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1965
THE TRAGEDIES OF ANTONIO BUERO VALLEJO

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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Spain is a country which has had one of the richest theater traditions in the world. The Spanish stage, however, has been slow to recover from the effects of the Civil War of 1936-1939. The major renovating attempt in the development of Spanish theater in recent years has been that represented by Buero Vallejo. If the Spanish theater is to reach its former heights, Buero is generally considered the dramatist who shows the most promise of making it possible. He and Alejandro Casona are the most respected playwrights of present-day Spain, and the only ones with anything approaching an international reputation.

This study is intended to be an introduction to Buero Vallejo's theater. It seeks to state the author's theories on the theater in general and on tragedy in particular, and to analyze his plays in the light of these theories. It is not meant to be a study of his stagecraft or of his style.

I am very grateful to Buero Vallejo for an extremely useful list of his most recent essays. Grateful acknowledgment is due Professor
Elias Rivers for his guidance in the preparation of this dissertation and for his many helpful suggestions, and to Professors James Babcock and Marta Frosch for their careful reading of the text and their criticism.
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I. INTRODUCTION

Buero Vallejo and 20th Century Spanish Theater

The theatrical season 1949-1950 marked the resurgence of serious drama in post civil war Spain. Antonio Buero Vallejo's *Historia de una escalera*, with a tragic portrayal of human existence largely missing until then from the 20th century Spanish stage, brought Spain back into the main current of modern European theater.

The early part of the 20th century had been dominated by the "comedia de salón" of Benavente and Martínez-Sierra and by the humorous comedy of the Quinteros. This theater, to a large extent superficial, banal, and anodyne, was one of "diversión," the deliberate avoidance of the more serious aspects of reality. The tragedy of human existence had been a major theme, of course, in the works of Unamuno and García Lorca. The tragedies of the former, however, were rarely staged, and none was really successful. The death of García Lorca in the first days of the Civil War removed him from the scene early in his dramatic career.

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After the war a new type of escape theater, which is usually termed "teatro de evasión," held full sway, producing mediocre works until in 1949-1950 López Rubio and Ruiz Iriarte succeeded in raising its quality with such comedies as Celos del aire and El landó de seis caballos. "Teatro de evasión" as applied to these authors signifies a theater which "renuncia a interpretar la realidad y se evade de ella hacia aventuras de carácter estrictamente imaginativo."²

The major significance, however, of the theatrical season 1949-1950, considered by Valbuena Prat the turning point in 20th century theater,³ lies in the new trend represented by Buero, who according to Haro Tecglen, "rompe el panorama del teatro de evasión." As this critic sees it, the Spanish theater had been in grave danger of affiliating itself permanently with this later tendency: "Lo peligroso es que el teatro español se halla afiliado

³Angel Valbuena Prat, p. 659.
definitivamente ... al teatro de evasión. ... Desde muchos años el teatro español se aplica a la vida imaginaria.  

In 1951, early in his dramatic career, Buero gave his diagnosis of and prescription for overcoming what Sáinz de Robles often called the "crisis" in the contemporary Spanish theater.

Vivimos una grave hora del mundo, pero nuestro teatro no vibra con ella, sino que la elude ... nos contentamos con el teatro de diversión o de evasión. ... Necesitamos un teatro de realidad y no de evasión; necesitamos por ello, y de una manera especial, la rehabilitación del sentido trágico en nuestro teatro, muerto desde Lorca, Unamuno y algunas obras de Benavente.

Tragedy has indeed never been as prevalent in Spanish theater as comedy, certainly not in the Siglo de Oro. The Romantic Period with such works as Don Alvaro o la fuerza del sino constitutes an exception. Nevertheless, "un sentido trágico," as seen in the Celestina, Don Quijote, and the plays of Calderón and as reflected in the theater and other genres of Unamuno and García Lorca, is basic to Spanish literature. It is for this reason, 

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undoubtedly, that Buero protests strongly when accused of not being "Spanish": "En el fondo mi teatro es mucho más acorde que el de muchos con tradicionales corrientes profundas de nuestra literatura y de nuestra patria." 7

This rehabilitation of tragedy in 20th century Spanish theater has been accomplished largely by Buero, who is generally recognized as the most important contemporary dramatist in Spain and the only one capable of elevating Spanish drama to a level comparable to that of other European countries, to that of a Miller, an Anouilh, a Camus, or a Betti. Also active in this movement to restore tragedy to its proper place in Spanish theater is the young dramatist and critic, Alfonso Sastre. His recent book, Drama y sociedad (Madrid, 1956), is a defense of tragedy.

The Life and Career of Buero

When Buero won, in 1949, the coveted "Premio Lope de Vega," last awarded to Alejandro Casona in 1933 for La sirena varada, he was virtually unknown in the literary world. 8 Buero

7Quoted in Juan R. Castellano, "Un nuevo comediógrafo español: A. Buero Vallejo," Hispania, XXXVII (1964), 23.

8"Nadie o casi nadie en España conocía a este mozo, delgado, tímido y pálido, que, sin embargo anda con pisadas apretadas y firmes y, aunque en voz baja, se expresa con palabras recortadas y tajantes." Alfredo Marqueríe in "Prólogo," Historia de una escalera, ed. José Janés (Barcelona, 1950), p. 9.
was born on September 29, 1916, in Guadalajara. Surrounded by collections of plays and drama journals, he early became interested in the theater, his father's avocation. In an interview with Juan del Sarto he describes himself as "uno de los ninos más fantochescos que haya podido haber," fighting imaginary battles dressed as Artagnan or reciting "Un castellano leal" and a thousand other verses. In these "descomunales y quijotescas aventuras" words were as important as actions: "Representando me veo de niño; y ése es el comienzo verdadero de mi vocación escénica. Leer, monologar y dialogar incansablemente eran mis juegos."9

Later he played with a group of friends what he calls "el más fascinador juego de mi vida." Using a table or sometimes an entire room as their stage they constructed houses of wooden boxes and actors of painted cardboard. Speaking for the actors and moving them about, they improvised such diverse subjects as the three musketeers, fairy tales, trips through space--"maravillosas historias que . . . me hicieron dramaturgo, aunque no me enterase de ello hasta muchos años después."10

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10Juan del Sarto, p. 3.
During boyhood Buero was attracted by Velázquez, and his primary interest at that time was painting. In 1934, after receiving the bachillerato in Guadalajara, he enrolled in the Escuela de Bellas Artes of Madrid. He interrupted his studies at the beginning of the Civil War and served as a medical aid on the Republican side, a contribution for which he received, at the end of the war, the death sentence (later commuted) and was imprisoned for six and a half years.

Upon his release Buero resumed painting "como un loco" but abandoned it "porque la mano, poco ejercitada, no sabía ir por donde el cerebro quería, y el cerebro quería Velázquez." Despite this characteristic modesty he was considered by critics a promising painter.

In 1945 Buero seems to have realized that his most profound interest had always been the theater. His painting, in relationship to his theater, may have constituted a "previa formación visual; como la toma de posesión del exterior del hombre y de las cosas, como obligado precedente a la ulterior exploración de sus internos significados." Buero's painting, in which he strived to emulate


Velázquez, is said to have been in the typically Spanish tradition of transcendent realism—realism in its most profound sense: both external and internal, both matter and spirit.  

His theater, like his painting, represents an attempt to understand what Buero calls "el gran milagro de la realidad": "Mi teatro es respuesta a esas permanentes preguntas acerca del mundo y de la vida que me acompañan."  

In addition to a substantial critical study of Gustave Doré, "Gustave Doré: Estudio crítico-biográfico," in Viaje por España, by Baron Charles Davillier (Madrid: Ediciones Castilla, S. A., 1949), pp. 1379-1508, by 1949 Buero had written four plays. In that year, encouraged by friends to submit his plays to competitions, he won both the "Amigos de los Quinteros" award for Las Palabras en la arena and the "Lope de Vega" prize for Historia de una escalera. He won these "sin recomendaciones, ni padrinos, sin influencias, a cuerpo limpio, desconociendo todos y cada uno de los componentes de los jurados quién era o de quién se trataba."  

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13 Cf. Buero's portrayal of Velázquez in Las Meninas as a searcher for "el último sentido de lo real, del mundo" or "el último sentido de la luz"; Antonio Buero Vallejo, "¿Las Meninas es una obra necesaria?" La Carreta, No. 2 (Barcelona, January, 1962), p. 20.

14 Quoted by Roig, p. 363.

The performance of Historia de una escalera in 1949 and En la ardiente oscuridad, which had also reached the final elimination for the same "Lope de Vega" award, in 1950, placed Buero "a la cabeza de una nueva generación teatral" and made him (together with Casona) the most important Spanish dramatist who had appeared in twenty years, according to one critic. 16

There was, however, from the beginning, considerable hostility, both toward Buero as a person and toward his theater, on the part of some defenders of the Franco regime. His Republican background, his failure to openly support the present government, and his intellectual independence made him a controversial figure. 17 Historia de una escalera was attacked as reflecting only "una porción muy pequeña de vida española, la más desgradable o sordida" and he himself has been branded an "existencialista solapado," "amargado insoportable," "fatalista a ultranza," etc. 18 Most of his plays have received arbitrary criticism at the hands of some critics, for reasons that are not purely literary. Due to a rigid system of censorship he has had difficulty in getting some plays staged, notably

16Vázquez-Zamora, "La señal que se espera," Insula, VII, No. 78 (June 15, 1952), 12.

17Castellano, p. 24.

**Aventura en lo gris**, which was written in 1949 but not staged until 1963.

Yet despite official opposition, his plays, with two early exceptions (*La señal que se espera* and *Casi un cuento de hadas*) have been highly praised both by critics and by the public. Each successive play (fourteen staged to date, plus a translation of *Hamlet*) has confirmed his standing as the leading dramatist of the post Civil War period. This is true despite the fact that Buero "ha despreciado el éxito económico... no ha hecho concesiones ni se ha sometido a las exigencias de conveniencia que requiere el ambiente español." 19

Buero has often been singled out for this "honradez" and "sinceridad": "Es fundamentalmente un autor honrado... tiene lo honrado y puro su teatro de obra hecha por un hombre, en el más completo y total sentido de la palabra." 20 For Torrente Ballester, "dignidad, nobleza y sinceridad son sus notas características." 21 Buero has remained true to his original

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19 Castellano, p. 23.


purpose: "Hagamos los autores un sincero teatro donde la vida, las inquietudes, pesimismo y esperanzas que nos rodean muestran su verdadera cara sin afeites."\textsuperscript{22}

This seriousness of purpose and this sincerity spring from Buero's personal struggle to understand reality. According to one critic, Buero has spoken of himself as "un emocionado inquiridor de razones y sentidos para cuanto se presentaba ante sus ojos" and "un curioso de filosofía, de ciencias; pero sin tenacidad suficiente para cultivarlas." For this reason, the theater to him is not a "función literaria" but rather "un imperativo anímico."\textsuperscript{23} It represents an authentically personal inquiry into the ultimate nature of reality. The theater, like life, is, for Buero, an all-embracing search for truth. The aim of the author is, in the words of one reviewer of his plays, not exclusively to "entretenernos, instruirnos o convertirse en testitmonio acusador de una situación social—cosa a la que sacrifican toda su actividad creadora tantos autores de nuestros días--, sino de aclararnos el fondo último del

\textsuperscript{22}Antonio Buero Vallejo, \textit{Almanaque de teatro y cine}, p. 58.

\textsuperscript{23}Roig, p. 364.
"hombre y de la vida." His plays constitute "una auténtica aportación literaria al estudio del hombre."\textsuperscript{24} It is to this serious type of theater that Buero continues to dedicate his efforts:

Yo quisiera resistir sin bajar un punto la ambición de mis propósitos teatrales, ... procuraré con mi modesta aportación que el teatro de mi patria no se hunda y resurja, ya que, se quiera o no, es aquí donde tiene que resurgir.\textsuperscript{25}

Previous Studies of Buero's Theater

Of the numerous brief studies of Buero's theater, most are of a very general or introductory nature. Only the exceptions will be mentioned here. J. Van Praag Chantraine\textsuperscript{26} divides Buero's theater into three types: "el género neorrealista," "la vena simbolista y lo fantástico" and "el teatro de ideas ... una nueva comedia nacional," a classification which this writer finds inadequate for reasons which will become evident.


\textsuperscript{25}Letter to Juan R. Castellano, pp. 23-24.

\textsuperscript{26}Jacquelin Van Praag Chantraine, "Tendencias del teatro español de hoy: Antonio Buero Vallejo y 'el Buerismo,'" \textit{Cuadernos Americanos}, CXXX, No. 5 (September-October, 1963), 254-263.
M. Manzanares de Cirre\textsuperscript{27} discusses the "realismo social" of Buero considering him an example of what Alfonso Sastre in \textit{Drama y sociedad} (Madrid, 1956) calls "los dramaturgos testigos de la realidad." Pérez Minik\textsuperscript{28} gives a political interpretation of Buero's plays. He considers his domestic tragedies as "minúsculas guerras civiles" showing the need for a spirit of reconciliation, written by "un vencido" in "un espíritu de víctima propiciatoria." This emphasis is excessive; Buero's plays are more universal in nature.

José Luis Abellán,\textsuperscript{29} in a very suggestive study, considers Buero's "preocupación por el misterio y lo maravilloso," as the most constant feature of his theater. The most penetrating brief study of Buero's plays is that of L. Magaña de Schevill.\textsuperscript{30} Treating Buero's theater as "realismo simbólico," she shows how the conflicts take place on two levels: the external level of "la realidad concreta y contingente de posible significado explícito"


\textsuperscript{28}Pérez Minik, \textit{Teatro europeo contemporáneo}, pp. 383-395.

\textsuperscript{29}Jose Luis Abellán, \textit{Insula}, No. 174, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{30}Isabel Magaña de Schevill, "Lo trágico en el teatro de Buero Vallejo," \textit{Hispanofila}, III, No. 1 (September, 1959), 51-58.
and the internal level of "la realidad transcendental con su simbolismo implícito." The conflict on the first level is resolved dramatically; the conflict on the second ends in a question.

As far as Buero's stagecraft is concerned, an excellent study of sound, both musical and non-musical, has been done by Beth Noble. 31

An interesting study of a more extensive nature is that of J. Viúdez, who discusses Buero's theater in terms of "la fatalidad," "la rebeldía contra la fatalidad," and "a la otra orilla de la rebeldía." 32 To this writer's knowledge there does not exist as yet any detailed study of Buero's entire theater.


