smith 1). The tunnel of the Foundation is, also, an avenue of escape. Biblical scholars and archeologists study
Hezekiah's tunnel of the Old Testament (Larue 1). Similar to the tunnel of Hezekiah, the tunnel carved by the two remaining inmates will bring "sustenance" to those who are left behind in the corridors of cells.

In Spanish mythology, there are many references to tunnels and caves, some of which are associated with the Moorish domination of Spain. The following quotation points out the importance of underground passageways in Spanish culture:

En España poseemos una rica mitología relacionada con las profundidades de la tierra. En Toledo, por ejemplo, se rindió culto a Hércules, y a época prehistórica se remonta la cueva, natural o artificial, utilizada como cisterna de agua por los romanos, y que con el tiempo sería cripta de la iglesia de San Ginés, hoy desaparecida.
También poseemos numerosas narraciones mágicas relacionadas con túneles durante la dominación musulmana. Y en los Pirineos, los túneles naturales de Alkerdi y Zugarramurdi han jugado un papel importante en la historia cultural de España, sobre todo en lo relacionado con la magia. ("Los primeros túneles" 1)

Even in postmodern literature the importance of the mystery of the tunnel and underground routes are important. In contemporary societies, students of history and archeology are
investigating the subterranean worlds under American cities in which old subway tunnels exist (Greenwood 1).

Hopefully, in *La Fundación*, the tunnel is a route to a fuller life. Buero does question this interpretation of the passageway. The difficulty in forging a tunnel without sufficient equipment is without a doubt a challenge to the survivors of the Foundation. Although the tunnel of the play possesses characteristics of the ancient world of mythology, it is a modern structure which imparts significance to the play in accordance with the ideological and political context of the work. From a mythological perspective, the condemned inmates are converted into heroes as they plan to escape from their dungeon of horrors in the prison to the "freedom" of the outside world. The tunnel is the space which connects these two worlds, and two levels of temporality.

The previous references to the mythological characteristics of the tunnel establishes its connection with the mythological world. Campbell's taxonomy reveals a striking correspondence between modern characters and those of mythology. Campbell explains that "The call to adventure" of the hero is based on the urgency of the predicament in which the hero finds himself. The activities of
the five prisoners before their entrance into the prison affirm that they heeded the call of Destiny, and without a doubt the condemnation which hangs over their heads is urgent; they have no other alternative but to escape.

The passage out of the prison can be equated with the stage Campbell classifies as "The Crossing of the Threshold" (77). Campbell associates the "threshold" with transition and transcendence; this accurately characterizes the carving of the tunnel by the remaining inmates. The passage into the prison world is comparable to the stage which Campbell categorizes as "The Belly of the Whale" (91). He emphasizes that the passage into the "Belly" is an inward passage as opposed to the "Threshold" which represents an outward passage (91). In the context of the play, self-annihilation does accompany the entrance into the prison, particularly in the case of Tomás who suffers psychology annihilation. Therefore, the passage into the prison symbolizes death which coincides with Campbell's taxonomy. During "The Road of Trials" in the Belly, the hero must survive a succession of tests (97). The ability to withstand the dehumanization of
incarceration certainly tests the mettle of each prisoner. Of course, Tomás' psychological trials are more "tortuous" than the rest of his cellmates.

All the inmates in Tomás' cell accept the authority of the system of the prison, while he psychologically rejects the mental anguish associated with his plight. He "ascends" from the stench of the dungeon into the labyrinth of his mind, while his cellmates and the prison guards attempt to guide him back to sanity. He does not have access to amulets, secret agents or supernatural helpers that are part of Campbell's categorization of the hero's adventure (97); however, he does possess an astute guide and interlocutor in the character of Asel, who leads him step by step back to sanity. In his last trial, he will descend into a blackness of the earth as he becomes a mole in order to become a free man. The tunnel is a channel of rebirth which leads to the outside world and "freedom."

Certainly, in this play, Buero questions the extent to which one is free; freedom on the other side of the tunnel may be just the illusion. (Monleón, "Buero: de la repugnante" 6). Buero, himself, is a hero of the "Foundation" who was released from
prison in 1946. Nevertheless, he carried the psychological scars and memories of six years of suffering with him. The apotheosis of the heroes is based on their bravery to face the unknown. In *La Fundación*, the reader and the audience do not known if the characters will reach freedom. It is their struggle against the monsters of totalitarianism which elevates them to the status of heroes.

The recycling aspect of the prison is Buero's invitation to the audience to participate in the battle against the deprivation of human liberty. The men in the Foundation are heroes of the *intrahistoria* of Spain. They join the ranks of the thousands of unknown heroes in Spanish history. The message of *La Fundación* is clearly political; however, the play transcends a criticism of totalitarianism by the manner in which Buero utilizes time in the text. In addition, the examination of scientific aspects of the play imparts greater depth and scientific realism to the interpretation of the dramatic experience.

The theatrical treatment of temporality in *La Fundación* demonstrates the anguish of twentieth century characters placed in a world they do not fully understand. The temporal aspects of
the play accentuate various temporal enigmas which challenge the intellect, while at the same time some of the temporal aspects of the play elucidate human behavior during a period of incarceration. In *La Fundación*, Buero has illuminated some of the problems of the humankind by the integration of time, space and art.
Works Cited


CHAPTER 5

El Tiempo se pierde en los secretos laberintos de la memoria que guarda las alegrías y angustias de mi vida.

Carlita Villa

La detonación: Temporal Perceptions and Larra's Suffering

In El tragaluz, Buero transports the members of the audience to the future to observe their own lives. In La Fundación, the public participates in contemporary history. In La detonación, Buero brings nineteenth century characters to the present so that the public can share in the private and public life of Mariano José de Larra. Historical distance collapses in the play as Buero immerses the audience in Larra's intimate world. In some of his earlier historical plays, Un soñador para un pueblo and Las...
Meninas, Buero did not attempt to immerse the audience in the mind of the protagonist. However, in this play, Larra emerges from the nineteenth century as the public participates in his theatrical reincarnation. La detonación is a play in which historical time is recovered and revitalized in a dramatized homage to Larra's life which lessens the moral condemnation of his suicide.

Buero Vallejo's dramatization of his admiration for Larra in La detonación is part of a long evolution which affirms the persistence of Larra in the memory of the literary world. Larra is a historical figure whose writings and popularity have withstood the passage of almost two centuries. From the moment of his death on February 12, 1837, Fígaro has sparked a great deal of debate. Throughout much of the unfolding of Spanish literature, such eminent writers as José Zorrilla, Ramón de Mesonero Romanos, Benito Pérez Galdós, some of the members of the Generation of 98--Azorín, Jacinto Benavente, Pío Baroja, Ramiro de Maeztu, and Miguel de Unamuno--Juan Goytisolo, and Antonio Buero Vallejo have immortalized Larra (Varela 50-95).

The literary world has also commemorated Larra's life in many moving ceremonies. On March 18, 1843, in an impressive
second interment, the remains of Larra were transferred in an urn to the Cemetery of San Nicolás. A somber procession of literary men and eighteen "pobres de San Bernardino, con hachas" walked in silence to the site of the burial. During the ceremony "cuatro poetas virginalmente inéditos leyeron sus versos " (Varela 54).

Seventy-four years after Larra's death, on February 13, 1901, in a desolate scene, some of the members of the Generation of 98 and other men of the world of literature observed the importance of Larra's life through speeches before his tomb in San Nicolás, a cemetery which had been closed since 1884 (Varela 61). Martínez Ruiz (Azorín) and Pío Baroja were two of the writers who visited the tomb (Varela 60). In a magnificent procession in 1902, the remains of Larra were transferred in a carriage pulled by eight beautiful black horses to the “Panteón de Hombres Ilustres del siglo XIX ”(Varela 64). In 1909, a group of young writers held a banquet which celebrated the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Larra. Fígaro has also been praised in poetry by such renowned members of the Generation of 27 as Luis Cernuda in his
poem "A Larra con unas violetas" and Vicente Aleixandre in his poem "El suicida (1837)" (Iglesias Feijóo 467-468).

The perpetuity of an interest in Larra is due to his unique contribution to Romanticism and the relevance of his literary vision in the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries. José Luis Varela in his book Larra y España affirms that the thinking of Larra is as significant today as it was in his lifetime. Some of the problems of modern Spanish society are the same as those which Larra faced in the nineteenth century (95). In his book El furgón de cola, Juan Goytisolo also explains the "actualidad" of Larra. He refers to the "cresciente influencia de Larra sobre la nueva generación." Goytisolo asserts the following:

A los ciento veintiséis años de su suicidio, Mariano José de Larra aparece, en efecto, en nuestra panorámica cultural, como el autor español más vivo, más entrañablemente actual de la hora presente. (21)

Goytisolo further emphasizes the succeeding:

[. . . ] su prestigio, por el contrario, aumenta de día en día y, de nuevo, son muchos quienes ven en él un precursor de los tiempos futuros y lo elevan a la categoría de un auténtico director de conciencia. (21)
It is paradoxical that a suicide victim is held in such high esteem. Buero's dramatization of Larra unravels this puzzle and explains why Goytisolo respects Larra.

Buero's play, *La detonación*, is a magnificent homage to Larra; it illustrates that Larra is a writer who belongs to the ages because as Alma Amell has noted "El énfasis y tema central de la obra es la falsedad de la sociedad, no sólo del siglo XIX sino de todos los tiempos" (136). She further points out that Larra's concerns and vision of the world parallel Buero's and that an encounter between the two artists was inevitable. Amell cites Ricardo Navas Ruiz regarding this point. In an article in *Estreno*, Navas Ruiz notes similarities between Buero and Larra:

Tarde o temprano el ilustre dramaturgo tenía que encontrarse con Larra porque todo su teatro no es sino una larga búsqueda de la autenticidad, de la honestidad entre los hombres, como lo fue la vida de aquél. (12)

In the play *La detonación*, Antonio Buero Vallejo dramatizes his personal vision of Larra. Amell refers to Buero's characterization of Larra as the "Larra que está en Buero, y *La detonación* es la culminación de todas las piezas que el dramaturgo había escrito hasta el momento" (134).
Buero unequivocally defines his relationship to Larra in an interview with Fernando Samaniego. Buero makes it clear that “Larra es un tipo de español lúcido y atormentado que está muy cerca de mi sensibilidad. Me ha interesado mucho desde el punto de vista profesional” (*El país* 27). In the same interview, Buero explains the following:

En mi opinión, la tragedia personal de Larra no es exclusivamente sus contrariedades amorosas. Sus últimos artículos destilan una verdadera amargura, que sin duda considero como irremediable, por la cantidad de problemas del país ante el que chocaba. Se puede decir que a Larra lo suicidó España. (27)

In an interview with Paloma Aviles, Buero's optimism about Larra's life is evident. He confronts Larra's suicide with his characteristic confidence:

Suponiendo que a pesar de todo yo sea un poquito un 'Larra', yo soy un Larra que no se suicida, y espero que no lo haga nunca. Creo que, a pesar de todo, como dice el criado, en mi obra no hay que suicidarse, hay que vivir. (25)

Buero makes it clear in this interview that Larra’s suicide was not merely a reaction to the rejection of Dolores:
Lo suicidó España, y éste creo que es el criterio más objectivo de las últimas investigaciones y no la tesis más vieja de que se suicidó por el amor de Dolores. [. . .] su desesperación social es muchísimo más fuerte que la que pudiera provenir de sus conflictos personales. (25)

Buero's evocation of the figure of Larra in *La detonación* reveals that the dramatist's admiration for Larra centers on his courageous response to the turbulent political years of his short life. The dramatization of the historical conflicts which surrounds Larra's life and his response to that conflict transfer the fascination with Larra from his suicide to his historical and literary contributions. In this presentation of Larra, Buero portrays the optimism which is characteristic of all of his dramatic productions. Living under the yoke of the Dictatorship in the second half of the twentieth century, Buero's response to censorship differs from that of Larra. Larra said what he felt had to be said regardless of the consequences. Buero's elucidates his own response to censorship in the well-known polemic over *posibilismo* and *imposibilismo*.  

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In addition, many other critics have noted similarities between the life circumstances of Larra and Buero; Patricia O’Connor has noted some of the comments. Martha Halsey asserts that “Of all Buero’s protagonists, Larra is the one with whom the playwright most closely identifies” (105). Pablo Corbalán maintains that “Buero hace hablar a Larra con el lenguaje que le corresponde y a través de Larra habla él también” (30). He also considers that Buero is an “alma tan próxima a la de Larra, tan preocupado y atormentado como él por el drama pasado y presente de nuestro país” (31). Regarding the characterization of Larra in La detonación, Magda Ruggeri Marchetti in her article "Sobre La detonación de Antonio Buero Vallejo," indicates that although there are similarities between Buero and Asel, Velázquez, and Goya, the playwright is more closely aligned with Larra than any other figure. She furthermore affirms that Larra ”es sin duda el más fuertemente autobiográfico, en primer lugar porque es un escritor y, en segundo, porque vivió en una época muy semejante a la actual” (194).

Buero not only elaborates his personal vision and memory of Larra in La detonación, but he also examines the historical
context of Larra's life and dramatizes his anguish in his historical moment. Larra lived in the first part of the nineteenth century; however, his life was the continuation of the past, a challenge to his contemporary world, and continues to be significant. Buero's dramatization of Larra in *La detonación*, is dynamic; in it Larra reacts to the social and political authority which formed the fabric of early nineteenth century Spain. His life is a testimony to the political chaos of that epoch, and Buero's interpretation of Larra examines Fígaro's personal and professional response to that chaos. Buero places Larra's suicide within the historical dynamism of that era. In *La detonación*, he unites history and his dramatic art; thus he is dramatist, historian, and teacher.

David Johnston in his article "Buero Vallejo: un teórico de la lucha histórica" indicates that the theater of Buero probes the conflicts between the forces of history and the individual (83). Buero's characterization of Larra within his historical context in *La detonación* supports Johnston's assessment. The playwright depicts Larra's individual struggle to survive with dignity at a time in which the royal power of Fernando VII compromised human
liberty. A brief review of the historical period in which Larra lived and his response to the conflicts of the era will present the historical background which imparts temporal structure to _La detonación_ and context to Larra's life.

Larra was born in 1809 in Madrid. The member of the family who was most influential in Larra's formation was his father, a physician and sympathizer of the rule of José Bonaparte. The French had sent troops to Spain in 1808 ostensibly to wage a campaign against the Portuguese; however, they succeeded in obtaining the resignation of Carlos IV in favor of José Bonaparte, the brother of Napoleón.

On May 2, 1808, the people of Madrid began to rebel against the presence of _Pepe Botella_ (sobriquet of José Bonaparte). The uprisings in Madrid were the impetus for a series of rebellions which spread throughout Spain and plunged the country into a bloody battleground. In 1808, the Spanish with the help of the English defeated the French in the battle of Bailén. After a few years of fighting, the French left Spain in defeat. When they began to evacuate the Peninsula, don Mariano de Larra was forced to go into exile in France; therefore, little Mariano spent
five of his formative years there, from 1813 to 1818. Buero notes this part of Larra's history in the dialogue between Larra and his father.

Larra lived the majority of his brief life in Spain under the tumultuous and terrifying rule of Fernando VII (1814-1833). In 1814, Fernando, entered Madrid in triumph after the abolishment of the constitutional government. The King known as *el Deseado* reinstituted an absolutist regime which ignored the democratic advances which had been made by the liberal constitution adopted during his absence. The regime repressed free speech, reestablished the Inquisition and allowed the Jesuits to return to Spain.