II. TRAGEDY AS A SEARCH FOR TRUTH

The orientation or point of view from which any dramatist works depends, obviously, upon his total concept of life and of the theater. Both represent for Buero, as we have seen, an inquiry into the ultimate nature of man. Buero's theater aspires to be "un medio estético de conocimiento, de exploración del hombre." 1 This exploration, if it is to reach any profundity, must necessarily take place within the framework of tragedy:

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 de su grandeza. Intentar conocer al hombre, preguntar simplemente por él de espaldas a la situación trágica es un acto incompleto, ilusorio, ciego; toda hipótesis antropológica que no la tenga en cuenta resultará... equivocada y perniciosa. Sólo cuando la exploración de la problemática humana tiene sus aspectos trágicos se hace veraz y honesta, además de valerosa. 2

Tragedy, indeed—from that of the Ancient Greeks to that of contemporary dramatists—has often been viewed as man's search for the truth about himself and about the universe. 3 This search

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2 Ibid.

may take place not only on the part of the author but also on the part of the characters, who in their own search reflect that of the writer. Often, although not always, the search on the part of the characters is a conscious one, as is true in the case both of Sophocles' Oedipus and of many contemporary protagonists. Oedipus, in his quest for knowledge, may be considered a prototype of the tragic protagonist of the 20th century.

At the beginning of Oedipus the King, the hero is a perfect example of what Buero, in connection with one of his own characters--Carlos in En la ardiente oscuridad--has called "la ceguera tranquila," that is, "una ciega y tranquila suficiencia que nos lleva a creernos en posesión de la verdad cuando más sumidos en error estamos." Oedipus, who mocks the blind prophet Tiresias, "You live your life in one continuous night of darkness," is actually blinder. For although he has eyes, he cannot see the error in

4Buero, "Comentario" to En la ardiente oscuridad (Madrid: Ediciones Alf il, 1951), pp. 82-83.


Knox, in his essay, "Sophocles' Oedipus" (in Tragic Themes in Western Literature, New Haven, 1955), emphasizes the complete self-confidence of Oedipus at the very beginning of the tragedy, his utter sureness that he is the "master of his destiny" and that he has the capacity to achieve "complete prosperity." Kitto, on the other hand, in Greek Tragedy (New York, 1952), points out the hot temper of the protagonist and the consequent rashness of his acts (his "tragic flaw").
which he stands: that he is the murderer of his father Laius and the husband of his mother, as was foretold by the oracle at his birth. It is the blind Tiresias who possesses the truth. Oedipus, overly self-confident in his apparent prosperity and happiness as "first of men" and rescuer of Thebes, utterly rejects the prophecy of Tiresias. He is man at his blindest.

When Oedipus learns from Jocasta that Laius, for whose murderer he is searching, was killed at a point where three roads cross, he begins, however, to be disturbed by the suspicion that he is the assassin, the cause of the plague, and the object of his own condemnation, for he once killed a man at such a place. Moreover, when he learns from the Corinthian messenger that Polybus, the king of Corinth who has just died, is really not his father as Oedipus had always assumed, he begins to experience grave doubts as to his own identity. Oedipus' search for the murderer of Laius thus becomes a search for knowledge about himself, as he sends for the shepherd who can identify him. And his "ceguera tranquila" turns into "consciencia dolorosa," a term which Buero has applied to Ignacio, the major character of En la ardiente oscuridad.®

The truth to which Oedipus aspires, however, includes more than the truth about himself. It involves metaphysical truth. For

®Buero, "Comentario," En la ardiente oscuridad, p. 83.
if Laius did not die by the hand of his son and if Oedipus has not murdered his father, as was prophesied, then the oracles are false and the universe without order. "I shall go no more in reverence to Delphi, /The holy center of the earth, /Nor to any temple in the world, /Unless these prophecies come true," chants the chorus.  

Jocasta, who by now has realized that the prophecies are indeed true, tries to stop Oedipus' inquiry: "In God's name, if you place any value on your life, don't pursue the search." But Oedipus cannot be content without the truth: "Burst out what will I shall know my origin, mean though it be." 

This courageous and heroic attitude of Oedipus is just the opposite of the attitude which Jocasta would have him take. She has already tried to stop his inquiry once (after Oedipus learned that Polybus was dead, but before he knew that he was not his father), and she tries again after she herself realizes the truth. She tries to protect Oedipus from the suffering which he would experience if he knew that the oracles were right. To escape this suffering, she would have him live a life of fiction and hypocrisy, that is, of "ceguera." But this attitude of escapism would be not

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7Sophocles, p. 61.  
8Ibid., p. 77. 9Ibid., p. 79.
only cowardly but profoundly pessimistic. For to maintain his
fiction, Oedipus would have to accept permanently the fact of a
universe without order or meaning, a universe governed by chance.

Oedipus, unwilling to live in illusion and insincerity, insists
upon learning the truth, despite the anguish and suffering it will
undoubtedly bring. Like Ignacio, he is "ardiendo por dentro" in
"la oscuridad ... horrorosa."\(^\text{10}\) And the words of Ignacio describe
perfectly his attitude: "Marcharé solo, negándome a vivir resignado.
Porque quiero ver."\(^\text{11}\) But the truth, the vision for which Oedipus
longs, is so appalling, that once attained, it causes him to pierce
out his eyes, eyes whose apparent vision had been but "ceguera."

Yet Oedipus cannot help feeling that his grief is not com-
pletely deserved for his sins were committed unknowingly, albeit
freely. He cannot accept the idea that his suffering is meaningless
and the gods who caused it are capricious. And in Oedipus at
Colonus his hopes are fulfilled. For as the oracle had prophesied,
after long years of wandering old, blind, and ragged, Oedipus finds
among the Eumenides a final resting place, a holy grave which will
confer benefit on the Athenians who have received him and curses
on the Thebians who drove him out of their midst in his

\(^{10}\) Buero, \textit{En la ardiente oscuridad}, p. 29.

\(^{11}\) \textit{Ibid.}, p. 30.
wretchedness. His suffering thus becomes the source of blessing to others and therefore is not meaningless.

And Oedipus himself, although he has no more hope in this world, goes to a place where vision is clear and knowledge is sure. His death, as he is caught up into a space unseen, in the midst of thunder and lightning, is not a terrifying darkness but a blinding flash of light. The gods have restored his eyes, but now they are "eyes of superhuman vision." Oedipus has now attained the truth—the light which he once so erroneously assumed was his. And this truth includes the justification for man's suffering and the consequent meaningfulness of the universe.

In the Oedipus tragedies of Sophocles we have the problem basic to all of Buero's theater: escapism versus realism, illusion versus truth. One critic has stated this problem as follows: "¿Se cumple mejor el sentido de la vida buscando la ficción y olvidando el problema íntimo, o es mejor apegarse definitivamente a la realidad sin evasión, por dura que sea?" Or as it is put by another critic: "¿Tranquilidad ficticia (like that of Oepidus in the beginning) o anhelo del infinito? Indiferencia o agonía? ¿Caracol


humano u hombre de carne y hueso que sufre porque quiere saber el secreto de su existencia?"14

Buero's answer is that of Unamuno: "Mi religión es buscar la verdad en la vida y la vida en la verdad." This search necessarily brings suffering, as did that of Oedipus. But the tragic protagonist accepts this as the necessary price for the most profound kind of knowledge. Ignacio in En la ardiente oscuridad says to Carlos, the advocate of a tranquil blindness to life's more profound and tragic aspects: "No tenéis derecho a vivir, porque os empenáis en no sufrir; porque os negáis a enfrentaros con vuestra tragedia, fingiendo una normalidad que no existe, procurando olvidar. . . ."15

Buero's attitude is thus the exact reverse of Evreinoff's in his Comedia de la felicidad and of the theater of "evasión" in general. In the latter, the characters escape from the real world with its anguish and suffering to a world of pretense, of illusory appearances, of "tinieblas."16 This world of "tinieblas" or

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14Magaña de Schevill, "Lo trágico en el teatro de Buero Vallejo," Hispanófila, III, No. 1 (September, 1959), 55.

15Buero, En la ardiente oscuridad, p. 28.

"ceguera" is precisely where Buero's tragedies start, as the protagonists begin their quest for truth. 17

This search, in both Ancient Greek tragedy and in modern tragedy, springs from anguish: the anguish of the Ancients in the face of the apparent injustice or capriciousness of the gods, and the very similar anguish which modern man feels before the apparent absurdity of the world and the meaninglessness of existence. Underlying this anguish, in Buero's theater as in the Hellenic, is hope: hope in man's attaining deeper understanding, both of himself and of the universe. Tragedy, both ancient and modern is a pilgrimage towards truth, even though the truth to which modern man attains is usually but fragmentary, tentative, and precarious, 18 not the sudden and complete illumination which comes to Oedipus in a blinding flash of light.

17 The protagonist of Irene o el tesoro seeks to escape the sordid reality which surrounds her. However, the new world or reality which she finds may be one, not of "tinieblas," but of "luz," a reality which, it is suggested, may be "the true one." The play is based upon a continuous equivocation and, as Buero has remarked in a commentary, may be considered either an "obra de evasión" or an "obra realista." The new reality to which Irene escapes may, likewise, be one of " ficción" or of "verdad," depending upon the perspective of the viewer.

18 Richard Sewall, "The tragic world of the Karamazovs," in Tragic Themes in Western Literature, p. 127.
Truth, in Buero's theater, as in the Oedipus plays of Sophocles, is symbolized by "luz," defined as "cualquier suerte de iluminación superior racional or irracional, que pueda distender o suprimir nuestras limitaciones." The other half of the metaphor is "ceguera." This "ceguera" is double: (1) man's blindness to his own nature, which prevents his self-realization as he blames his failures on adverse circumstances instead of his own faults and errors, and (2) man's blindness to metaphysical truth, which prevents his finding a meaning in life. In Buero's tragedies we see the blindness of Oedipus reflected in modern man, the same tragic struggle to free oneself from the "tinieblas" of one's own "ceguera espiritual," characters who evade this struggle and characters who attempt to reach the "luz" --such as Ignacio in En la ardiente oscuridad, Amalia in Madrugada, Silverio in Hoy es fiesta, Velázquez in Las Meninas, and many others.

Buero himself has made the following observations about the significance of "ceguera" as it appears in his theater. "Ceguera" is a lack of vision. To conquer it is therefore to obtain "visión" or to discover a facet of truth. It is likewise a limitation to man's freedom, to his free self-development and so represents the core

19Buero, "Comentario," En la ardiente oscuridad, p. 78.
of any tragic problem, which is always "la lucha del hombre, con sus limitaciones, por su libertad." 20

These preoccupations are present—either implicitly or explicitly—in all of Buero's theater. The two works in which they are most obvious are En la ardiente oscuridad, to which several references have already been made, and El concierto de San Ovidio. In these tragedies protagonists who are physically blind symbolize the problems of man in general. For as one reviewer has noted in connection with the latter play, "Ver o no ver no es sólo una tristísima realidad para los que no ven sino una esencial cuestión de toda la humanidad." 21

Ignacio's longing for physical sight represents the yearning for metaphysical knowledge or vision which all men experience. The physical blindness of David of El concierto de San Ovidio, who longs to become a real musician instead of an "atracción bufonesca" exploited by unscrupulous fair impresarios, represents the obstacle to self-realization which, in one form or another, all men encounter. The struggle of Ignacio and David represents "una sana rebeldía contra nuestras limitaciones que se plantea la posibilidad de


superarlas"\textsuperscript{22}--a rebellion against "las tinieblas" to obtain "la luz," which will be seen in all Buero's plays, although usually without the overt symbolism of these two works.

Buero's theater will be viewed in this study as a consistent effort to "abrirnos un camino hacia la luz." From the first play Buero wrote, \textit{En la ardiente oscuridad}, to his last, \textit{El concierto de San Ovidio} (1962), Buero's theater has remained faithful to this purpose. He has stated in a recent article: "El propósito unificador de toda mi obra ha seguido siendo seguramente el mismo: el de abrir los ojos."\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{22}Buero, "La ceguera en mi teatro," \textit{La Carreta}, No. 12 (September, 1963), p. 5.

III. BUERO'S IDEAS ON TRAGEDY

Before analyzing Buero's tragedies in terms of the search for truth which they propose, it will be well to consider Buero's concept of tragedy and his attitude toward this search. Buero has expressed his ideas on tragedy, as well as on the theater in general, in numerous essays.

The problem of "genres," according to Buero, cannot be formulated prescriptively in our day. A literary work corresponds to one predominate "sentido" or "intención," although it may combine various forms. ¹ It is in this broad and universal sense that he considers his own plays tragedies: "Si intentan ser tragedias, lo intentan ser por su último sentido, no por su forma."² It is in this sense, also, that the main trend of contemporary world theater may be termed tragedy, tragedy not as a "género perceptivo" but as a "concepción de fondo."³ To define this "ultimo sentido" or


²Buero, Entretiens sur les Lettres et les Arts, p. 55.

"concepción" of tragedy as Buero sees it is, then, the purpose of this chapter.

Catharsis

Despite the fact that "preceptivistas rigurosos" may deny that the term "tragedy" should be applied to works other than those of the Ancient Greek theater or those written within its pattern, the concept of "lo trágico" has survived throughout the ages even though the forms in which it is expressed may differ from that of Hellenic tragedy. For Buero, both the fundamental key to and the ultimate justification for tragedy in its many manifestations (Greek, neoclassical, Elizabethan, romantic, contemporary, etc.) are to be found in the Aristotelian concept of catharsis.

Catharsis, according to Buero, means more than "purga" or "purificación." It is more than the pacification of the emotions by their incorporation into the theatrical fiction, more than their dissolution by their escape into artistic expression. Catharsis, in

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5Buero, El teatro; enciclopedia del arte escénico, pp. 63-65.
its most elevated sense of"purificación," is "ennoblecimiento" or "perfeccionamiento espiritual." Catharsis is the purification of two specific emotions, pity and fear, that is, their elevation from a primitive and instinctive level to a moral level. These emotions, in their initial state, do not necessarily imply any sort of elevation. There are different types of pity. For example, says Buero, the pity aroused in an inferior soul by the calamities of a melodrama is of a different sort from the pity aroused in a cultivated soul by the suffering of Oedipus. Since almost all tragedies have something of the melodrama about them, the initial pity aroused by tragedy may be quite primitive. Through tragedy these emotions are transformed or sublimated. They acquire an ethical and human quality which they may have initially lacked. And once transformed, these emotions become those attitudes of man which it is the purpose of tragedy to inspire: not "lástima y horror a secas," but "compasión reflexiva ante el mal del mundo y . . . terror sagrado." 

This spiritual elevation or catharsis may bring about a desire to struggle against the problems which the tragedy presents, a desire to help one's fellow man. This desire comes, if it comes, through catharsis, "no por explícitas consideraciones ni moralejas . . . sino por la fuerza ejemplar del argumento y sus pasiones," that

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6Ibid., p. 66. 7Ibid., pp. 66-67.
is, "por directa impresión estética y no discursiva." For "la belleza estética es un hallazgo ... supremo del hombre que, con su sola presencia, puede expresarlo todo sin decir nada." After this esthetic beauty, our actions cannot be commonplace. Many modern tragedies tend to be expositions of social evils and injustices. But if the desire for action which they cause is politically programmatic rather than esthetically cathartic, then, according to Buero, they are not tragedies but "teatro de propaganda."

Catharsis or "superación personal" comes when the tragedy "nos estremece de piedad y pavor al ponernos delante el misterio ontológico del ser humano." If a play makes the spectator experience a desire for action without feeling the radical problem of man's existence and destiny, it is not a tragedy. Ibsen's Ghosts, for example, is a tragedy because it shows the tragic relationship between the sins of the parents and the Nemesis brought upon the son, that is, because it makes us feel the struggle of man to realize his personality and to find a meaning in life. Tragedy, thus, is a fundamentally moral type of theater, although the moral lesson comes not through "moralejas" or "fríos tópicos de discurso," but through purification. Tragedy is ethical theater because it is

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8Ibid. 9Ibid., p. 68.

10Buero, "Comentario," En la ardiente oscuridad, p. 83.
"la forma más auténtica para conmover y remover al espectador ... para interesarle por el insondable dolor humano." 11 Tragedy may lead not only to "depuraciones catárticas," which, in themselves, are transforming, 12 but also to concrete actions of cathartic origin on behalf of one's fellow man. 13

Morality, Liberty, and Destiny

Catharsis, as we have seen, may bring about certain psychological and moral results, certainly internal and perhaps also external, in the lives of those who witness a performance of tragedy. According to Buero, these results are due to the moral content of tragedy. "El destino trágico," says Buero, is to a large extent the creation of man himself. If destiny were arbitrary, if it resulted from the caprice of the gods, or in modern terms, from the absurdity of the world, then the only reaction possible would be fear or anguish, and the only moral possibility would be stoicism. 14

11Ibid.


13An interesting example of what Buero means by an action of cathartic origin is Ehrlich's discovery of the cure for syphilis. In an article, "Ibsen y Ehrlich [sic]," in Informaciones (April 4, 1953), Buero tells how the German scientist decided to dedicate his life to conquering syphilis after seeing a performance of Ibsen's Ghosts.

Tragedy, according to Buero, far from postulating the idea of an absurd world in which man is a victim of irrational forces, seeks to find an underlying order in the world. Fear at the apparent caprice of the gods, in Greek theater, or fear at the possibility of the meaningless of the world and the consequent need to react heroically, in the theater of such modern existentialist writers as Sartre and Camus, are but "substratos conceptuales y emotivos de la tragedia."

For tragedy, states Buero, from ancient times to the present, is not only "necesidad" but "libertad." What tragedy ultimately attempts to show is that destiny is neither "blind" nor "arbitrary," that catastrophes and the suffering which results are "castigos--o consecuencias automáticas...--de los errores de los hombres." Tragedy tries to show that it is violation of the moral order of the universe which brings suffering and grief. The tragic cycles of the Greeks, for example, points out Buero, begin with an "acto de libertad humana," not "un decreto del destino." The oracles in Greek tragedy, moreover, do not predestine; they merely indicate the consequences of man's actions, which are freely committed. 15

However, the moral relationship between "libertad" and "destino," with which tragedy deals, is complex. It may not respond

15Ibid.
clearly to any relationship between "error" and "punishment."

Since man's actions are often ambivalent, so, too, are the results. For example, asks Buero, are the actions of Prometheus bad and is his punishment justified? The complexity of the relationship between "libertad" and "destino" is so great that the writer of tragedy does not attempt to explain it rationalistically. Moral order, since it is based upon "una metafísica no formulada," is necessarily enigmatic. Tragedy, therefore, rather than an explicit moral lesson, is "una aproximación positiva a la intuición del complicadísimo orden moral del mundo."

Due to the limited moral comprehension of man, what is just may often seem unjust. Ultimately, therefore, tragedy must result in an act of faith:

El último y mayor efecto moral de la tragedia es un acto de fe. Consiste en llevarnos a creer que la catástrofe está justificada y tiene su sentido, aunque no podamos conocer su justificación ni entender ese sentido.

This emphasis upon hope in the meaningfulness of the world and in the existence of a moral order obviously differentiates Buero from many contemporary dramatists who make the absurdity of the world a basic tenet of their philosophy: "El absurdo del mundo," Buero has said, "tiene muy poco que ver con la tragedia como último

16 Ibid., p. 70. 17 Ibid., p. 71. 18 Ibid.
contenido a deducir, aunque tenga mucho que ver con ella como apariencia a investigar. "19 Although many existentialist dramatists would deny the existence of an order in the world, they must, Buero would maintain, still hope in its existence; and it is the very fact that they feel this hope threatened which causes them to write tragedies full of anguish.

If "el destino trágico," according to Buero, is not unjust, neither is it always unfavorable: "La concepción de la tragedia como expresión del Destino adverso o de la Necesidad inexorable no resiste la prueba de los hechos."20 Buero defines tragedy as

el perenne conflicto entre libertad y necesidad, a saber: la tensión o el concierto entre hombre y Naturaleza, entre individuo y colectividad, entre ser humano y ser humano; la tensión del hombre consigo mismo para realizarse y el concierto una vez realizado; la tensión o el concierto, finalmente del hombre con lo Absoluto.21

Tragedy, as Buero understands it, is the conflict between "liberty" (man's free will) and "necessity" (the limitations imposed upon man by his environment, by other men, by his own personal deficiencies, or by "lo Absoluto").

19Ibid.


This struggle which tragedy proposes between "liberty" and "necessity" does not, however, inexorably result in the triumph of "necessity": "Desde la tragedia ática hasta nuestros días, este conflicto se resuelve en no pocos ejemplos ilustres... a favor de la libertad y no de la necesidad." Adverse destiny, then, according to Buero, "es una probabilidad del hombre, un grave peligro relacionado con sus torpezas y limitaciones, mas no una condición intrínseca de lo humano."22

That tragedy does not imply any "fatalidad insuperable" is proved by the numerous tragedies, both Greek and modern, which have conciliatory endings. Tragedy may end, not only in "la superación espiritual, el ennoblecimiento interno que el dolor puede acarrear... aspectos en los que siempre se reconoció una salida resolutoria... hacia más dulces formas del sino," but also in "el vencimiento del hado."

Catharsis or "superación espiritual" is not limited to the spectator. The protagonists, in their poetic world, may undergo a fictional purification and elevation which brings calmness, serenity, and at times, even joy. Buero gives two examples from the tragedies of O'Neill. Strange Interlude ends in "calma,  

22Quoted by Schevill, p. 54.
aceptación y elevación" on the part of the anguished characters. Lazarus Laughed ends in "alegría embriagadora" as Lazarus, dying, shouts from the flames an enthusiastic "yes."23

The catharsis or spiritual elevation of the protagonist may lead to an actual victory over destiny. The Greek trilogies or tragic cycles, which traced the story of a hero from the beginning to the end, began with an act of free will on the part of some remote ancestor which brought about the tragedy, and ended with another act of free will on the part of the hero, which "reparaba los males desencadenados y disolvía el hado."24 The Orestes cycle of Aeschylus, for example, points out Buero, concludes with the decision of Orestes not to accept as implacable the expiation destined him; this act of free will wins him the protection of Pallas, through whose intercession he is finally absolved of his crime. And his suffering ends as he is freed from the anger of the Furies.25 The lost part of the Promethean cycle ended, in all probability, with the remission of the punishment of Prometheus and his reconciliation with Zeus. The Oedipus cycle of Sophocles,


24Ibid., p. 72.

likewise, has a conciliatory ending, as we have already seen. Most Greek tragic cycles probably did. 26

This victory over destiny comes when the protagonist, as a result of suffering and purification, begins to reflect deeply and to "desconfiar de la inexorabilidad del hado y a esperarlo todo de su propia capacidad rectificadora," and perhaps also to trust in "la ayuda del cielo," a heaven which cannot but be moved by sincere faith. 27

When the protagonist, transformed or ennobled through catharsis, seeks to ameliorate his condition by an act of "libertad interior o de confianza--libre también--en la Divinidad," he may be helped by "la gracia del cielo": "El encadenamiento de causa a efecto; de exceso o delito a castigo; el mantenimiento de la adversidad, pueden ser rotos por la gracia del cielo." This grace, never capricious, although infinitely merciful, comes to the protagonist who seeks it with faith. 28

Thus we see that the conflict between "liberty" and "necessity," which tragedy involves, is often resolved affirmatively, in spiritual elevation and, at times, in actual victory over destiny.

27 Ibid., p. 73.
28 Buero, "Comentario," La señal que se espera, p. 67.
These conciliatory or happy endings, which are nevertheless tragic, show us that tragedy is not necessarily "catástrofe final, sino una especial manera de entender el final, sea feliz o amargo." Even those tragedies which end in final catastrophe, with no apparent solution, are not devoid of hope. Like those tragedies with conciliatory endings, they are "expressiones sutiles pero no menos abiertas del impulso hacia la liberación de nuestras trabas, externas o interiores; sociales o individuales." For Buero believes that all tragedy is ultimately an expression of hope.

No afirma nada concluyente en cuanto a las humanas limitaciones sino que propone el encuentro con aquellas verdades o, al menos, aquellas búsquedas que podrían, acaso, liberarnos de nuestras cegueras.

Optimism and Pessimism

As we have seen, tragedy, according to Buero, proposes a search for the truth about man and his destiny, the truth which can free man from his blindness and thus permit him to realize himself and to find a meaning in life. Therefore, in no sense, does Buero consider tragedy pessimistic. If tragedy proposes this search,

29 Ibid.


31 Ibid., p. 55.
even though it does not affirm its success, then it cannot be thought of as "negative" or "nihilistic."32

Buero reminds us that the laughter caused by a performance of comedy is not synonymous with optimism and that the anguish caused by a performance of tragedy is not a proof of authentic pessimism. The suffering portrayed in tragedy represents, at the most, a "pesimismo provisional por el que se pretenden trazar sobre bases más ciertas los caminos positivos del ser humano."33 Tragedy is, then, the opposite of true pessimism. Tragedy, for Buero, is always positive, never negative. For it is

un heroico acto por el que el hombre trata de comprender el dolor y se plantea la posibilidad de superarlo sin rendirse a la idea de que el dolor y el mundo que lo partea sean hechos arbitrarios.34

Tragedy invites us to face the greatest suffering and grief with courage and to extract from them "una postura afirmativa."35 This "modo trágico de entender los problemas, a la altura de la época en que vivimos," is, according to Buero, what twentieth-century man needs.36 All of this is authentically pessimistic


33Buero, "La tragedia," El teatro ..., p. 75.

34Ibid. 35Ibid.

only to those who would attempt to evade the problems of reality and to thereby deny their existence. 37

When Buero's own tragedies have been called pessimistic, as they constantly have been, by those who consider the theater as primarily a "diversion," he has answered, "El autor joven no puede ser, ni biológicamente ni socialmente, pesimista. Vive, por definición, la edad de la ilusión o el optimismo," an age of faith and hope, "bien alejada del cómico descreimiento en la vida y su nobleza... el más terrible pesimismo posible, aunque se disfrazo y adobe con la risa y las diversiones." 38

According to Buero, tragedy, as we have seen, seeks the meaningfulness of life:

No hay pesimismo más radical que el de dar por segura la falta de sentido del mundo; y no hay género teatral que más pertinazmente lo busque--cuando no lo afirma--que el trágico. 39

It is not tragedy but the theater of "evasión," cultivated by many of the best dramatists in Spain today, which is pessimistic; for in its advocation of an escape or flight from life, it denies life's meaningfulness. Its attitude is one, says Buero, of cowardly

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39Buero, "La tragedia," El teatro..., p. 75.
"agotamiento" and "desvitalización," even though it may be disguised by laughter. According to Buero, "la repulsa de lo trágico no es otra cosa que la incapacidad para permanecer esperanzador después de asomarse al espectáculo total de la vida y sus derrotas." According to Buero, "la repulsa de lo trágico no es otra cosa que la incapacidad para permanecer esperanzador después de asomarse al espectáculo total de la vida y sus derrotas."

Buero then rejects the theater of "evasión," which he scornfully calls "teatro anodino." The words of Ignacio to Juana in En la ardiente oscuridad are indicative of his attitude: "Te quiero con tu tristeza y tu angustia, para sufrir contigo y no para llevarte a ningún falso reino de la alegría." Tragedy proposes an optimism based not on illusion and blindness, but on truth; one based on the recognition not only of the brighter aspects of life, but also of the darker. Tragedy proposes, in short, "el único optimismo posible, si es que esta virtud ha de ser una gran realidad del hombre y no una falacia sin consistencia."

If tragedy, according to Buero, cannot be called pessimistic because it portrays suffering and anguish, neither can it be termed pessimistic because it offers no solution for this suffering. Since

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42 Buero, En la ardiente oscuridad, p. 28.
43 Buero, "La tragedia," El teatro ..., p. 75.
tragedy deals with problems about which man, despite his search, does not have the ultimate knowledge, it cannot offer clear solutions, either of a social or of a transcendent nature. Nevertheless, tragedy in general, and Buero's tragedies in particular, have been considered pessimistic because of this lack of solutions.

"Padecemos tal prurito racionalista de resolverlo todo, que nos avenimos mal a tolerar una obra sin explicación o moraleja."44

A tragedy is, however, not a treatise or an essay, but a work of art, the purpose of which it is to reflect life: "Su misión es reflejar la vida, y la vida suele ser más fuerte que las ideas."45 If the writer of tragedy wished to present rational solutions to problems, says Buero, he would write monologues or essays. For in art, ideas are never as simple or univocal as in other more rational activities.46 Art is not explication, but implication; and this implies a certain degree of equivocation.47


45Ibid.


Tragedy attempts to show that "las cosas del mundo nunca tienen una sola perspective, sino varias."\(^{48}\) This, of course, is the idea expounded by Ortega in *El tema de nuestro tiempo*: that truth may present a variety of facets depending upon the position from which it is viewed. And tragedy, like life, says Buero, may offer a "simultánea multitud de significados dispares."\(^{49}\)

To objections that this ambiguity is incompatible with dramatic clarity, Buero replies: "Tras esas . . . objeciones se esconde una propensión al esquematismo y la simplicidad sumamente peligrosa para el teatro, y el ejemplo que nos brinda hasta la saciedad la mejor dramaturgia de todos los tiempos la desautoriza sin ninguna duda." Complexity, equivocation, and even obscurity are justified provided the surface elements of the tragedy, that is, the plot, setting, etc. are direct and comprehensible. For equivocation has little to do with confusion.\(^{50}\)

By showing the problems of man and of his destiny in all their complexity, the writer of tragedy attempts, according to Buero, to "inquietar, y hacer pensar" and to "revitalizar en nuestro ánimo mediante el sentimiento y la reflexión algunas de

\(^{48}\)Ibid., p. 123.