The oppressive politics of the King provoked the reactions of the liberals; such men as Espoz y Mina, and Rafael Riego emerged as heroes of the conflict. The liberal reaction caused the King to acquiesce to some of the liberal demands; three years (1820-1823) of struggle between the two forces followed and finally terminated with the institution of bloody tyrannical measures by the King. These years of struggle were followed by the 'década ominosa' (1823-1833). During this time, Fernando VII persecuted
the Liberals and defenders of the Constitution. The regime condemned to death many of the liberal leaders, such as General Riego and Mariana Pineda.

Clearly, Buero Vallejo's interpretation of history is objective in as much as he presents historical events which are a part of the official history of the era. Iglesias Feijóo emphasizes the historical significance of *La detonación* in relationship to the time in which Buero created the drama. He states that "en última instancia existe también en el autor de *La detonación* el propósito de evocar en el escenario un período histórico que puede resultar alegccionador por sus posibles paralelismos con el presente" (472). Ricardo Navas Ruiz further affirms that “Las coincidencias entre los problemas políticos enfrentados por Larra y los actuales son asombrosas” (12).

Nevertheless, Buero exceeds a rote reiteration of historical events in the dramatization of Larra's life by the oblique inculcation of autobiographical elements in the play, his interpretation of the personality of Larra, the utilization of masks in a highly creative fashion, and the inclusion of temporal elements in the play which dramatize the psychological flux in
the thought processes of Larra. For example, this psychological instability manifests itself in a distortion of the velocity of the speech of some of the characters and in the temporal disorder in which the scenes materialize. The integration of all these elements results in a play which is a fusion of art and history. Larra was a Romantic who lived during a turbulent time. However, Buero's Larra didn't escape into his interior world as many Romantics did; on the contrary, he expresses his concern with the repressive regime in spite of severe censorship.

According to Keir Elam, the dynamic interplay between history and the present moment is vital to the understanding of a drama (117). On September 20, 1977, La detonación premiered in the Teatro Bellas Artes. The most significant historical event of that year was the general elections in Spain held after forty-one years of political silence (Torres Fepsa 1161). In addition to general elections, a constitution was created which incorporated all the rights and liberties that are fundamental in a democracy (Cantarino 430). Therefore, the focus on a historical figure and the nineteenth century was not a technique Buero employed to
circumvent censorship. Iglesias Feijóo supports this assessment in these words:

El drama, escrito y estrenado cuando en la configuración política española se daban cambios de notable importancia, marcados por el advenimiento de la monarquía a finales de 1975, demuestra a posteriori que la creación de un teatro cuya acción se sitúa en tiempos pasados no era un mero recurso para esquivar una censura supuestamente atenta sólo a lo que se desarrollara en la época actual. (466)

However, the theme of censorship is significant in a study of the play because it was a problem during the life of Larra and certainly affected the manner in which Buero approached his dramas. Obviously, some of the circumstances in which Larra lifted his pen and his voice are comparable to some of the circumstances in which Buero had to express himself. Censorship had been a part of the life of the contemporary Spanish audience under the dictatorship of Franco; finally, it was abolished under the government of Adolfo Suárez.

Even though Spain was in a state of political transformation, La detonación was instrumental in instructing its audience about Spanish history in the first half of the nineteenth century.
Iglesias Feijóo explains that many facets of contemporary life had their roots in the century in which Larra lived:

Aquella época está vigente en la actualidad en cuanto que allí se encuentran los orígenes de la España de hoy; de ese modo. Larra pasa a ser un testigo del comienzo de muchas de las circunstancias que perdurarían hasta nuestros días. (472)

The late seventies of the twentieth century were auspicious years for Spain and contrasted sharply with the turbulent years of Larra's time. Nevertheless, the political shame and deceit which were of profound concern for Larra still existed. Many writers in the seventies were still interested in Larra due to his courage to speak out against the injustices of his time and the coetaneous quality of his writings.

La detonación motivated the audience to reflect on the present by participating in an intellectual dynamic between contemporary history and Buero's examination of nineteenth century Spain. Magda Ruggeri Marchetti comments on the relationship between the two historical periods. She refers to such similarities as the following:

[. . .]la mano obscura de la censura y del control de la información, omnipotentes, con total e impune libertad
de acción; y cuando éstos no bastan, la cárcel, los destierros, la represión brutal del ejército. Aún más actuales resultan el escepticismo ante los cambios políticos y las alusiones a la España de hoy, tan transparentes como la frase 'Con Fernando VII vivíamos mejor en labios de un nostálgico. (194)

Ricardo Navas Ruiz refers to some of the other similarities between the two epochs, such as the return of those in exile, the death agony of Fernando VII and that of Franco, the desire of the man in the street to know "¿Se muere? ¿No se muere?", the executions ordered by Franco before his death and those ordered by Calomarde in the last years of Fernando VII, and the loss of ideological vigor (13-14).

Iglesias Feijóo summarizes very succinctly the contemporary situation and that of the nineteenth century in such a manner that the dynamic relationship which Keir Elam theorizes is quite clear:

De esta manera, la biografía escénica de la vida de Larra descubre una vez más sus conexiones con el tiempo de los espectadores que, por encima de los detalles concretos, pueden considerar muy vivos los juicios del escritor decimonónico acerca de las dificultades que acarrea la instauración de un sistema de libertades democráticas o sus impaciencias ante la parsimonia con que se acometen las transformaciones más urgentes. En este sentido, Figaro está situado en un momento de transición que no acaba de romper decididamente con el pasado y sus quejas sobre el
'justo medio', la persistencia de la censura o sobre las vacilaciones del poder político podrían tener para el público una aplicación inmediata al panorama de la actualidad periodística más vibrante con sólo introducir la terminología adecuada ('ruptura democrática', 'desencanto', etc.). (473)

Of course, the audience has to interpret and participate in the complex temporal maze of *La detonación*. Almost all of the scenes in the present of the discourse text are memories of Larra or perhaps those of his servant, Pedro. However, it is a past which is well-known because of the popularity of this writer and his particular response to the shortcomings of nineteenth century Spain. Larra's life has become a part of the consciousness of the Spanish nation. Alma Amell points this out in the following words:

*La detonación* es un ingenioso tejido de factores, pensamientos, sentimientos y fragmentos de texto larriano relevantes para un buen entendimiento de Larra, su importancia para la España de todas las épocas y por ello su eterna y obligatoria presencia en la conciencia española. (140)

Notwithstanding, Buero's interpretation of Larra elaborates on the public figure by the exposition of both Larra's public and private life. The dramatist focuses on many of Larra's struggles against the restrictions on human liberties during the nineteenth century.
which were brought to fruition in the twentieth century. This is a historical play in which Buero has used experimental techniques associated with time.

In *La detonación*, memory and historical time fuse. The popular memory of Larra intersects with the official history of the nineteenth century. The figure of Larra emerges as heroic when it is placed within the turmoil of the reign of Fernando VII. The perpetuity of the contribution of Larra to literature and the "actualidad" of his writings produce a dynamic interplay between history and memory. Also, Buero's memory of Larra and the official history contribute to the development of the dramatic plot of *La detonación*. Of course, the dramatization of memory takes on many variations in relationship to the text; however, it is the memory of Larra within the play which forms the foundation of the dramatic action and the structure of the play. Therefore, an examination of memory in relationship to the psychological state of Larra will be fruitful.

*La detonación* is a brilliant amalgam of art and of the history of the last years of Larra's life. Magda Ruggeri Marchetti
notes the following about the temporal duration of the action of the play:

Dos hilos temáticos paralelos guían la obra en perfecta simbiosis: la vida de Larra y los borrascosos acontecimientos políticos que acaecen entre los años 1826 y 1827. [. . . ] Más de la mitad de la obra se centra en el período que va del año 1834 hasta 1837. (189)

Iglesias Feijóo affirms Ruggeri Marchetti’s assessment that the play deals with the years from 1826 to the death of Larra in 1837 (466). The scenes in La detonación do not take place in chronological order but reflect the chaotic mental state of Larra; his life is a series of flashbacks which emerge haphazardly from his consciousness. Iglesias Feijóo refers to the passage of the various scenes as "la resurrección del pasado" (482). The two hours in which the play takes place is the psychological condensation of a few minutes before Larra’s suicide. He confirms this when he utters "El que va a morir lo recuerda todo en un momento" (22).