\(^{50}\)Buero, "Comentario," *Irene o el tesoro*, p. 124.
Tragedy should never contain explicit answers. Buero is equally opposed to what is usually known as the theater of "compromiso" as he is to the theater of "evasión." Whereas the theater of "evasión," according to the definition cited before, "se evade de la realidad," the theater of "compromiso," as represented by Les Mains Sales of Sartre, for example, "toma parte en ella comprometiéndose." Since the theater of "compromiso" creates situaciones "en exclusivo cumplimiento de consignas previas," the conclusions which it reaches are not only explicit, but pre-mediated, and often forced. The ideology of the author deforms the truth.  

For Buero, the role of tragedy is not that of a "servicial y racional glosador de ideologías, tendencias y opiniones en lucha." Tragedy is a search for truth, its own truth. It is an autonomous "modo de conocimiento," which does not need any justification outside of itself. When Buero himself has been criticized for evading "el ejercicio de una literatura

51Ibid., pp. 122-123.

comprometida," he has replied, "El básico y verdadero compromiso [of art] ... es el de buscar la sinceridad y la verdad."53

If the purpose of tragedy, in its avoidance of explicit solutions, is to "inquietar y hacer pensar," obviously it is to make us reflect in a positive manner. However,

para llegar a esta removedora y eficaz inquietud acaso no sea el mejor camino la solucion dialéctica, sino la patética, dejando en la comedia los pseudoconflictos ideológicos como interrogaciones incontestadas.54

In advocating this "solución patética," Buero disagrees with the theories of Brecht. Brecht emphasizes the "fuerza dialéctica" of drama, whereas Buero, as we have seen, considers purification by pity and fear, "la vieja comunión emotiva," the ultimate justification for all drama or tragedy. Brecht's best works, however, maintains Buero, are precisely those in which, his theories to the contrary, there is an "emoción religiosa," which may affect even his ideological adversaries. And these works (Mother Courage, Galileo Galilei, etc.) are tragedies, although Brecht rejects tragedy.55


But Brecht, in theory at least, accentuates the rationalistic tendency of the theater. He denies that the theater can be a "vehículo de conocimiento... atenido a intuiciones no racionalizables." But the "conocimiento racionalizado" which Brecht proposes, points out Buero, is that drawn from the sociological doctrine which he espouses and therefore "un conocimiento externo y previo; didáctico," which convinces no one who is not already convinced. It represents "verdades recibidas" and not the "verdad" of the drama. This knowledge or truth, therefore, is not that which comes as a result of any search which the play proposes, but an a priori truth. And if art is a "vehículo de conocimiento," then, according to Buero, "no puede regateársele su condición intrínseca de explorar con medios propios." Buero asks:

¿Debe atenerse el teatro a la glosa racional de conocimientos provisionales procedentes de otros campos, o aventurará su propia y a menudo oscura --por intuitiva--indagación de los conflictos y personajes que estudia e imagina?  

Buero thus denies the rationalistic concept of the theater and maintains that tragedy should never have definitive solutions of any sort: "argumentales, racionales o ideológicas." But

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56 Ibid.

this does not imply that tragedy is not optimistic, only that its
optimism is of an implicit sort. For tragedy is founded, not on
congrete affirmations of a definitive nature, but on the psychological
reality of hope. 58

Hope

For Buero the *sine qua non* of tragedy is hope: "su meollo
es la esperanza." This hope is double: hope in the earthly solution
of human grief and hope in the metaphysical justification of the
world. And, at times, hope in both things as one; for despite their
apparent disparity, they may be, in essence, the same. 59

Absolute pessimism, a complete lack of hope, would end
tragedy. It would be so depressing and paralyzing to the writer
that it would destroy the creative power within him. Even the
anguished writer of a tragedy of utter despair, says Buero, draws
from an indestructible source of hope, a hope which may be
menaced, but which is still alive, for otherwise, there would be
no anguish. Tragedy, likewise, orientates the spectator toward
hope, even though it may seem to be an invitation to despair.

*El hombre es un animal esperanzado, y si escribe
tragedias donde alienta la angustia de su esperanza
defraudada, a la esperanza misma sirve.* 60

59Ibid., p. 76. 60Ibid.
The ultimate significance of "lo trágico," as conceived by Buero is "la esperanza humana," a hope which embraces both faith and doubt.

Tragedy may end in conciliation and harmony, that is, catharsis for the protagonist as well as spectator; or it may end in catastrophe. Tragedy may express social or philosophical truths, as does the Orestes trilogy, or concrete negations about life and its meaning, as do many modern existentialist tragedies. In the first case, it is very near the affirmative pole, the pole to which hope leads, "el de la fe sin sombra de duda, que es tanto como decir el de la esperanza cumplida." In the second case, it is very close to the opposite pole of doubt; but if it moves in any direction, it can move only toward the pole of faith. For absolute negation would destroy tragedy. From one pole to the other there is only one pathway, that of hope.

Del uno al otro no hay más que un trayecto en el que la esperanza trágica se da en mayor o menor grado, pero se da siempre.

All tragedy falls between these two poles of faith and doubt.

The tragedies of Aeschylus, for example, says Buero, are so near

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61Buero, "La cequera en mi teatro," La Carreta, No. 12 (September, 1963), p. 5.

62Buero, "La tragedia," El teatro ..., p. 76.
the affirmative pole of faith, that, if they went any further, they would no longer be tragedy, but propaganda. Those of Sophocles are further away from the affirmative pole, for Sophocles doubts, although he hopes profoundly. Those of Euripides are nearest the pole of doubt, for he does not hesitate to question the meaningfulness of life and the justice of the gods. His tragedies, like those of some existentialist writers, are so near the pole of doubt, that, if they went any further, they would be absolutely negative and, therefore, no longer tragic. Tragedy, from its beginning at the dawn of Western civilization to the present, has followed the trajectory from faith to doubt illustrated by the three creators of the genre:

La historia entera del género describe, de Esquilo a Sartre, la misma trayectoria que va de Esquilo a Eurípides... Del sentido trágico de Esquilo—el más afirmativo—o de Eurípides—el más escéptico—no puede pasarse a ningún otro sentido trágico: son los límites de la tragedia. 63

Buero's concept of the area of tragedy as a scale with varying degrees of doubt and of faith is similar to that of Louis Martz, who describes it as a "spectrum" which ranges between the poles of "fruitless suffering" and of a "secret cause" which affirms the existence of some universal order. Martz would place the plays

63Ibid., pp. 86-87.
of Ibsen, for example, on the negative side and Murder in the Cathedral on the affirmative side. 64

The approximation of tragedy to one of these two poles of faith or of doubt determines the degree of hope. But hope, to some extent, is always present. For even in the case of those playwrights who depict human destiny as meaningless, there is the hope which, even though it may be philosophically denied, motivated the writing of the tragedy. And at the pole of faith, there is still the hope which postulated the affirmation which the tragedy makes. 65

Tragedy, for Buero, as essentially an expression of "la fe que duda."

El escritor trágico lanza con su obras su anhelante pregunta al mundo y espera, ... que la respuesta sea un "sí" lleno de luz. Plantea una y otra vez el enigma del mundo y de su dolor precisamente porque lo cree enigma ... y no amargo azar. 66

Nevertheless, tragedy, except in cases of extreme affirmation, does not offer explicit answers to the questions which it raises about man and his destiny. For even when the author and the spectator share an ideology which would provide answers to the

64 Louis Martz, "The Saint as Tragic Hero," Tragic Themes in Western Literature, p. 176.

65 Buero, "La tragedia," El teatro ..., p. 76.

66 Ibid., p. 77.
"problemática" presented, it is not the purpose of tragedy to expound them:

Lo que la tragedia plantea ... no es una discusión de dichas soluciones, sino la condición humana de la duda y la fe en lucha ... Condición permanente ... y de cuyo eterno juego entre fe y duda, con su eterna resultante de esperanza, brota a la vez la permanente revitalización de toda fe, su constante salvación del aniquilosamiento y su pertinaz replanteamiento en el alma del hombre como conflicto vivo y no como formula muerta. 67

Tragedy, then, reflects man's "permanent condition," which, for Buero, is an eternal struggle between doubt and faith, with the constant result of hope. Buero would agree with Lain Entralgo, who tells us that, "por el hecho de ser como es, el hombre tiene que esperar, no puede no esperar." 68 If a man believes, he hopes with absolute confidence; if he doubts, he hopes without confidence. But he always hopes. For hope is "una constante del hombre."

A man who lacks confidence in the fulfillment of his desires despairs. But despair, "desesperación," is merely "la cara negativa de la esperanza." "Si no hay oscuridad sin luz, ni mal sin bien, no hay desesperación--la palabra misma lo revela--sin esperanza." Man always hopes, because hope is "una tension

67 Ibid.

del hombre, un modo de ser humano." And to portray this tension is the purpose of tragedy: "Presentar esta tensión como tal, con su probabilidad de realización, pero también con su improbabilidad, parece objetivo básico de la tragedia." 69

Tragedy, through its cathartic effect, may help to resolve this tension into calmness and serenity. This happens cuando acertamos a vislumbrar la secreta unidad de esos pares de conceptos contrarios . . . cuando alcanzamos a ver . . . que desesperación y esperanza son sólo grados, o caras falaces, de algo grandioso e inmutable que está más allá de todas las tragedias, pero a lo que sólo por ellos podemos arribar. 70

Tragedy offers us a positive way of "distending" our hopes. For only by means of the truth can we be saved from "falsos modos de distender nuestras esperanzas," such as passivism and escapism. 71

If the purpose of tragedy is to portray this tension, that is, to portray hope, this does not mean, however, that it always, or even usually, does so explicitly. Ibsen's A Doll House, for example, ends with "una declarada incitación a la esperanza," the hope that Nora and Helner will change so that their life together may be truly a marriage. Ghosts, on the other hand, ends only in catastrophe. But it, too, is an invitation to hope, says Buero, for by showing us

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69Buero, "Comentario," Hoy es fiesta, p. 100.
70Ibid., pp. 100-101. 71Ibid.
the dangers that beset man because of his weaknesses, it invites us to overcome them.\textsuperscript{72}

Buero has pointed out these two different ways in which hope may act by using two of his own tragedies, also, as examples. At the end of \textit{El concierto de San Ovidio}, hope is explicit, for we see the positive consequences of the tragic event represented. But at the end of \textit{En la ardiente oscuridad}, as at the end of \textit{Ghosts}, hope is only implicit, for the work is "una tragedia cerrada y sin salida." But both forms of tragedy, "de apariencia opuesta," are equally "abiertas en el fondo," and both "sirven a la esperanza."\textsuperscript{73} For hope is essential to all tragedy, "incluso ... la más aparentemente desesperanzada."\textsuperscript{74}

Form

"Lo trágico," for Buero, deals, as we have seen, with the conflict between liberty and necessity and finds its ultimate justification in catharsis, the effect of which is to orient the spectator toward hope. It is in this sense that Buero uses the

\textsuperscript{72}Buero, "La tragedia," \textit{El teatro} ..., p. 75.

\textsuperscript{73}Buero, "La ceguera en mi teatro," \textit{La Carreta}, No. 12 (September, 1963), p. 5.

\textsuperscript{74}Buero, "Comentario," \textit{Hoy es fiesta}, p. 99.
expression when he speaks of the need for a "reaclimatización de un sentido actual de lo trágico in Spain. 75

"Lo trágico" has not been lacking in the Spanish theater, points out Buero, despite "cierta sedicente dificultad nacional para el género." La vida es sueño, for example, and Fuenteovejuna are "tragedias verdaderas por razones mucho más importantes que las preceptivas": La vida es sueño, because of the conflict between predestination and free will, the moral relationship established between the hero's actions and their consequences, and the cathartic effect, not only upon the spectator, but also upon the hero; Fuerteovejuna, because of the mutually conciliatory ending, which recalls the traditional reconciliations of Greek tragedy. Tragic elements are also to be found in other Golden Age plays, such as El caballero de Olmedo and El médico de su honra, as well as in the plays of such modern dramatists as Galdós, Unamuno, and García Lorca. 76

Tragedy, to Buero, be it called "tragedia" or "drama," is a matter of "contenido" rather than "forma." Nevertheless, he points out, the form of modern tragedy, like its content, is closer to that of the classic tragedy than is commonly supposed.

75 Buero, "La ceguera en mi teatro," La Carreta, No. 12 (September, 1983), p. 5.
76 Buero, "La tragedia," El teatro ..., pp. 78-79.
Realism has contributed much to tragedy: natural dialogues and humble characters and situations which, through their simplicity and truthfulness, have done much to make tragedy more meaningful to the average man.\(^{77}\) Such requirements of classic tragedy as the nobility or the elevation of characters, situations, and language, which have been abandoned in modern tragedy for the most part, were but relative, even for the Greeks.\(^{78}\)

The use of the chorus, masks, and music, "las tres formas fundamentales de la tragedia antigua," is still important in modern tragedy, as is proved by the chorus in \textit{Yerma}, the masks in \textit{Six Characters in Search of an Author} and \textit{Lazarus Laughed}, and the music in \textit{Peer Gynt} and the tragedies of Brecht, for example.\(^{79}\) Tragedy, moreover, at least in Europe, has returned, since the nineteenth century, to a construction based, at least partially, on the classic unities. There is, though, at the present time, a growing tendency, especially in the United States, toward a "forma libre" or "abierta," which Buero terms "functional." This form,

\(^{77}\)Buero, "Neorrealismo y teatro," \textit{Informaciones}, April 18, 1950.

\(^{78}\)Buero, "La tragedia," \textit{El teatro}, \ldots, p. 78.