Buero converts the historical past into the present as various characters emerge to act as the interpreters of history: don Mariano de Larra, Ramón de Mesonero Romanos, José de
Espronceda, Cea Bermúdez, Martínez de la Rosa, Juan Álvarez Mendizábal, etc. In one of the first scenes of the play, don Mariano de Larra explains the plight and the exodus of his family from Spain to France. In his explanation, obviously for the benefit of his son Mariano, don Mariano recreates his fear of the despotism of the King. The inclusion of the first scene between don Homobono and Calomarde illustrates the concern which don Mariano feels for the future of the young Larra who wants to be a writer. At the same time that the dramatist introduces the receptor of the play to the young Larra, he recreates the beginning of interpersonal conflicts between the youth and his father, and introduces the theme of censorship.

The scene between Larra and Mesonero in the Café del Príncipe is a magnificent example of the union of art and history. Ramón de Mesonero Romanos interprets some historical events of the reign of King Fernando--the execution of Riego, the creation of "The Numantinos," the detention of Espronceda at the age of fourteen, the hanging of Millar, the execution of Valdés, Chapalangarra, and Torrijos, and the fear and repression of the most literate voices of the Reign. In the cafe, don Ramón
introduces his audience to some of the literary and political figures of the day, such as Ventura de la Vega, Bretón de Herreros, Carnerero, Arriaza, Lista, Quintana, and Nicasio Gallego.

The inclusion of the *letrilla* in the text incorporates oral tradition into the recreation of the historical period in which Larra frequented the Parnasillo and adds a humorous touch to a serious play:

*Una víbora picó*  
A Manuel Bretón el tuerto.  
¿ Murió Bretón ? No por cierto.  
La víbora reventó. (36)

This *letrilla* intensifies Buero's characterization of Bretón, a character who wears a sardonic mask and has "a face of a few friends."

In Guillermo Schmidhuber's analysis of *La detonación*, he investigates the historicity of the play in relation to its literary qualities. He indicates that in the fusion of art and history, Buero has accomplished what Nietzsche referred to as the "'literaturización de la historia.'" Schmidhuber makes the following statement concerning plays such as *Un soñador para un pueblo*, *Las Meninas*, *El tragaluz*, *El sueño de la razón*, and *La detonación*:
El estudio de estas obras bajo la luz de la historiografía moderna, permite esclarecer su valor con un aparato crítico diferente al ya utilizado en la teoría dramática, si olvidamos, por un momento, el deslinde que existe entre la historia y el teatro. (1)

Schmidhuber examines the 'literaturización' of history in La detonación based on "los cuatro tropos clásicos propuestos por Juan Bautista Vico (1668-1744): metáfora, metonímia, sinécdoque e ironía "(1). Schmidhuber concludes the following concerning the play:

[. . .] la audacia dramática de Buero sobrepasa en complejidad a los dramas antes mencionados, al subir a escena a los mayores literatos de la España romántica--Martínez de la Rosa, Mesonero Romanos, Bretón de los Herreros, Espronceda, entre más de cuarenta personajes para dar marco histórico a Mariano José de Larra, un escritor fundamental en el pensamiento español. La obra se prefigura como metáfora de la España romántica y como posible metáfora teatral de la España actual [. . .]. (2)

The above hypothesis about the "metaphorization" of contemporary history in La detonación raises questions about the verisimilitude of the play and Buero's intentions to criticize modern Spain. The characterization of Larra in La detonación according to Iglesias Feijóo is realistic. This critic makes it clear
that "No existe, en efecto, falseamiento alguno en nada esencial de lo que Larra representó, ni en el panorama general (literario, social, político) que se expone" (474). Iglesias Feijío acknowledges that even though there are parallels between the two periods, Buero is not criticizing Francoism. Interestingly, Schmidhuber rejects the hypothesis about the play's "metaphorization" of contemporary Spain, and concludes that *La detonación* is a synecdoche:

[. . .] la historia teatral de Larra no llega a convertirse en metáfora de la conciencia histórica del pueblo español del final de hoy; por lo que esta pieza es solamente una sinécdoque de la España al final del franquismo. (2)

Schmidhuber defines synecdoche in this manner:

figura caracterizada por el uso de una parte para simbolizar una cualidad que se presume inherente del todo. Es integracional. Por ella un microcosmos presume de identidad con un macrosomos. Por ejemplo, las mónadas de Leibniz son sinécdoque de la materia. (4)

Schmidhuber’s examination demonstrates that Buero's conception of time in *La detonación* pervades many facets of the play, including the above literary characteristics. The Spain of Larra's epoch is a part of the whole of Spanish history and not a metaphor
of the time in which the play premiered. Its dynamism rapidly unfolds on the stage in the "literaturization" of historical time.

In addition to the recreation of the historical time of Larra's life and the "literaturization" of time, Buero uses the technique of temporal simultaneity in his dramatization of Larra's overwhelming concern with censorship. The verbal relationship between the temporal spaces is magnificent; it emphasizes the simultaneity of actions in two theatrical spaces as they chaotically emanate from Larra's mind. Such personages as Vega, Díaz, Espronceda, Bretón, Carnerero and Father Gallego discuss censorship in the Café del Príncipe. The counterpoint between the dialogue of the clients of the café about censorship and that of the authoritarian figures in the "official space" who make decisions which affect the writers is structured on a verbal irony which informs the audience of the nature of Larra's frustration with the regime. History becomes palpable in Buero's dramatization of the concern with censorship, the confiscation of property of the Church, the atrocities of mobs against the religious orders, the violence of the Carlist War, the execution of the mother of General Cabrera, etc.
As in the other plays examined in this dissertation, Buero also recreates aspects of mythological time in *La detonación*. One such mythological reference is the use of masks in the dramatic recreation of Larra's life. Of course, the use of masks is not new in theatrical presentations. Masks were used in tribal rituals in many cultures; they were worn in the Greek theater, and they have been used throughout the history of the theater (Self 28). In chapter one, Pajón affirmed the influence of the Greek theater on Buero.

In the Greek theater, there were two types of masks, tragic and comic. Also, each actor could wear different masks thus enabling him to play more than one part. Buero uses this technique in *La detonación*; for example, the same actress plays the role of Pepita Wetoret and Dolores Armijo. This technique allowed for flexibility in the theater in as much as more roles could be incorporated into the dramatic text (Wilson and Goldfarb 199). Also, all the characters in the Greek drama were portrayed by men; the male characters used masks to play female roles (204). The Roman theater continued the Greek practice of the use of the
mask (211). Of course, the use of the masks is not confined to Western theater, but it has been popular in the East: noh theater, Beijing Opera, and Kabuki theater.

In La detonación, the thematic of the mask is introduced in the conversation between Larra and his father, don Mariano de Larra, when the young Larra alludes to the hypocritical aspects of those "who wear their masks." The multiplicity of masks in the text are manifestations of the public facades of the various characters who wear them. They are non-verbal signs which are highly communicative because they inform the audience of the type of personality that the wearer wants to present to society. The following dialogue introduces the receptor of the dramatic text and the spectator to Larra's attitude towards the hypocrisy denoted by the various masks:

D. MARIANO. Si de algo puede servirte el consejo de este médico no demasiado tonto que es tu padre, no te enfrentes aún con el mundo. Lo desconoces.

LARRA. Por eso me voy. Debo conocerlo [si quiero escribir de él.] Y arrancar las caretas.

D. MARIANO. ¿Qué caretas?

LARRA. Todos llevan alguna. (La detonación 47)

Stating these words, Larra has elected his destiny to “descubrir la
véndar detrás de la máscara, (y) denunciar la farsa colectiva
[. . .] .” (Navas Ruiz 12). This decision includes Larra’s
confrontation with his own hypocrisies.