\(^{79}\)\textit{Ibid.}, p. 82.
as opposed to "la forma cerrada" based on the unities, is charac-
terized by

la simultaneidad en la escena de lugares de acción no simultáneos en la realidad, alternativa rápida de estos lugares o indefinida sucesión en cuadros, multiplicidad de acciones secundarias y discontinuidad temporal sin trabas. 80

In this tendency Buero sees definite dangers, both for tragedy and for the theater in general. During the Golden Age and the Romantic period the abandonment of the three unities represented an effort to save the theater from rigidity and asphyxiation. This tendency in the twentieth century, however, represents no such effort. This is proved by two facts. First, the vitality of the present European theater, which, for the most part, retains "la forma cerrada." Second, the utilitarian motive behind the present tendency toward "la forma libre." For the adaptation of this form is due, not to any internal necessity, but to the desire to attract the public which frequents the cinema. 81

This desire has led to the imitation of certain techniques frequent in the cinema: the use of numerous short scenes, rapid changes of place, flash-backs, plastic effects, etc. This imitation


81Ibid., pp. 85-86.
of the cinema is a mistake, for it will lead eventually to the death of theatrical art as such. The public will come to consider the narrative art of the cinema superior to its pale theatrical imitation, and consequently, demand that the theater become even more cinematographic. 82

Whereas the Golden Age dramatists, says Buero, could afford to use what may be called cinematographic techniques, for reasons of natural theatrical evolution, contemporary dramatists cannot, for they must take into consideration the existence of the cinema as an established and independent artistic form. Therefore, if the theater wants to win its battle against the cinema, it must do so:

utilizando sus medios más puros: el diálogo, la construcción realista que acepta y no elude la presentación de la vida mediante "actos" condensados en trechos de tiempo continuo y las limpias fuerzas de la acción que tales trechos permiten o pueden sugerir. 83

The use of "la forma cerrada," moreover, is, for the dramatist, the only way to "dominar su oficio." For the use of a facile form, or lack of form, often disguises the ineptitude of the beginner. 84

82Ibid. 83Ibid., p. 86.

Buero is likewise opposed to the excessive use of plastic effects inspired by the cinema. ". . . luces de colores y otros efectos, son cosas gratas al principiante y como recursos del teatro no me parecen, en general, buenos." 85 Whereas the cinema is "el arte de la imagen," the theater is, or ought to be, "el arte de la palabra." 86 Another effect of the cinema upon the theater, to which Buero objects, is the reduction of the two intermissions to one. For the intermissions, with the opportunity which they provide for reflection and criticism, help to stimulate an interest which is active and not merely passive. 87

For all of these reasons, Buero favors the classic "forma cerrada" in order to preserve the purity and integrity of tragedy, in particular, and of the theater, in general. Nevertheless he acknowledges the validity of all forms, for as we have seen, he believes that the essence of tragedy lies, not in any prescriptive form, but in its "último sentido," which is "la esperanza humana." 88

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87 Ibid., p. 88.
88 Buero, "La ceguera en mi teatro," La Carreta, No. 12 (September, 1963), p. 5.
All of Buero's tragedies represent a search for the truth or "luz" which will enable man to find an earthly solution for human suffering and a metaphysical justification for the world. To express this idea Buero often uses a double metaphor: "ceguera-visión" and "luz-tinieblas." ¹

For practical purposes we divide Buero's tragedies into two main groups, corresponding to what Buero has called the two poles of any theater: the social, and the philosophical or metaphysical. ² These two groups are formed by those tragedies which deal primarily with man's struggle to (1) realize himself and (2) find a metaphysical basis for life. This search constitutes a struggle against "las tinieblas": one's own and those imposed by other men or by "lo Absoluto." Of course, these two struggles are almost never mutually exclusive.

In the first group are tragedies about man's struggle to achieve a meaningful relationship with other men. This struggle

¹Buero, "Comentario," En la ardiente oscuridad, p. 80.

²Buero, "La ceguera en mi teatro," La Carreta, No. 12 (September, 1963), p. 5.
springs from what Buero, in referring to Ignacio and Carlos in
*En la ardiente oscuridad,* has called "el nobilísimo impulso de
superar su soledad humana, ... nobilísimo porque ... encierra
... para el hombre sus posibilidades más altas." These plays
illustrate what, as we have seen, Buero terms "la tensión o el
concierto entre ser humano y ser humano," as differentiated, for
example, from the tension between the individual and society or
between man and the Absolute. 4

Buero is extremely concerned about a problem very charac-
teristic of the existentialist theater: the radical solitude of the
individual, his inability to communicate on any vitally meaningful
level with other individuals. This lack of communication results
from his inability to understand either himself or others, from his
"ceguera espiritual." And it often leads to the destruction both of
himself and of other persons.

Most of Buero's protagonists, however, struggle desperately
to free themselves from the "tinieblas" of their blindness, to attain
"la luz." This search for "luz" necessarily brings anguish as,
using their freedom, they force themselves to come to grips with
the insincerity and hypocrisy on which their relationships with

3Buero, "Comentario," *En la ardiente oscuridad,* p. 84.
others are based. Because of this anguish, this group of tragedies deals, not only with the tension between individuals, but also "la tensión del hombre consigo mismo." Due to the predominantly psychological nature of these tragedies, the action, for the most part, is internal.

All of the tragedies in this group about the struggle to achieve meaningful human associations deal largely, although not exclusively, with the relationship between man and woman. Three tragedies, Las palabras en la arena, La tejedora de sueños, and Casi un cuento de hadas, treat the nature of love. The first two, which deal with the problem of adultery, contrast egoistic love, love which is incapable of pardon, with pure unselfish love. Casi un cuento de hadas contrasts superficial love with real love.

These three tragedies, in technique, are indicative of the great diversity of Buero's theater. The first is a brief drama of Biblical inspiration; the second, a recreation of a Greek myth; and the third, a fantasy based on a fairy tale. In the search for the truth about reality, which tragedy proposes, many techniques are valid, not only realism in its narrowest sense. At times reality may be best revealed by a return to a symbolic past, as in Las palabras en la arena and La tejedora de sueños. Many of the Greek and Shakespearean tragedies, Buero has pointed out,
which are the most realistic "en aspectos profundos del hombre y de la vida," are precisely those situated in the past. 5 Sometimes reality is best revealed by fantasy, as in *Casi un cuento de hadas*. For fantasy, according to Buero, may disclose "una tremenda realidad." It may show that reality has more than one plane. It does not attempt to "negar la crudeza del plano habitual donde vivimos," however, "sino . . . de revelarla." 6 As far as form is concerned, these three tragedies adhere very closely to the three unities, or to a "form cerrada."

**Las palabras en la arena**

Asaf, the protagonist of *Las palabras en la arena*, is an excellent sample of the "ceguera tranquila," that is, the insincerity and evasion with which Buero is concerned in all his theater. Unlike most of Buero's protagonists, who as a result of a period of self-doubt and questioning, eventually struggle to attain "light," Asaf does not do so; and his insincerity or lack of personal authenticity, to use an existentialist term, is what causes unmitigated defeat.

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5Miguel Luis Rodríguez, "Diálogo con Antonio Buero Vallejo," *Indice*, XII, Nos. 116-117 (September-October, 1958), 21-22.

Las palabras en la arena is a one act tragedy based on the Biblical incident of the woman accused of adultery, in which Jesus said that anyone without sin might cast the first stone. In accord with patristic tradition, Buero has Jesus, in order to dispel the angry mob, write in the sand the secret sins of several members of the mob, including Asaf, the arrogant young captain of the Sanhedrin Guard.

Buero explains in a commentary that he thought it likely that some of the words which Jesus wrote might have referred to future actions and, therefore, have provoked only ridicule on the part of those to whom they referred. Asaf, since he knows himself to be innocent of the sin indicated, scorns Jesus' words. But shortly thereafter a servant girl reveals that his wife Noemi has committed adultery with a Roman centurion. After we hear a scream from within his house, Asaf confesses that the word which Jesus indicated in the sand was "asesino."

Human sins such as adultery, Buero says in his commentary, should be revealed in the theater, just as they are in the Scriptures: "Pues el Evangelio es revelador y valeroso; ventila las

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7Buero, "Comentario," Historia de una escalera y Las palabras en la arena (Madrid: Ediciones Alfil, 1952), p. 103.
lacras humanas y no las oculta. Las convierte en ejemplares meditaciones escritas; no en 'tabúes.' Hagamos, en el más revelador y valeroso sentido de la palabra, un teatro evangélico.

The ethical concern of the author is evident, also, in his condemnation of Asaf's attitude toward the adultery of his wife. Asaf's greatest moral defect is the egoistic, selfish nature of his love, a love which is incapable of pardon. This type of love and of morality is contrasted to the pure, unselfish love which Jesus teaches, a love which forgives. It is Asaf's blindness to this moral defect that brings about his tragic destiny.

The prophecy of Jesus in regard to Asaf's destiny fulfills, in this tragedy, the role of the oracles in Greek tragedy. It does not predestine; it only predicts. Jesus, with his intuitive understanding of human nature, doubtlessly foresaw, in Asaf's vindictiveness and brutality toward the woman accused of adultery, his probable destiny. For, as we are told by the servant girl who watches the crowd from the garden wall and reports to Noemi, the young warrior Asaf is one of those who demands with the greatest violence the stoning of adulteress.

The tragedy consists, Buero states in his commentary, of the struggle of the protagonist against this "sino homicida"

8Ibid.
prophesied by Jesus. That Asaf is made uneasy by the word of Jesus is obvious in his refusal to tell anyone, including his wife, what the word was which Jesus wrote. But, in reality, there is very little struggle on Asaf's part against his destiny. His defeat comes from his very unwillingness to admit to himself the possibility that Jesus' prophecy might be true, from his evasion of the problem. To quiet his incipient anxiety, he dismisses Jesus' words as "unas insignificantes palabras en la arena... unas palabras que borra el viento." 10

If Asaf had wanted to know the truth and had reflected with sincerity, he would easily have seen in his character, as did Jesus, an indication of his probable destiny. The words and actions of Asaf, which reveal him as a future murderer, who is only partially unconscious of his wife's infidelity, are many.

Asaf's leadership in the attempted stoning of the adulteress whom Jesus pardons is an obvious prefiguration of his murder of his wife for adultery. Moreover, in Asaf's conversation with Noemi about the adulteress, his vindictiveness toward her is evident: "La mujer se salvó. Ya caerá en otra ocasión." 11

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9 Ibid., p. 102.
10 Buero, Las palabras en la arena, p. 86.
11 Ibid., p. 91.
We see, also, his anger at Noemi's compassion when she refers to the adulteress as "esa pobre mujer," and perhaps his suspicion, also. We see, finally, his insistence upon the law of Moses and his rejection of Jesus' idea of pardon: "Hablas lo mismo como el galileo, igual que ese agitador peligroso, que quiere destruir los hogares y perdonar, ¡siempre perdonar! Pero perdonando no puede haber familia, ni mujer segura, ni hijos obedientes, ni Estado, ¡ni nada!"

In this conversation there are also strong indications that Asaf is not completely without suspicion in regard to his own wife's infidelity. This suspicion has doubtlessly been present from the beginning, for it is probably the real reason for the intensity of Asaf's feelings about the Biblical adulteress. This suspicion is, of course, intensified by Noemi's sympathy for the adulteress. When Noemi sees that Asaf is angry because she protests his harshness toward the adulteress and, with feigned humility, asks if he will not forgive her, his enigmatic answer is indicative of his doubts. "Sí, por esta vez. Pero habrás de pagar por tus errores ..." His doubts are also to be seen in the intense look which he gives Noemi when she delays outside the house for the

\[12\text{Ibid.} \quad 13\text{Ibid., p. 92.} \quad 14\text{Ibid.}\]
purpose of intercepting the servant girl, who is to return from delivering a message to the Roman centurion.

But Asaf does not want to admit to himself the truth about his wife. When he discovers the servant girl with the bag of money given her by the centurion, he tries to believe, until informed otherwise, that she is the guilty one, when he must know that it is his wife.

It is Asaf's spiritual blindness, his failure to come to grips with reality, to face the problems of his relationship with his wife and of his own character, despite the warning of Jesus, that brings about his defeat. Human responsibility is, as we have seen, a central theme of all tragedy, according to Buero. For he believes that tragedy attempts to show that man is, to a great extent, the architect of his own destiny.

Despite this unmitigated catastrophe, the tragedy is still an invitation to hope. For it is, in the words of Buero, an "humilde intento ... de comprender y ayudar a comprender algunos de los laberintos donde se pierde la moral de los hombres."\(^{15}\) There is also the hope that the other Jews, who have known in their hearts from the beginning that the words which Jesus wrote about them ("prevaricador," "ladrón de los dineros de los

\(^{15}\) Buero, "Comentario," Las palabras en la arena, p. 104.
pobres, "corruptor de niñas," and "hipócrita") are true, will profit from the example of Asaf.

The protests of these Jews (the priest Joazar, the scribe Eliú, the Sadducee Gadi, and the Pharisee Matatías) against Jesus' words in their conversation with Asaf early in the tragedy constitute a type of choral effect, which is repeated in their questioning of Asaf at the end of the tragedy. Their presence outside the house as Asaf emerges to confess his crime, moreover, makes the conclusion highly effective from a visual standpoint. "La sierva se arrodilla también, gimiendo. Los demás se incorporan con los ojos espantados, y el destino pone su temblor en el grupo antiguo que rodea al hombre vencido."  

La tejedora de sueños

Ulysses in La tejedora de sueños, like Asaf, leads a life of spiritual blindness, of fiction and hypocrisy. And his failure to come to grips with the truth about himself, to face his moral defects, especially the egoistic nature of his love, causes his defeat, as it caused Asaf's.

La tejedora de sueños, a "tragedia de túnicas," written strictly within the classic unities, has been called by Valbuena

16 Buero, Las palabras en la arena, p. 99.
Prat "acaso una de las mejores muestras de la renovación de un tema mítico en nuestro tiempo."\(^{17}\) According to the author, it is an attempt to write the "tragedia interior de una tragedia griega. Una obra en que lo más grave y horrible ocurriese secretamente en los corazones de los protagonistas ..."\(^{18}\) Buero's Penelope, tired of waiting after twenty years, shuts herself up in a secret room, to weave dreams, not about her husband, but about Amphinomus, the handsome young suitor who protects her from the abuses of the other suitors and with whom she has fallen in love, despite her external fidelity to Ulysses.