Larra and Esponceda do not wear masks in the play, but this
is not to say that they are not hypocrites. In the last scene before
Larra commits suicide, he faces his own hypocrisy and fears:

¿Y éste..., ¿quién es? No lo sé. [Ahora, comprendo que]
también es una máscara. Dentro de un minuto la
arrancaré... y moriré sin conocer el rostro que
esconde..., si es que hay algún rostro. Quizá no hay
ninguno. Quizá sólo hay máscaras. [. . .] . (190)

After this self-revelation and in the tradition of Romanticism,
Larra flees into the 'interiorization" of death.

Buero uses the masks to transform the wearer into someone
else; the masks are not metaphoric. Many of the "faces" in the
play reveal the social roles in Larra's world. The personality of
the characters contrast poignantly with the characterization of
their masks. Buero has brilliantly demonstrated the transforming
power of the mask; don Mariano without his mask is a decrepit old
man, Mesonero without his mask possesses a timid face, and
there is no difference between Dolores and Pepita.
The theme of the mask appears in Larra's article "El mundo todo es máscaras. Todo el año es carnaval." The principal image in the work is that of a costume ball. A series of various types of characters parade through the text. Alma Amell describes Buero's technique:

"'El mundo todo es máscaras' es el extremo cuidado de Larra para no individualizar sus descripciones. Cualquier persona puede corresponder a cualquier tipo representado en "'El mundo' "lo que evita que alguien pudiera sentirse aludido en particular. (89)

Iglesias Feijóo also theorizes about this article:

[... en la vida social todos se ocultan bajo una máscara que encubre su realidad, por lo que el uso de caretas en carnaval sólo resulta una redundancia: 'en todas partes hay máscaras todo el año'. Sobre este pensamiento, unido a la función de descubridor de las hipocresías que el bachiller realiza allí con ayuda de Asmodeo, Buero ha planteado la misión de su protagonista como una lucha constante por desenmascarar a los que le rodean. (476)

Certainly, the theme of the mask, the setting, and the various types of characters allow Larra to express his anxieties over the hypocrisy in Spanish society in 1833, the year in which the article was written. Larra describes very vividly the costumes of the carnival of Madrid. The masks of the various characters
exteriorize their interiors, and they cannot hide behind them; on the contrary, their masks identify them. Another of Larra's essays which is pertinent to *La detonación* is the article "La Nochebuena de 1836." This article focuses on the Larra's pessimism which reaches a climax in *La detonación*. Also, the character of the servant, Pedro, appears in the work. Certainly these two articles elucidate Larra's response to the hypocrisy of the era and his frustration with the reality of the first part of the nineteenth century. Larra's articles are his most important literary contributions, and Varela notes the following concerning their literary significance:

Por su cantidad y calidad, los artículos son la 'obra' de Larra: lo que le singulariza entre los escritores de su tiempo y en el vasto panorama de nuestra literatura moderna; consituyen también el género en que adquiere su personalidad más fiel y honda voz. (155)

Buero dramatization of the hypocrisy of nineteenth century Spain illuminates “el presente con un pasado similar” (Navas Ruiz 13) because the central theme of *La detonación* is "la falsedad de la sociedad, no sólo del siglo XIX, sino de todos los tiempos" (Amell 136).
Another aspect of mythological time in *La detonación*, is the process of the "herorization" of Larra. However, Buero does not have to make a hero of Larra in view of the fact that the life of Fígaro was heroic and can be analyzed using certain mythological themes. Pedro Corbalán notes the mythological aspects of Larra’s life. He points out that “La figura de Larra adquiere una dimensión superior, ya por encima de sí misma, adentrándose en lo mítico y asumiendo la voz de un profeta sacrificado” (31). Buero uses these motifs to recreate Larra’s life in drama.

The childhood of Larra reaffirms Jung’s concept of the mythological child-hero. The child motif postulated by Jung and discussed in chapter three of this dissertation forms the narrative of Larra’s life. According to Jung, the child motif constitutes part of the *collective psyche*. The psychologist associates the “child hero” with hardships and an evolution towards an independent state (119). Buero dramatizes the influences on the life of young Larra—especially that of his father—and his development towards independence. From the moment of his birth, little Mariano José was cast into a hostile environment; he suffered along with his family because they supported the rule of José Bonaparte the
brother of Napoleón. When the Spanish defeated the French in the War of Independence, Larra was carried from his native country to a foreign land at a very young age.

Upon his return to Spain at the age of nine, Larra endured the despotism of Fernando VII. Also there is in the play a reference to the triangular relationship between father, son and mother in the dialogue. The unspoken hostility between Larra and his father, don Mariano, surfaces in the scene between the two in which don Mariano relegates the mother to the background in his discussion. Don Mariano's confession of an illicit love affair intensifies the conflict between him and his son in as much as the prohibited female was also the object of Mariano José's affection. The child-hero motif is further emphasized in the text by reference to "The Numantinos" which Espronceda organized and the desire of Larra to leave the protection of his home in Valladolid to study in Madrid or Valencia. Buero romanticizes his task; the pen would be his sword and his laughter his inspiration to challenge hypocrisy.

Joseph Campbell's taxonomy of the hero, which was so useful in the analysis of the heroes of La Fundación, may also be
applied to Larra. His entire life can be conceived of as an answer to what Joseph Campbell identifies as the "Call to Adventure" (49-58). As a journalist, Larra attempted with his pen to enlighten a world filled with darkness and discord. Campbell notes that usually a guide appears to lead the hero along his perilous path. Pedro, a character taken from the article "La Nochebuena de 1836," is Larra's companion in his last adventure with Death. Pedro's significance deepens in profundity as the receptor of the text becomes cognizant that he is the externalization of Larra's subconscious. Campbell's concept of the goddess appears as Pepita, and his concept of the temptress is Dolores who enchants Larra. His heroic battle against the demons of authoritarianism is part of the psyche of a nation which considers him a literary hero *par excellence*.

*La detonación* is the dramatization of the psychological turmoil which Larra experiences. Temporality structures the play. Larra states that "El que va a morir lo recuerda todo en un momento" (45). The moment to which Larra refers is condensed into a period of two hours in which Buero interprets part of the life of Larra. Virtudes García Serrano asserts that "La estructura
temporal de *La detonación* está organizada a partir de una inmersión en el pasado, localizada en el interior de la mente del suicida." She further clarifies this assertion:

Lo que el espacio escénico presenta ante la mirada del espectador no son solamente lugares, sino referencias temporales que progresiva o simultáneamente van mostrando los tiempos de la aniquilación del héroe. (203)

Certainly, space and time are intimately united in *La detonación*. The very crux of the structure of *La detonación* is temporal. Larra's memories provide the temporal structure of the play; however, temporality is distorted and begins to take on aspects of a-temporality as Larra distorts time. However, Iglesias Feijóo informs us that "Esa rememoración sigue en líneas generales un orden cronológico, en el que, no obstante, se introducen quiebras, saltos en el tiempo e irrupciones del presente, [. . .]"(477-478).

My interpretation suggests that the play is composed of a temporal framework which is not a mere series of flashbacks. The velocity with which the various scenes of *La detonación* materialize from the mental spaces of Larra, indicates that the
temporal structure is a group of memories which exists simultaneously. The dialogue creates the sensation that Larra has lived almost all of his life and that he is focusing on various fragments of an enormous temporal tapestry. Sometimes he is confused because of the enormity of his life. The following scene demonstrates this confusion after his conversation with don Mariano which took place when Larra was sixteen.