Buero explains that he considered Penelope's problem similar to that of all the Greek women who were abandoned when their husbands went to Troy. Many of these women, says Buero, must have felt impulses similar to those of Clytemnestra, who took a lover and with his help murdered her husband. These women are, then, possible subjects of an interior tragedy far more profound than the exterior one of Clytemnestra. For the essence of tragedy, for Buero, lies in the interior, not the exterior action "poblada de alaridos y sangre." Penelope, since

\(^{17}\) Valbuena Prat, *Historia del teatro español*, p. 662.

she was the purest and most prudent of these women, must have also been the most tortured. And to show this, according to Buero, in no sense degrades her: "No extraña repulsión o destrucción sino humana y piadosa aclaración de su figura doliente, cuya última nobleza sigue resplandeciendo, entre las crudas luchas de su larguísimas fidelidad."19

Buero's tragedy, as the "tragedia interior" of a Greek tragedy, develops ideas which he considers implicit in the Odyssey. If Ulysses disguises himself upon returning home, instead of making himself known to his wife, it is legitimate to think that he may doubt her fidelity. If he adopts a very special attitude toward one of the suitors, Amphinomus, to the extent of advising him to leave in order to avoid being killed when the husband returns, it is, likewise, possible to think that the reason may be, not only his gratitude for Amphinomus' protection from the jokes of the others, but also his suspicion of Penelope's love. It is possible, then, to consider Penelope's love for Amphinomus, the essence of Buero's interpretation, as implicit in the original myth.20

The interior tragedy of Buero's Penelope is symbolized by the mysterious figures which she weaves on the shroud for

19Ibid., pp. 78-79. 20Ibid., pp. 80-85.
Laertes. In the center of the stage is a room or "templete," the entrance to which is always guarded by the blind Euriclea. In this small room, symbolic of her soul, Penelope, who no longer thinks of Ulysses, weaves by day and unravels by night, as she listens to the chanting of the chorus of servant girls who prepare her yarn. These figures, which Penelope weaves and which no one is ever allowed to see, represent her intimate dreams and illusions, her love for Amphinomus, which she knows can probably never be realized.

The inner tragedy of Penelope is revealed, also, at the very beginning of the tragedy, by her alternate laughs and laments as the slaves, seated on the steps in front of the secret room, sing of her love for Ulysses. From within the room where Penelope weaves, we hear first her laughter, "penetrante, musical y misteriosa, plena de inmenso y contenido regocijo," then a lament, "muy suave, infinitamente apenado y lúgubre," symbolizing her dreams of love and her disillusion as she realizes the improbability of their fulfillment.

Penelope, although she believes Ulysses dead, cannot choose to marry Amphinomus, for the other suitors, who are interested in her wealth, would kill him out of envy. This she

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21Buero, *La tejedora de sueños*, pp. 8-10.
explains to him in the conversation in which she reveals her love. When Amphinomus learns that Penelope unravels her weaving every night, he tells her that there can be only one reason: "Yo soy hombre y sé razonar ... sólo hay una explicación. ... Que amas a Ulises y estás dispuesta a esperarle hasta tu muerte." 22 But Penelope answers that she knows that he is the only one of the suitors who loves her and would be content to live with her in poverty. And he is the only one who is willing to wait. For whereas the others see her older than she is, he sees her eternally beautiful. Therefore she unravels each night to delay until she becomes completely impoverished: "Decidí empobrecerme del todo. Y para eso destejo por las noches ... Viuda y sin pensar ya en Ulises ... porque yo no se razonar!" It is then that the significance of the mysterious figures becomes clear. "Son ... ¡mis sueños! Mis sueños, que luego debo deshacer, todas las noches, por conseguirlos definitivamente algún día." 23

Buero's Penelope cannot dream of Ulysses, for, unlike Amphinomus, Ulysses knows nothing of love. His absence to take part in the Trojan war was not motivated by patriotism, but by the attraction which he felt for Helen. Furthermore, if he returns home after twenty years, it is only because Helen has

22ibid., p. 37. 23ibid., p. 40.
lost her beauty and youth. When Ulysses demonstrates his lack of faith in Penelope by spying on her, she realizes that what she has always suspected is true, that Ulysses' love is completely egoistic.

This egoism is seen clearly in Ulysses' lack of generosity toward his wife when he learns that she has betrayed him, although only in her thoughts, for instead of attempting to understand and pardon her, he kills all of the suitors, including Amphinomus, before her very eyes. He does this even though he himself has been guilty of far greater infidelity in abandoning Penelope to go to Troy. The love of Ulysses, like that of Asaf, is completely selfish and incapable of forgiveness.

Ulysses, like the protagonists of Calderón, is interested only in preserving his own prestige. To this end he orders the weavings of Penelope destroyed and composes a new rhapsody for the slaves to sing about her fidelity: "Soy el rey de Itaca. Nuestro nombre debe quedar limpio y resplandeciente para el futuro. Nadie sabrá nada de esto." Although love and hope may

24 This tragedy has been called by Giménez Caballero, "el drama más calderoniano desde que murió Calderón." Quoted by Rafael Suárez Solís in "El teatro español quiere modernizarse," Diario de la Marina (Havana, February 16, 1952), p. 4.

25 Buero, La tejedora de sueños, p. 70.
perish, outward appearances must be preserved in order to satisfy Ulysses' egoism. For this is the purpose for which he has returned, to save his reputation.

The egoistic love of Ulysses is contrasted to the pure unselfish love of Amphinomus. Whereas the astute and devious Ulysses is, in the words of Penelope, a "mezquino razonador" who thinks only of his own interests, Amphinomus, like Penelope, is a "soñador," an idealist, whose only concern is for her. He has been described by Valbuena Prat as a "caballero quijotesco."26

The love of Amphinomus is just the reverse of that of Ulysses. Ulysses' love is one which demands but does not give. Amphinomus, however, is willing to take Penelope as she is, with her weaknesses, without requiring of her anything in return. When Penelope confesses to him that she started the shroud as a revenge against Helen, that she enjoyed the rivalry over her, and that she tried to prolong it to flatter her wounded vanity, Amphinomus can understand and forgive her:

Anfino: No veo en ello nada censurable.
Penélope: ¿Verdad que no? Tú lo comprendes y lo disculpas... Tú solo... 27

26Valbuena Prat, Historia del teatro español, p. 662.

27Buero, La tejedora de sueños, p. 39. In Buero's play Amphinomus is known as Anfino.
Amphinomus is willing, moreover, at the end, to give his life for his love. He, of all the suitors, is the only one who does not flee from the arrows of Ulysses: "Yo defendí a Penélope.... Pero acepto morir a tus manos.... Gracias por tu flecha, Ulises. La muerte es nuestro gran sueño libertador.... Gracias por tus sueños, Penélope." 28

This "moral práctica" of Amphinomus, contrasted to the "fría y utilitaria moral política" of Ulysses, says Buero in commenting on this tragedy, is that of a "precristiano." Buero describes Amphinomus in Pauline terms as "el hombre nuevo," as opposed to Ulysses, who represents "el hombre viejo." 29 We have, thus, the same contrast as in Las palabras en la arena: selfish love, that of Asaf and Ulysses, versus pure ideal love, that of Jesus and Amphinomus. And in both tragedies we have the same contrast between external morality, that of honor codes which demand blood sacrifices in order to satisfy man's egoism, to Christian morality, with its idea of pardon.

In both plays it is spiritual blindness to this higher type of love which causes the tragedy. When Ulysses declares, at the end, that all is lost because Penelope still loves Amphinomus and

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28 Ibid., p. 64.

29 Buero, "Comentario," La tejedora de sueños, pp. 79-80.
that this is the fault of the gods, Penelope reminds him that it is man who causes his own misfortunes: "No culpes a los dioses. Somos nosotros quienes la [nuestra desgracia] labramos."³⁰

In a dramatic confrontation toward the end of the play, Penelope explains to Ulysses the reasons for his defeat. In this confrontation we have revealed with lucidity the insurmountable alienation and absence of communication which exists between Penelope and Ulysses, due to the blindness and insincerity of the latter. The effectiveness of this confrontation is heightened by the constant awareness which we are made to feel, by various of Penelope's remarks, of the body of Amphinomus, which lies behind the balustrade.

Ulysses' misfortune is caused, Penelope tells him, by his own fear and cowardliness. For Ulysses disguised himself because he did not dare to believe either in Penelope or in himself, because he doubted his own ability to please her with his white hair and wrinkles.

Ahora debo decirte que tu cobardía lo ha perdido todo. Porque nada, entiéndelo bien, nada había ocurrido entre Anfino y yo antes de tu llegada... salvo mis pobres sueños solitarios. Y si tú me hubieses ofrecido con sencillez y valor tus canas ennoblecidas por la guerra y los azares, tal vez yo habría reaccionado

³⁰Buero, *La tejedora de sueños*, p. 70.
a tiempo. Hubieras sido, a pesar de todo, el hombre
de corazón con quien toda mujer sueña... ¡Y no este
astuto patán, hipócrita y temeroso!

Ulysses feared, moreover, that he would find Penelope
old, as he has found her. If he had returned with faith and love,
instead of fear and distrust, he would have found Penelope eternally beautiful, as Amphinomus finds her, and Penelope would
have found in him "el hombre de sus sueños" despite his "canas
y arrugas."

¡Sólo habrías tenido una manera de ganarle [a Anfino]
la partida! Tener la valentía de tus sentimientos, como él; venir decidido a encontrar tu dulce y bella Penélope
de siempre. Y yo habría vuelto a encontrar en ti, de golpe, al hombre de mis sueños.

Now, although Ulysses still has his wife "en los ojos de
todos," he really has nothing, "una apariencia; una risible...
cáscara de matrimonio." And his destiny will be to "vivir: muriendo." The purely external nature of the victory which
Ulysses, to whom outward appearances are all-important, has
won by deception and force, is pointed up effectively by the ironic
song of the chorus. The words of their chant, praising Penelope
for never having loved any man but her husband, are like the
"palabras de hielo" of the cynical and rationalistic Ulysses himself.

31Ibid., p. 69. 32Ibid., p. 70. 33Ibid.
It is Penelope, not Ulysses, who has won what Buero calls the internal victory,\textsuperscript{34} the only important one, for she will always be young and beautiful in the dreams of Amphinomus.

Y eres tú [Ulises], tú solamente, quien ha perdido la partida. ¡Yo la he ganado! ... tú no habrás tenido en tu camino ninguna mujer que te recuerde joven, porque tú naciste viejo. Pero yo seré siempre joven, ¡joven y bella en el recuerdo y en el sueño eterno de Anfino!\textsuperscript{35}

From this interior victory springs the infinite hope of Penelope with which the tragedy ends. For, whereas in Las palabras en la arena hope is only implicit and external to the action of the tragedy, here it is explicit.

Penélope: (... transfigurada, con los ojos en alto. ...) 
... ya no hay figuras que tejer, y el templo de mi alma quedó vacío. Pero aún tengo algo ... Mi Anfino ... ¡Oh, Anfino! Esperame. Yo iré contigo un día. ... \textsuperscript{36}

The hope of Penelope is not limited, though, to another world where Amphinomus awaits her. For she foresees a day on earth when there will be "una palabra universal de amor," the pure unselfish love of Amphinomus and of Jesus.

\textsuperscript{34}Buero, "Comentario," La tejedora de sueños, p. 86.

\textsuperscript{35}Buero, La tejedora de sueños, p. 70.

\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., p. 72.
Esperar ... Esperar el día en que los hombres sean como tú [Anfino] y no como ése [Ulises]. Que tengan corazón para nosotras, y bondad para todos; ... Sí; un día llegará en que eso sea cierto ... ¡Cuando no hay más Helenas ... ni Ulises en el mundo! Pero para eso hace falta una palabra universal de amor que sólo las mujeres soñamos ... a veces. 37

Casi un cuento de hadas

Casi un cuento de hadas, like the two preceding tragedies, deals with the nature of real love, man's blindness to which is often the cause of his inability to establish meaningful human relationships. This blindness, represented in the preceding play by Ulysses, is represented in the present one by Armando, a minor character. Riquet and Leticia, the two major personages, like Amphinomus and Penelope, stand as symbols of man's hope in attaining the "light."

This tragedy is an "escenificación libre" of Perrault's tale, Riquet à la houppe, about the ugly but intelligent prince Riquet and the beautiful but stupid princess. In this tale a fairy predicted, at the birth of the prince, that he would have the power to transmit his intelligence to the woman whom he loved and, at the birth of the princess, that she would be able to transmit her beauty to the

37 Ibid.
man whom she loved. The theme of the fairy tale, says Buero in his remarks about this tragedy, is the power of love to transform. For the story says, "ce ne furent point les charmes de la fée, mais l'amour seul fit cette métamorphose." 38

In Buero's tragedy, a kindly old woman, "una hada humanizada," summons the ugly prince Riquet to the palace of the beautiful but unhappy Leticia, who is regarded by all as stupid and therefore unmarrigeable. And Riquet, by his love and encouragement, succeeds in awakening the wit of Leticia, who is really "sólo un poco acobardada por la falta de cariño." 39 Leticia, in turn, comes to see, at times, in the deformed Riquet, with his unruly red "mechón," "un príncipe apuesto en cuya cabeza brilla el copete de oro como una llama." 40

The ugly prince (who, it is important to note, is "pavoroso," rather than "ridículo") 41 and the handsome prince whom Leticia is able to see at times are actually played by two different actors. The challenge which this technical problem offered, Buero says, is one of the reasons why he chose to dramatize this particular

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39 Buero, Casi un cuento de hadas, p. 20.
40 Ibid., p. 28. 41 Ibid., p. 18.
The appearance of the handsome Riquet is always accompanied, moreover, by soft violin music (appropriate to the eighteenth-century, fairy-tale court in which the action takes place). This music represents the transformation of the ugly Riquet into the handsome prince whom Leticia's love enables her to behold.

"El amor," says Riquet, "aviva el espíritu del ser amado, y también hermosea sus facciones a los ojos de su pareja." And, in effect, Leticia is finally able to declare with perfect conviction that Riquet "es el príncipe más gallardo del mundo." This power of love to transform is the same power which, as we have seen, permits Amphinomus to see Penelope as eternally young and beautiful.

Through the transforming power of Leticia's love, Riquet gradually becomes the "príncipe encantador" of whom she has dreamed. For, seated in the balcony of the palace playroom, where the entire play takes place, Leticia, lonely and unhappy, had often dreamed of the arrival of a handsome prince who would appear through the window of the gallery, the window through which Riquet first appears. And she had played with a secret

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42 Buero, "Comentario," Casi un cuento de hadas, p. 77.
43 Buero, Casi un cuento de hadas, p. 27.
44 Ibid., p. 32.
doll, "un lindo muñeco... lujosamente vestido de caballero, con peluca empolvada," the symbol of this "príncipe encantador," whom Riquet has now become. "Eres mi amado, que he esperado, lleno de pena, durante años y que, al fin, ha venido... para abrir mis ojos."  

The "ceguera" of Leticia, however, as Riquet points out, returns at times; for she does not always succeed in seeing the handsome Riquet, especially when other people are present. The power of love to transform rests upon faith; and Leticia's faith is not perfect. The alternate appearances on the stage of the two Riquets with different physical characteristics represents in visual form Leticia's constant struggle between faith and doubt.

For Riquet to become the prince of Leticia's dreams, however, not only her faith, but also his faith in himself, is necessary: "Si dudas de ti, ¿cómo tendré yo fe? Lo intento, pero no siempre lo consigo. ¡Ayúdame! Tú serás para mí el hombre más gallardo, como lo eres ahora..., mientras quieres serlo." If Riquet himself doubts his ability to become handsome in her eyes, it will be impossible for Leticia to see him that way. It is, as we have seen, Ulysses' lack of faith in himself, in his ability to please

45 Ibid., p. 17. 46 Ibid., p. 34. 47 Ibid.
Penelope, which prevents her from finding in him "el hombre de sus sueños."

From doubt, however, the path leads toward faith: "Todos los prometidos se ven a veces feos. O necios. Es el cansancio del amor, que así toma fuerzas para querer más ... Creemos el uno en el otro, y nuestra verdad será una gran verdad," declares Leticia. And when, after three months, Riquet must leave the palace to go to his mother who is dying, their mutual struggle or "prueba de fe" has been victorious.

Riquet, however, realizes that his absence will be a severe test of Leticia's faith; and, as he leaves, he attaches a lock of his own hair to Leticia's doll: "Quiero preparar mi conjuro, aunque dude de su eficacia. Voy a tratar de encadenarte ... Vuélvete niña, otra vez, Leticia. Judga con él en mi ausencia." And Riquet leaves Leticia as he first found her, with the doll in her arms, near the gallery window, where she will wait once more for her "príncipe encantador," but, this time, with hope.

But as Riquet has said, "No hay conjuros" and "la vida no es un cuento de hadas." Only minutes after his departure Leticia awakens from her dreams to find herself introduced to the handsome prince Armando, who has come to ask for her hand in marriage;

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48ibid., p. 45. 49ibid., p. 44.
and as her eyes become fixed on his, without her realizing it, the
doll which she carries in her arms falls to the floor.

In his remarks about this tragedy, Buero explains that, for
Perrault, the decision of the beautiful princess to marry Riquet
was doubtlessly accompanied by a "desilusión interior." The tale
says that the princess, "avant fait reflexion sur la persévérence de
son amant, sur sa discrétion et sur toutes les bonnes qualités de
son ame et de son esprit, ne vit plus la difformité de son corps ni
la laideur de son visage."50 Fairy tales, Buero points out, often
"manejan, embozada o declaradamente, factores trágicos . . .
junto al color de rosa, algo de negrura o escepticismo."51 From
this implicit "casi" of Perrault, "una sensata duda realista que,
lejos de empequeñecer la anécdota feérica, la humaniza," comes
the explicit "casi" of Buero's tragedy, in which he has attempted
to "unir un poco de poesía y un poco de realidad."52

Leticia, once she has glimpsed in Armando "los frutos del
mundo" and their "engañososa belleza, apetecible e inmediata,"53 is
no longer able to see in Riquet the prince that was her ideal, and
his. For the figure of Armando will always be between them. And

50 Buero, "Comentario," Casi un cuento de hadas, p. 74.
51 Ibid., p. 78. 52 Ibid., p. 74.
53 Buero, Casi un cuento de hadas, p. 72.
when Leticia accepts Riquet as her husband, it is not the Riquet of her dreams, but the "bufón." And she knows, as Riquet warns her, that this decision will bring suffering:

Riquet: Comienza el dolor. El dolor de nuestra intimidad triste ... Nuestra unión será una agonía eterna entre pavanas, un llanto inacabable entre las risas de las damiselas. 54

But Leticia prefers this real love and the sorrow it will bring to the meaningless love of the "guapo" but "vacío" Armando. As in La tejedora de sueños, we have a comparison between two types of love. The real love of Riquet, which makes Leticia "revivir" is contrasted to the superficial love of Armando, which "la ha adormecido otra vez" and which "la ha obligado a dejar de soñar." 55 For Armando, like everyone else except Riquet, believes that Leticia is stupid. And when Leticia is with him she becomes quiet and withdrawn.

Leticia knows that only real love will make her "revivir" and that no one can love her as much as Riquet: "Yo no soy nadie sin ti. Tú has hecho vivir en mí la inteligencia dormida ... y el amor." 56 Only Riquet can open her eyes to the real meaning of love: "Sólo tú tienes el poder de abrir mis ojos." 57 Therefore, she prefers this love with the suffering it will bring to the "vana y fugaz ilusión" of a love such as Armando's.

54ibid. 55ibid., p. 59. 56ibid., p. 34. 57ibid., p. 72.
This she explains to Riquet in order to prevent him from leaving, after he has killed Armando in a duel provoked by the latter. For Riquet, realizing that the "sortilegio no ha cumplido" and that Leticia, despite her statements to the contrary, no longer sees him as handsome, prepares to leave: "¿Crees que podría aceptar esta farsa? ¿Que voy a cometer la cobardía de fingir-me engañado?... Escucha, Leticia: Si te crees obligado a mí, te equivocas. No me debes nada, y no quiero gratitud." It is then that Leticia makes clear the reasons for her decision:

Prefiero ese dolor [de su unión con Riquet]... al horror de otro Armando. A la vana y fugaz ilusión de otro ser brutal y frío como él, que me hiciese necia y frívola, como él quería que fuese. 59

The superficiality of the love of the "brutal y frío" Armando, who is as blind to the real meaning of love as Ulysses, is especially evident in the fear which he displays at the intensity of the feeling which Leticia once thought she felt for him. Armando tells her that there are extremes "para todo," including love, that princes "marry for many reasons, and that with them "el cariño es una cosa distinta--y más sensata que entre los simples menestrales." 60

The superficiality of Armando's love, moreover, is indicative of his attitude toward life in general. For Armando, who is

58 Ibid., p. 71. 59 Ibid., p. 72. 60 Ibid., p. 52.
interested above all the political advantages of marriage, as for
Ulysses, the object of life is to further one's own interests. Life
is, in short, like the game of cards to which, confident of his own
superiority, he challenges Riquet, in order to degrade him in the
eyes of Leticia: "En el galante siglo en que vivimos ¿a qué pensar
en anticuadas manifestaciones de hostilidad? La elegancia es
preferible... ¿No es admirable nuestro siglo [el dieciocho],
caballeros? Es el siglo que ha logrado la difícil virtud de
convertir la vida en un juego."61 But since for Riquet, love, like
life, is real, the game becomes a duel.

Leticia, by choosing this real love of Riquet, wins an
internal victory very similar to that of Penelope. Like Penelope,
she chooses a love the fulfillment of which she knows will be
difficult if not impossible. Her victory is won, as Buero has
commented, by "aceptación" and "dolor."62 For she accepts the
difficult truth of Riquet's "fealdad imborrable" as she decides to
"buscar el sortilegio de nuevo... aunque sea en el dolor." And
she will continue to appear stupid to the court, although she really
isn't.

61Ibid., p. 63.
62Buero, "Comentario," Casi un cuento de hadas, p. 79.
It is this inner ennoblement or "superación espiritual" of Leticia which enables her, like Penelope, to "vivir en la esperanza," although she can no longer see in Riquet the handsome prince that was her ideal.

Leticia: ¡Pues amémonos en ese ideal! Soñemos juntos en el nuestra triste verdad.
Riquet: ... ¡Que su recuerdo nos guíe y nos ayude ... El nos espera siempre, inalcanzable, en el fondo de nuestros corazones.
Leticia: Sí. El nos espera, desde algún mundo sin dolor. Mi dulce y feo Riquet ... Ven. 63

The handsome Riquet, which Leticia is no longer able to see, becomes transformed gradually into an "ideal recordado" and stands as the symbol of hope upon which their marriage will be based. This transformation is shown by an extremely skillful visual effect at the very end of the tragedy. The handsome Riquet appears in the gallery window with "una mirada cargada de dolor, nostalgia y lejanía." And it is in front of this "inaccesible figura, que en su fondo ideal de música y de sueño, presidirá para siempre su difícil amor," 64 that Leticia kisses the lips of the ugly Riquet as the curtain falls. It is of this "inaccesible figura" that Leticia will continue to dream; for dreams are necessary and

63 Buero, Casi un cuento de hadas, p. 72.
64 Ibid.
without illusion there can be no love. This play, like *La tejedora de sueños*, ends tragically, that is, with a desperate hope, rather than with any definitive solution to the character's problems.

The three tragedies just discussed, about man's efforts to achieve meaningful human relationships, deal primarily, as we have seen, with the nature of love. *Las palabras en la arena* and *La tejedora de sueños* contrast egoistic love to unselfish love, and *Casi un cuento de hadas* contrasts superficial love to real love. Four other tragedies, *La señal que se espera*, *Madrugada*, *Hoy es fiesta*, and *Las cartas boca abajo*, deal primarily with man's search for the truth about his relationships with others, or his attempt to avoid this truth. This problem of seeking or avoiding the truth in human relationships has, of course, been seen to some extent in the first three tragedies. In these four, however, it becomes the predominant theme. And while in the first three tragedies, this theme is only implicit, in these four it is quite explicit.

In two of these tragedies, *La señal que se espera* and *Madrugada*, we see, in a very explicit manner, the tragic protagonists' search for truth: Enrique's attempt to learn if his wife really loves him and Amalia's attempt to learn if the dead Mauricio left her his money out of scorn or love. In *Hoy es fiesta*
and *Las cartas boca abajo*, on the contrary, we see the protagonists' initial unwillingness to face the truth, their urge toward escapism and illusion. In *Hoy es fiesta* Silverio flees from his guilt for a certain action committed against his wife until he at last realizes his need for her pardon. In *Las cartas boca abajo* an entire family lives a fictitious life of lies and insincerity until the husband Juan shows his own cards and those of his wife. As a result of some crisis in their lives, all of these protagonists, despite the initial resistance of some, attempt to "reach the light." And in this, they are different from Asaf and Ulysses.

In technique, *La señal que se espera* is a partial fantasy with a poetic atmosphere of lyricism similar to that of *La tejedora de sueños* and *Casi un cuento de hadas*. The other three tragedies, however, are, for the most part, realistic. In *Hoy es fiesta* and *Las cartas boca abajo*, which deal with lower and middle class Madrid society, we have a direct reflection of reality usually termed "realismo social." The settings of these latter two tragedies, especially the tenement house in the heart of Madrid, on the azotea of which *Hoy es fiesta* takes place, are reminiscent of those of Galdós' "Novelas Contemporáneas." In these two
tragedies we see Buero's "extraordinaria capacidad para extraer de la vida corriente todo lo que en ella hay de ... trágico." 65

The realism of Madrugada, Hoy es fiesta, and Las cartas boca abajo, however, is far more than a reflection of exterior reality. It is realism of a symbolic sort. It would, therefore, be a mistake to rigidly classify these tragedies as "realistas" as opposed to others, such as La tetedora de sueños and Casi un cuento de hadas, which are "simbolistas" or "espiritualistas," as most critics have done.

Buero, himself, rejects any such division: "Por ser todo arte condensación, el más realista de ellos es, también, símbolo. O sea signo: significato implícito, y no explícito, de cosas que la anécdota real y estricta no encierra." 66 This does not mean, however, "símbolos claros como teóramas o silogismos," but rather "los sentidos que encierran sutilmente la vida y la literatura que quiere reflejarlo." 67

In these last three tragedies, as in all Buero's theater, external reality is endowed with symbolic, and often mysterious,  


66 Miguel Luis Rodríguez, "Diálogo con Antonio Buero Vallejo," Indice, XII, Nos. 116-117 (September-October, 1958), 21.

67 Buero, "Comentario," En la ardiente oscuridad, p. 89.
meaning. These plays, therefore, represent, as one critic has said in reference to Las cartas boca abajo, "un sentido trágico inserto en la mejor tradición española," that of the transcendent realism of Galdós. 68

In these last three tragedies, all written within a very definite "forma cerrada," and above all in Madrugada, the technical skill which Buero displayed in Historia de una escalera, at the beginning of his career, and for which he has been so highly praised, is especially evident: compact plots, "sobriedad de la arquitectura," "lenguaje ceñido," the lack of "medios espectaculares," etc.

La señal que se espera

Enrique in La señal que se espera is, like Ulysses, a man of doubts and jealousy, of spiritual blindness; for he unjustly suspects that his wife Susana has married him only for his money and that she still loves her former sweetheart Luis. Susana believes that it is Enrique whom she loves, but she is not absolutely certain of this; and Luis still entertains some hope that Susana loves him. The tragedy consists of the efforts of these three

major characters to learn the truth about their relationships with one another.

In a desperate effort to "conseguir claridad" Enrique brings Luis to live with him and Susana at their Galician pazo. From this encounter which he forces between Susana and Luis, Enrique, despite his doubts, hopes desperately that he will somehow receive an assurance of Susana's love. Enrique also permits Luis, a musician, to construct, in the sun gallery off of the garden, an aeolian harp which Luis believes will miraculously play a forgotten song as a "señal" that his creative work may begin again. For Luis believes that he will not be able to compose again until he recalls a melody which he wrote for Susana just before she left him. Enrique vaguely remembers, as he later tells Susana, a melody which he heard her play during the early days of their courtship; and the suspicion that this is the music which Luis expects to hear is perhaps one reason for which he permits Luis to construct the harp. He possibly believes that Susana, if she

69 An aeolian harp is, as Buero explains during the course of the play, an instrument the strings of which emit, with changes in the atmosphere, sounds similar to a crude type of music. Although scientific logic has destroyed the "carácter milagroso" of this and of other types of "armonía espontánea," Buero has tried, in this play, to suggest, he says in his commentary, that "el asunto no estaba, a pesar de todo, tan claro." "Comentario," La señal que se espera (Madrid: Ediciones Alfíl, 1952), p. 70.
does love Luis, may play the melody herself in order to make his miracle come true.

Enrique's efforts to learn the truth are only partially conscious on his part. He himself does not understand clearly the motives for his actions. For instance, at one point, he tells Luis that he brought him to the pazo in order that Susana might see his miserable condition and scorn him; for Luis has had a mental collapse as a result of Susana's leaving him. All of these motives are probably partially true, for human actions are seldom univocal. The real reason underlying all of these motives is, however, Enrique's hope in Susana's love.

Enrique's search for the truth is a constant struggle between faith and doubt. When he learns that Susana has been seen running toward the beach to drown herself, he believes that she loves him; for she once said that her disappearance would be the ultimate proof of her love. But, when, minutes later, he hears the music of the harp,70 which Susana has secretly come back to play, his doubts return.

In the end, however, Enrique's tenacious efforts to "conseguir claridad" are rewarded when Susana chooses to remain with him despite the news of his complete financial

70This music is a melody by Buero. It is played by guitar.
failure, which he has received in a letter early in the tragedy but which he does not reveal until near the end. Enrique succeeds because his efforts, unlike those of Ulysses, are based more upon his necessity to know the truth than upon his jealousy. And because his efforts are based upon hope.