PEDRO. 1826. Usted está en Madrid.
LARRA. (Mientras abandona la levita y el criado le pone el frac.) ¡Antes de casarme no tuve criado!
PEDRO. (Impasible.) ¿La capa?
LARRA. Sí (Se la deja poner. PEDRO le tiende el sombrero y lo toma, PEDRO. (Va a recoger la levita.) ¿Bastón?
LARRA. No. (Lo mira.) ¡Vete!
PEDRO. Ya me fui con las señoras.
LARRA. (Colérico.) ¡Pues qué haces aquí? (PEDRO se encoge de hombros. Su señor deja de mirarlo y baja la voz.) ¿Ha muerto ya?
Pedro. (A media voz.) Casi. [. . .]. (La detonación 52)

However, Bobes Naves provides another interpretation based on the preceding dialogue. She explains Larra's mental confusion as follows: "Se mezclan el pasado de Larra, con su presente en la obra y con el futuro del criado puesto de manifiesto por el tiempo verbal usado 'Ya me fui' "(65).
Pedro possesses dual identities that of Larra's servant and Larra's alter ego. These two roles of Pedro merge in Larra's temporal experience just before his suicide. Iglesias Feijóo states that Pedro "aparece al principio del drama (p.45), en el único instante en que comparte con el protagonista el tiempo present del relato escénico " (491). The appearance of Pedro as Larra's alter ego is related to the a-temporal aspect of Larra's experience.

In the dialogue between Pedro as Larra's alter ego, and Larra, the latter attempts to impose his concept of time on his life and becomes confused when it conflicts with Pedro's concept of time. In the relationship between Larra and his alter ego, Buero has brilliantly juxtaposed subjective aspects of time with the concept of chronological time. Larra is undergoing a psychological crisis in which his conscious mind and his subconscious are in opposition, thus manifesting a contrast in the concept of temporality held by different parts of his personality.

Another temporal aspect of the play is Larra's perception of the velocity of speech. Larra becomes agitated when some of the characters seem to speak in a slow and halting manner in contrast to what he perceives of as his "normal" speed of speaking. He
finally realizes that his mind is racing and abnormal, while Pedro and Adelita speak at a normal pace. The phenomenon of the racing mind has been studied by psychologists and psychiatrists in suicidal patients. It is frequently associated with rapid speech. (Hendrix 1) This state of hyperactivity or hyper-arousal demonstrates Larra's confusion, his restlessness. Buero highlights this phenomenon by hyphenating some of the dialogue in which the velocity of the dialogue appears to Larra to be very slow.

Buero's Larra appears to have lost what the theorist William Friedman refers to as ‘time memory,’ that is, memory of when some particular event occurred. The memories that make up Larra's terrible turmoil are the salient ones in his life--events involving his family, his lover, his servant, Pedro, his writings, the discussions in the Parnasillo and most important, his conflicts with censorship. One theory which explains time memory is that, "the time of an event is not simply read off from some aspect of the memory of it, but is inferred from information about relations between the event in question and other events whose date or time
is known" (Poidevin, 4). In various instances in the play, Larra and Pedro carry on a dialogue in which the protagonist attempts with the servant's help to establish a particular date.

The Larra of *La detonación* undergoes what some theorists categorize as tenselessness. They propose that human beings tend to divide time into past, present and future, in other words, their perception of the world is "tensed." The proponents of this theory agree that this is an objective interpretation of reality. However, they ask the questions, "Does what is present slip further and further into the past? ¿Or does this picture merely reflect our perspective on a reality in which there is no uniquely privileged moment, the present, but simply an ordered series of moments? " (Poidevin 5) The theoreticians that oppose this theory are known as ‘tenseless theorists.’ For them, the only objective temporal facts concern relations of precedence and simultaneity between events. The simultaneity of the perceptions of events is one that Larra describes when he utters "El que va a morir lo recuerda todo en un momento" (45).

Iglesias Feijóo comments on this utterance when he says that "La obra desarrolla, por tanto, la idea de que el hombre que va a
morir revive en unos instantes todo el curso de su vida" (477). Therefore, the entire play, from the perspective of the protagonist, is composed of simultaneous events; they are tenseless, that is they are not part of the normal continuum of past, present, and future. Buero has "tensified" Larra's experience in the creation of La detonación by the inclusion of the character of Pedro who acts as Larra's interlocutor. Of course, he is much more in as much as the two of them, Larra and Pedro, dramatize the psychological state of the protagonist.

Buero reinforces the temporal immersion of the audience by his artistic use of lighting. The critics have commented about the creative use of lighting in La detonación. Mary Rice notes that "cuando Larra va por primera vez al Café (del) Príncipe acompañado de Mesonero, éste le describe a los contertulios que concurren allí. Al hablar de cada uno, se ilumina la figura del nombrado que todavía permanece inmóvil" (93). This technique facilitates the temporal flow of the discourse and emphasizes the simultaneity of the action on stage. Iglesias Feijóo has noted that a change in lighting accompanies many of interruptions of the chronological flow of the text and indicate that the action of the
drama is the "concretization" of the mental spaces of Larra (482). Other commentators have noted that flashes of light interrupt the "memories" of Larra and accompany the appearance of the pistol, Pedro, or the voice of Adelita. Iglesias Feijóo further notes that a strange light always accompanies the presence of Adelita and is identified with the present. Sometimes the lighting changes to emphasize a change in a period of time (482). Of course the most dramatic aspect of the lighting occurs near the end of the play when the entire auditorium is plunged into darkness as Larra silently exits this temporal existence. Mary Rice notes that it is the absence of illumination which highlights the pistol and the death of Larra (93).

In the final temporal aspect of the play, Buero dramatizes the effects of the passage of time on the physical appearance of the servant, Pedro. He is now 75, stooped over with white flowing hair. Many years have passed since Larra's death. In this resolution, Pedro summarizes the fate of Larra's children and the singularity of Fígaro's life. While the servant philosophizes about the meaning of human existence, a starry night accentuates the profundity of the moment, and the scene closes in silence.
La detonación is a play which faithfully depicts the historical era in which Larra lived: the characters, the places and the events. The dramatist does not elaborate a rote list of historical events and characters in the play. On the contrary, he dramatizes the dynamic interchange between Larra and the historical context of his life. Buero deepens his faithful representation of the past by the inclusion of a rich collection of temporal techniques such as the velocity of the dialogue, the "literaturization" of time, the recreation of mythological time, the inclusion of aspects of psychological time, the depiction of temporal simultaneity, and references to autobiographical elements. All of these techniques probe the play's surface realism and intensifies Buero's characterization of Larra. In its totality, the play is a vindication of Larra's life; it mitigates the moral severity of his suicide by dramatizing the suffering which he endured and his contributions to literature and history.
Works Cited


CHAPTER 6

Todo tiene su tiempo, y todo lo que se quiere debajo del cielo tiene su hora.

Eclesiastés (3.1)

The four plays examined in this dissertation manifest an evolution in Buero's experimental techniques. In a span of 28 years, from the premiere of Historia de una escalera in 1949 to the debut of La detonación in 1977, Buero experimented extensively with a variety of theatrical techniques, one of which is the dramatization of temporality. In the group of plays which I examine, the playwright focuses on certain problems, such as the social conflicts between the individual and the historical time in which she or he exists; the frustration of the individual with ontological problems, for example an understanding of time; the
unwillingness of the protagonists to accept the social and political restraints of the time in which they live; and the continuity of modern life with the mythological past. Buero resolves some of his concerns in drama and enlightens the receptor about the possible solutions to social and political problems of the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries.

In the preceding chapters, I examine Buero’s exposition of temporality in four plays; in this chapter, I would like to conclude my study with a succinct examination of the evolution of temporality in these works. Buero experiments with the close conceptual relationship between time and space by integrating them in a space-time complex which evolves over the course of the plays. The scenery, the costuming, and many other semiotic signs allow Buero to express many of the enigmatic qualities of time.

All of the scenic images in *Historia de una escalera* depict the stagnation or closure experienced by the inhabitants of the apartment dwelling: the staircase, the landing, the dust covered window, the four apartment doors, and the light bulb enclosed in wire. The staircase in the play is a static configuration in which
the characters' repetitious movement around its structure examines philosophical questions associated with human existence in time and space. The play's space-time system is created by the characters' motion up and down the static structure symbolizing a cyclic aspect of temporality which intersects with the chronological passage of thirty years. Moreover, the integration of all of the semiotic signs in the play--gestures, movements, dialogue, lightening, sounds, etc.--produces a dynamism that elevates the significance of the monumental immobility of the stairs.

The staircase landing intensifies the static sense created by the image of the staircase. It is closed in on one side by a dirty window which impedes visual contact with the outside world. On the other side, there is a worn hand railing which forms a boundary with the shaft of the staircase, or *el hueco*. The entire scene is a dingy microcosm in which some of the characters confront the harsh realities of their existence: the desire to recover the past, the disillusionment with the present, the hope to escape poverty, and the fear of the future. The scenery "speaks" to the audience by calling attention to the social, political, and economic plight of the generations which live and die there in its confines.

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In *El tragaluz*, Buero transforms the stagnation depicted by the scenery in *Historia de una escalera* into a dynamic interaction between parts of the setting. The unifying structures are the basement apartment in which the shadow of the *tragaluz* looms over the life of the family, the elevated office from which Vicente reigns, and the sidewalk cafe which forms the backdrop on which Encarna's anxieties materialize. These spaces metaphorize the transition in the Spanish social structure during the 1960s (particularly familial relationships and the economic hierarchy), the introspection of some of the characters, and the effect of the past on the present. Buero creates a temporal-spatial system in this play by integrating temporal information into the three spaces and by dramatizing the dynamic interaction between them. For example, the thought processes of various characters in the office materialize in the other two components of the scenery—the basement apartment and the sidewalk cafe. Also, the *tragaluz* possesses multiple significance associated with temporality. It is a basement window, a train window, and a magic window which connects reality and fantasy. As a basement window, it symbolizes the temporal and spatial isolation of the family from the world in
which they live; as a magic window, it symbolizes the desire to recovery the past, and as a train window, it symbolizes the effect of the Spanish Civil War on the lives of all the members of the family, especially the Father.

The entrance of El and Ella into the theater in act one of El tragaluz signals that the auditorium is also a part of the play's plot. Subsequently, El and Ella integrate the auditorium into the plot as they transport the audience to the future so that it might witness its own life on the stage proper. The complexity of the scenery in this play visually interprets the social, economic, political and interpersonal problems experienced by a post-civil war family. Buero's investigation of the effect of temporal expansion on an unchanging spatial setting develops the play's scientific thematic.

From the grandiose temporal macrocosm created by the span of centuries in El tragaluz, the receptor enters a temporal microcosm in La Fundación in which the dynamic relation between the scenery and time becomes more complex. The materialization of a psychological state which Buero employed in El tragaluz is "totalized" in La Fundación as Tomás psychologically controls the scenery transforming it into his perception of a
scientific foundation. The spatial transformations in the play parallel the protagonist's psychological evolution towards the acceptance of his reality. Time collapses in the prison setting due to the lack of normal temporal clues; therefore, Tomas' transformation of the spatial components of his environment assume temporal significance as psychological change takes place in time. Although Tomás finally realizes his spatial confinement, he never fully accepts his incarceration as he continues to resolve his conflicts by an inordinate concern with ontological enigmas of time and space which might evoke questions in the spectator or the reader of the text about the significance of human existence. The analogy between the human condition and imprisonment elevates the theme of the play from the political to the philosophical.

However, it is in La detonación that the intricacy of the interplay between the various dramatic scenes and time reach a zenith as episodes of Larra's life explode from his memory in three minutes. The Café del Prínciple, the bureaucrats' official space, and Larra's study are the scenes in which Larra's remembrance materializes minutes before he commits suicide. The entire play is a condensation of Buero's interpretation of Larra's conflicts in his
personal, political, and professional life. The playwright frequently calls attention to Larra's temporal confusion in the dialogue. Like Tomás in La Fundación, Larra frequently distorts time, thus indicating that he is undergoing a psychological crises. Temporal distortion is one of the most disturbing perceptual disturbances in some mental conditions (Melges 100). Finally, the members of the audience, immersed in Larra's temporal-spatial confusion, not only witness Larra's death, but they "die" with him as they are enveloped in darkness.

In addition to the evolution in the time-space complex in the four plays analyzed in this dissertation, Buero's dramatic exposition of the relationship between the psychological state of some his characters and time also evolves the course of these four works. In Historia de una escalera, the text suggests Fernando's psychological state without fully examining the theme in depth. However, in El tragaluz, Buero portrays the psychological effect of historical time on the characters of the intrahistoria more explicitly and poignantly than he does in Historia de una escalera. In El tragaluz, the aberrant behavior of the Father is the subject of concern for the rest of the family. Vicente explains that the
Father's psychological condition is due to artherosclerosis, while Mario attributes it to senile dementia. In fact, all of the members of the family suffer from the effects of the Civil War, especially from the incident in the train station. The Father dramatizes the culmination of their suffering in the bloody sacrifice of Vicente.

In *La Fundación*, Tomás' psychological perception of time and space controls the dramatic movement in the play. The immersion of the audience in Tomás' world represents a step forward in Buero's experimentation, which allows the receptor of the play to understand the mental aberrations which Tomás undergoes. Gradually, as the protagonist accepts reality, the scenery stabilizes; yet, he still agonizes over his lack of an understanding of time. There is a suggestion that time and space dissolve as Tomás raises questions about temporality and reduces space to a hologram, an illusion. The dramatization of psychological time reaches a zenith in *La detonación* as space and time interact to produce the play's scenery and its temporal structure in which Buero immerses the audience. Buero defends his experimentation with psychological characterizations and catharsis which he adapts from the Greek tragedy. He compares
the theater in some aspects with the field of psychiatry, and he posits the necessity to examine the interior state of his characters as follows:

Básicamente lúdico, el teatro es también, en su raíz, compromiso humano. [. . .] Y ese compromiso afecta a toda creación estética; no sólo a la teatral. Pero, en lo que a ésta se refiere, parece oportuno recordar que, para la amenidad tanto como para el compromiso, no puede descartarse el conocimiento operativo de los sutiles meandros de nuestra psique. Pues, lo queramos o no, y sean cualesquiera las formas de la escenificación, desde ellas pretendemos comunicarnos con nuestros semejantes. Y no se puede hallar el nivel humano que origina la comunicación auténtica sin instalar en él la oscura realidad del hombre interior al lado de las realidades externas y coyunturales que, desde otros ángulos de visión, asemejan al hombre a un bicho o a una máquina. Bicho, máquina o muñeco, pero enigmática realidad psíquica a la vez, es ciertamente, cada uno de nosotros. A mí, como dramaturgo, me es imposible olvidarlo, y espero que el teatro tampoco lo olvidará (El futuro...141)

While Buero's development of the space-time complex and psychological time evolve in the four plays of this study, the role of historical time is a constant force in the trajectory of the works. The scenery, the dialogue, the costuming, etc. all contribute to the unfolding of historical time in each play. In Historia de una escalera, Buero probes the effect of the passage of thirty years on
the characters of the play. He does not specifically refer to particular historical events; however, he dramatizes the effect of historical time on the characters during the chronological passage of thirty years. The main characters of *Historia de una escalera* react to their present historical moment in various ways--Urbano participates in the main historical currents of his day while his antithesis, Fernando, retreats into the security of his own thoughts. There are indirect references to historical events which took place during the thirty year span referred to as the "crystallization of time" as the reader or spectator witnesses history's effect on the lives of the characters, such as the minimal transition in the scenery after the Spanish Civil War.

In *El tragaluz*, Buero represents the culmination of twenty-seven years of history, from the end of the Civil War to the year 1967. In the year 1967, as I previously noted, there was increasing material prosperity in Spanish society, a decline in traditional cultural values, and progress towards the institution of democracy. The antithetical motif of acceptance and rejection of contemporary life examined in *Historia de una escalera* is repeated in *El tragaluz* in the conflict between Vicente and Mario.
contrast to Vicente, Mario responds to the historical transition which confronts him by retreating into the past.

In *La Fundación*, Buero broadens his historical perspective by philosophically examining the effect of historical time on the individual. The inmates in the Foundation are political prisoners condemned to death by a totalitarian government (Iglesias Feijóo 440). Of course, they all suffer, but it is Tomás who psychologically rebels against the harsh reality of his existence. Time and space oppress him, and he confronts them with his imagination. Yet, it is time which gives the prisoners the opportunity to hope as they set out to carve an escape tunnel. The entire play is an allegory which examines the effect of time and space on the individual restrained in explosive political circumstances.

In *La detonación*, the playwright returns to the nineteenth century to examine the conflict between history and the individual. The contrasting historical periods--the nineteenth century of the play and the twentieth century of the audience--increase the historical breadth of the play and intensify the dramatization of existential crises caused by conflicts between individual liberty and
historical determinism. The focus on a historical figure intensifies the dramatization of Larra's dilemma by removing the work from the realm of fiction to reality. *La detonación* as well as *La Fundación* transcend their spatio-temporal systems by the universality of their messages.

Another temporal constant in these four plays is chronological time. The utilization of chronological time is not excessive and mainly serves as a tool by which the dramatist explores the passage of time in daily life. As a realist, Buero does not reject what is known as the ordinary passage of time; however, he does embellish the passage of chronological time by integrating it into the scenery, the costuming, the characterizations, the gestures, and other semiotic elements. In *Historia de una escalera*, the play's three acts focus on a small amount of chronological time which Buero describes as the "crystallization of the passage of thirty years." He repeats this miniaturization of the temporal framework in *El tragaluz*. The action in the inner play is linear and takes place in just a few days. The dramatist sets the dramatic miniaturization against the background of the Spanish Civil War and against the background
of future human development. In the last two dramas of this
study--*La Fundación* and *La detonación*--Buero repeats this
temporal miniaturization of the main action which reaches a
climax in *La detonación*. The entire play takes place in just a few
minutes before Larra commits suicide. The miniaturization of
time in *La detonación* is juxtaposed against historical time and
other ramification of time, such as psychological perceptions of
the passage of time and the temporal longevity of Larra's
contribution to history and literature.

From the specious present which passes chronologically,
there is a movement towards the past in *Historia de una escalera*
and *El tragaluz*. In *Historia de una escalera*, the characters reflect
on by gone days with a nostalgia which demonstrate their desire
to return to the past. The past was always better, the present
bitter, and the future tenuous but hopeful. In *El tragaluz*, Buero
extends the temporal depth of the play by including memories of
the war. As in *Historia de una escalera*, the desire to return to a
Golden Age is one of sub-themes of the play. Memory forms the
frontier between the "good old days" of youth, the agony of the
bellicose conflict, and the economic deprivation and suffering
which follow the conflagration. The present moment is so critical in *La Fundación* that memory is relegated to only a few references in which the characters embellish the past in order to accommodate for the deprivation in the prison setting. However, the entire play, *La detonación*, is the dynamic dramatization of Larra's memory. Even though Larra rearranges chronological time, the evocation of memory in the text follows a general chronological order as fragments of the past rapidly unfold in the last three minutes of Larra's life (Iglesias Feijóo 477).

Buero magnifies the element of hope expressed in youthful memories by incorporating a regenerative framework in his plays. Time is one of the elements which contributes to the hope inherent in these plays. As I noted earlier, this regenerative aspect in Buero's plays can be traced to Antonio Machado. Although some of the characters, for example Fernando and Tomás, express anxieties about time and its effect on their lives, Buero challenges their pessimism by his exposition of temporality. In *Historia de una escalera*, the hope of new life transcends the anxiety associated with the passage of chronological time and the vital rhythm of
birth, maturation and death. Buero repeats this optimistic thematic in *El tragaluz* in the expectancy of the birth of the child of Encarna and Vicente.

In addition to the optimistic resolution which the expectancy of new life imparts to the plays mentioned above, Buero includes the audience in the regenerative resolution of *La Foundación*. The recycling of the history of the Foundation represents the expectation that the historical cycle will be broken and that the audience will participate in the resolution of the problems which he dramatizes. In *La detonación*, Larra's message can be heard across more than a century. The appearance of Pedro at the end of the play, opens the drama to the future, firmly roots Larra's life to twentieth century history, and affirms the modernity of his literary and historical vision. The tragedy of death in *La detonación* is so powerful and pervasive that only in historical retrospect can hope be perceived in the play. After the passage of more than one hundred and fifty years, Larra's voice is still relevant in the resolution of social problems of the twenty-first century. Many of the injustices which he confronted in the
nineteenth century have been resolved in twentieth century Spain, such as censorship and dictatorship.

Another temporal constant in Buero's plays is the reenactment of mythological themes in modern plays. Classical mythology is the foundation of Buero's first play, *Historia de una escalera*. The playwright interprets mythological time in *Historia de una escalera* in the dramatization of the suffering associated with temporal and spatial repetition. The characters' movement in time and space mimic aspects of the Myth of Sisyphus. In *El tragaluz*, the playwright's mythological perspective deepens as he incorporates allusions to primordial time in a portrayal of aspects of twentieth century life. Buero experiments with mythology in the "impersonalization" of many of his characters, such as *El* and *Ella*, the Father, and the Mother and by the depiction of Vicente's bloody sacrifice.

In the other two plays, *La Fundación* and *La detonación*, Buero transforms modern characters into heroes based on Jungian archetypes which exist in the collective unconscious. Also, the image of the hero which Joseph Campbell delineates in his taxonomy elucidates the mythological resonance in these two
plays. In *La Fundación*, Tomás undergoes significant psychological development, and finally Buero converts him into a twentieth century hero who plans to defy the odds by tunneling his way to freedom. The play is replete with symbolization associated with the mythological world: light, darkness, and the tunnel. Buero's characterization of Larra interprets historical time and his knowledge of Larra's personal and professional life. Larra is a complex character who rebels against the constraints of his environment. Buero guides the receptor of the play to an understanding of Larra's self-annihilation by depicting him as a human hero who intellectually challenges the injustices of his time.

In conclusion, these four plays illustrate the evolution in Buero's dramatization of the complexity of space-time relationships and the effect of psychological perception of time and space on his characters. However, the interpretation of mythological time, chronological time, and historical time indicates that these modalities are a constant dramatic force in the four works. Buero integrates them into his experimentation with space-time and psychology; therefore, they, too, assume a concomitant development as integrative elements. Also, the scientific motif of
*El tragaluz* and the psychological interpretation of such characters as Tomás in *La Fundación* and Larra in *La detonación* "objetivize" the playwright's interpretation of time, thus deepening his realism. This study affirms Buero's faithfulness to the realism with which he began his career, and it also demonstrates how he surpasses his artistic beginning by probing social realities in the twentieth century and human existence with an experimental versatility that characterizes his theater. Furthermore, Buero's experimentation with temporality in these four plays surpasses symbolic realism and places them in the realm of philosophical examinations of reality.

Buero's presentation of time in *Historia de una escalera* dramatizes a dialectic between Bergson's duration and chronological time. When Fernando expresses his fear of the passage of chronological time without change, he is referring to the conflict between these two dimensions of time. His dreams of a prosperous future never materialize. In *El tragaluz*, the conflicts between aspects of duration and historical time repeat this opposition. Also, the possibility of the existence of multiple times contrasts with the possibility of the simultaneity of time. In *La*
Fundación, time becomes more elusive and almost disappears as Tomás questions its existence. The world which he creates manifests his attempt to externalize his sense of duration. His imaginative world conflicts with the harsh reality of the prison and ameliorates his anxiety about death. However, at one point he loses his sense of duration as he questions his own existence and that of time. Considering the various manifestations of time in chapter four, the conflict between duration and its externalization is the most outstanding temporal feature in this chapter. Buero also dramatizes a conflict between chronological time and duration in La detonación. The continual conflicts between Larra and his alter ego dealing with chronological time create a temporal narrative thread in the work. However, Larra terminates this conflict by choosing death instead of life, thus annihilating his sense of duration as well as his sense of the passage of chronological time. Buero allows Larra’s alter ego, Pedro, to live, and at the end of the play he comments on Larra’s life. The four plays of this dissertation reveal some of Buero’s conception of time and its importance to his characterizations, scenery, and dialogue.
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