Enrique's struggle is paralleled by that of Susana, both to prove her love for Enrique and to verify this love in her own mind. This struggle is complicated by the responsibility which she feels toward Luis. As a result of this responsibility Susana finally decides to play the melody which she believes to be the one Luis is waiting for, although she knows that Enrique may misinterpret it as a sign of her love for Luis and, also, as an act of revenge, for he has continually derided Luis' belief in the miracle. Susan's motives, however, for playing the harp are as unclear to her as Enrique's motives for permitting the construction of the harp are to him. Somehow, though, she knows that the time has come to end the tension of all: the tension of Luis; her own tension; that of the servants, who consider the melody a "señal" of a miracle which will happen in their own lives; and even that of Enrique, who, as she suspects, also listens for the music.

Whereas the path of Enrique toward Susana is one of doubt, that of Susana toward Enrique is one of faith. Therefore, as she
explains later, she plays the melody with the belief that somehow Enrique will understand: "Yo tengo fe, y por la fe no llegué a la playa. Sabía que tú lo ibas a interpretar mal, y confiaba, a pesar de todo, en que algún día... comprenderías." And by playing the harp, Susana clears up the lingering doubts in her own mind about her love; for as she plays Luis' melody, it is Enrique of whom she thinks.

Enrique and Susana succeed in their struggle to "reach the light," the "light" which enables them to save their marriage because they seek it by acts of free will and by their faith. For Enrique's doubts are only the negative side of his faith, the faith which Susana reads in his eyes: "Yo espero, ¡espero"!... porque veo en tus ojos, a pesar de todo, la fe... En mí." Enrique and Susana triumph, Buero has commented, "por su deseo de acertar y porque lo que piden... es justo." Luis' success in regaining his ability to work, also, is due to faith. For, although he does not realize it, he constructs the harp with the faith that Susana will play it, as is clear in one of

71Buero, La señal que se espera (Madrid: Ediciones Alfil, 1952); p. 52.

72Ibid., p. 53.

73Buero, "Comentario," La señal que se espera, p. 67.
their conversations: "Si tú la esperas conmigo, llegará... .
Cuando te miro a los ojos, confío... . ¿Sonará tal vez esta
tarde, Susana? (Casi conminatorio)... . Queda poco tiempo.
¿Oyes? ¡Queda poco tiempo!" 74

The theme of the tragedy is, thus, the creative power of
faith, a theme also present, although to a lesser extent, in La
tejedora de sueños and Casi un cuento de hadas. All of the
characters hope, with varying degrees of faith, for something.
For in life, as Julián, a guest of Enrique and Susana, remarks,
"todos esperamos algo," even though there may be no rational
probability of realizing our hope. Julián, himself, hopes that he
will receive a letter from his wife, who has left him for another
man. The old servants, Rosenda and Bernardo, who long for
children but have never had any, believe that they will receive,
after the "señal" sounds, a letter from a nephew from whom they
have had no news since he went to America years ago.

It is the hope and faith of all, including Enrique, which
brings the "señal" and the letters which arrive shortly afterwards,
the "fe común" of which Luis speaks just before the melody sounds:

El jardín está solitario. Los dedos en visibles de Dios
pueden, ahora, concederme mi melodía... . ¿Qué
absurdo, verdad? ¡Pero creo! Si el jardín está solo,

74 Buero, La señal que se espera, p. 29.
también está rodeado de una gran fe. Los criados, desde la cocina, aguzan el oído y rezan. Susana llora en su habitación y escucha. . . . Y yo espero mi señal. El jardín está lleno de nuestra fe común. 75

But it is more than the "deseo de todos" which brings the miracles of the harp and of the letters. It is, Susana knows intuitively, "un deseo invisible y más alto":

Entonces, mis manos tocaron . . . Pero para mí sigue siendo misterioso quién tocó la señal. . . , aunque estas manos la hayan tocado.

..............

Aca a las condujo tu propio deseo [el de Enrique]; el deseo de todos. (Bajando la voz) O acaso un deseo invisible y más alto. 76

The "señal" of the harp is, like Susana’s return from the beach, a miracle, although played by human hands. For, as Julián observes, "todo es humano en este bajo mundo" but "todo es, también, maravilloso." 77 And, as he has remarked earlier, the very existence of things is miraculous:

Un milagro es la planta que crece, aunque no de flores extrañas, y el arpa y la gruta de las voces aunque creamos saber por qué suenan . . . Un milagro es el hijo que se concibe, y nace y que se hace hombre. 78

The letters, likewise, are miracles, although brought by human hands. They represent, Buero has commented, a "tipo de

75ibid., p. 42. 76ibid., pp. 57-58.

77ibid., pp. 58-59. 78ibid., p. 23.
justicia distributiva. "79 As Julián has said, "En el mundo todo es señal ... El azar no existe. "80 As we have seen earlier, Buero has stated that in tragedy "el encadenamiento de exceso o delito a castigo; el mantenimiento de la adversidad" may be broken by the grace of heaven, which comes as a result of faith, and that tragedy may end in "el vencimiento del hado."81

Through the "señal" with its "sentido desencadenante"82 and through the letters, Susana, Enrique, Luis, and Julián win a victory which is both internal and external, as they gain the understanding which enables them to see their past errors and which will thus permit them to remedy the causes of their previous unhappiness.

Susana now realizes the reasons why her marriage to Enrique almost failed:

Susana: Cuando ayer salí al jardín, a llorar después de ... la señal, creí entenderlo. Nos ha faltado algo muy importante, Enrique. Algo que debimos desear ... y que no quisimos. Una señal definitiva.

Enrique: ¿Qué señal?

79 Buero, "Comentario," La señal que se espera, pp. 67-68.
80 Buero, La señal que se espera, p. 18.
81 Buero, "Comentario," La señal que se espera, p. 67.
82 Ibid., p. 68.
Susana: La que Rosenda y Bernardo han esperado... inútilmente. El milagro...

Enrique: (Extático, ante ella)... del hijo...
¡Mi pobre Susana! Eras como un arpa eólica que anhelaba su melodía de mujer...
Esa es la última, la verdadera razón de que subieses a tocar a la solana. 83

Both Susana and Enrique, who have always considered children "un estorbo," realize that their unhappiness has been the result of wanting "placeres sin dolor." Enrique, moreover, who, because of his wealth, has not had to work, realizes the need for constructive endeavor to give his life meaning. The letter revealing his financial failure is, thus, a blessing, as are the other two letters.

Luis now understands that he forgot the melody because it was "una forma de olvidar... aquel tiempo." And he is now able to admit for the first time that it was Susana who left him and not vice versa: "No pude soportar esa humillación y... enloquecí para olvidarla. Inventé mi versión... Pero uno no puede engañarse impunemente... Perdí la fuerza para crear. ¡Ya la he recobrado!" 84 The "señal" does not bring complete happiness to Luis, however, because he still loves Susana. But it

83 Buero, La señal que se espera, p. 58.
84 Ibid., pp. 46-47.
Julían now knows that the failure of his marriage may have been partly his fault. And he decides to return to pardon his wife, or to be pardoned by her, realizing that "tal vez tengamos todos que perdonarnos los unos a los otros." 86

Rosenda and Bernardo, who learn, from the letter which their nephew asked a consul to write, that his last thoughts, before dying as a result of a shipwreck, were of them are now able to live in peace.

Through their efforts to understand their shortcoming and through their faith the characters have reached a state of calmness and serenity. By means of the catharsis or purification which they have undergone, their tension has been resolved into spiritual peace and harmony.

This inner peace is shown by a highly effective auditory effect near the end of the tragedy. As the six characters gather in a group, Julían remarks that the air is still and that it must have been moments like this which made the Ancients believe in the music of the spheres. And then, "una dulcísima y lejana

85 Ibid., pp. 59-60.  86 Ibid., p. 56.
armonía, que dijérase hecha de eterno viento susurrante y voces claras, inicia sus acordes... una música increada que no existe en la tierra," but which perhaps, Buero says, may resemble the Prelude to *Lohengrin*.  

This music continues until the curtain falls, enveloping the characters in its harmony, as they experience what they feel to be a "minuto único" which will perhaps never come again in their lives. This music is heard only by the audience; but it is felt by the characters, especially by Susana:  

"No... No lo oigo. ¡La siento!... ¡La siento dentro de mí!"  

This sound effect, the last miracle of the play, reinforces the metaphysical aspect of the tragedy, as it reminds us of the inner and spiritual significance of exterior reality, of the mystery and marvel that may constantly surround us without our knowing it. Moments like this, moments of "perfecta paz y comprensión," when "por alguna misteriosa ley, se nos regala a los pobres seres humanos el prodigio de las coincidencias," are given to us, Susana says, "cuando lo hemos sabido esperar." The tragedy thus ends.

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87 *ibid.*, p. 61. 88 *ibid.*, p. 62. 89 *ibid.*, p. 61.
in hope fulfilled, confirming the declaration made by Julian early in the play:

La fe nunca es inútil ... La fe mueve las montañas y produce las señales. Por su poder vivimos. 90

Madrugada

Madrugada, like La señal que se espera, deals with a search for truth or knowledge. The struggle of Amalia, the protagonist, to learn whether her dead husband, Mauricio, really loved her is similar to that of Enrique to find out whether Susana loves him. This search for truth, however, is much more explicit in Madrugada. Amalia's efforts, unlike those of Enrique, are the result of a conscious decision on her part. The entire tragedy deals with the intricate and well-planned struggle in which she engages, in a desperate but seemingly hopeless attempt to clarify Mauricio's feelings toward her.

Mauricio, who was a wealthy artist, has died just before the tragedy begins. Just before his death he has married Amalia, his model and mistress, and has left her almost his entire estate. But Amalia is tormented by doubts as to Mauricio's real attitude toward her. Amalia's doubts are caused by the fact that the only two relatives not mentioned in his will are Leandro, who had tried to seduce her,

90 Ibid., p. 48.
and his father Lorenzo. If Mauricio had heard rumors of Leandro's efforts and had believed that they were successful, it would explain, Amalia believes, the will and, also, several recent months of "frialdad" toward her on Mauricio's part: "¡Nada para Leandro, nada para ese canalla que le quita la mujer, y para su padre, tampoco, por si acaso! A la pecadora, sí. Para ella, benevolencia, perdón, desprecio. ¡Pago, quizá!" Amalia, thus, does not know whether Mauricio married her and left her his money to prove his love and trust or only to pay her for her services.

Amalia had tried unsuccessfully to learn the cause of Mauricio's recent aloofness and to clarify matters between them shortly before Mauricio's death: "Cuando nos hemos quedado solos, he tratado de aclarar ... Era difícil ... estaba el pudor. La vergüenza de tocar un punto tan espinoso ... Esa maldita vergüenza mía, que nos ha impedido a los dos crear la confianza necesaria." Amalia's words, moreover, at that time, have intensified Amalia's doubts, as she relates to Sabina, her maid and confidant:

Amalia: El ha dicho entonces algo ... tremendo.
"Ya es tarde para decirnos muchas cosas,

92 Ibid., p. 15.
mi pobre Amalia ... Pero quizás, desde el otro lado de la muerte, te recobraré"
... Yo me he echado a llorar, diciéndole: "¡Si no me has perdido!" Y él me ha contestado: "No. No te he perdido. Pero quizás te recobre ... desde el otro lado."

Sabina: Tal vez sospechaba sus dudas y la ha querido tranquilizar.
Amalia: No. Era algo muy concreto. Algo que ha sonado en sus palabras con una dulzura infinita ... ¿Perdón, quizás? ¿Perdón por algo que no he cometido? (Amarga) Si es así, me perderá del todo.93

Sabina suggests that perhaps Mauricio, somehow, even from beyond death, is able to hear Amalia's words of explanation and of love: "Quizá la oyó ... Y quizás la oye ahora."94 But Amalia cannot live with her doubts, for she is a woman for whom love is everything. First Mauricio's model, then his mistress, she had gradually fallen in love with him: "Entonces se hizo el milagro ... El milagro del amor, dentro de mí. El lo hizo con su tacto, con su dulzura, con su bondad. ¡El lo ha sido todo para mí!"95 Amalia must somehow clarify Mauricio's enigmatic words:

¡Me parece como si él me manda hacerlo! ... No puedo vivir ... ¡ni un momento más!, sin intentar que él me recobre ... para siempre.96

Therefore, Amalia, in a desperate attempt to learn what Buero, in his comments, has called the "verdad interior" of her

93Ibid. 94Ibid., p. 13. 95Ibid., p. 14. 96Ibid., p. 16.
marriage and inheritance, quickly calls Mauricio's relatives, one of whom she has reason to believe may have tried to turn Mauricio against her recently by telling him lies about her. She tells Mauricio's relatives, who do not know that he has just died, that he is ill and not expected to live through the night.

Rising above her grief, she dresses in an ostentatious manner in order to impress them with "una falsa apariencia de dureza" and, when they are assembled, lays her cards on the table in a daring scheme to force them to reveal the truth. She tells them that Mauricio has made out a will, not yet signed, leaving her all his money but that, since the answer to a question is more important to her than the money, she will not have him sign the will if they tell her who slandered her and what Mauricio's reaction to the slander was. This desperate attempt to get the truth will be a race against the clock, for Amalia has only a little over an hour and a half. At six o'clock some of Mauricio's friends will arrive with candles to arrange the capilla ardiente, thus exposing the facts in the case.

Amalia, however, is, a woman of amazing will power; and she finds, through her love for the man who has redeemed and elevated her, the strength necessary to search for the truth.

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without which she cannot live. Amalia's search is similar to that of the heroes of Greek tragedy. For, like them, not content with "una ceguera tranquila," she insists upon learning the truth despite the anguish which her efforts will entail and despite the risk that the truth may not be that for which she hopes. Upon the tragic hero, it has been said, "suffering is never merely imposed: he incurs it by his own decision," which springs from his desire for the deepest kind of knowledge. 98

One critic of Madrugada has stated that "sin fatalidad, sin oráculos y sin dioses vengativos, la técnica teatral de Madrugada es exactamente la del Edipo griego." 99 Buero has commented in turn:

El papel de la fatalidad juega indirectamente en la obra por lo irreversible de la muerte del pintor, el del Oráculo por las premonitorias palabras que éste llegó a musitarle a Amalia y el de los dioses vengativos por ese reloj indiferente, antiguo Cronos barbudo que por la sola fuerza de su presencia, enreda en sus propios errores y precipita hacia el crimen a una parte de los personajes. 100

This desperate struggle of wits in which Amalia engages Mauricio's relatives, who wish to prevent her from getting

98 Brooks, "Introduction," Tragic Themes in the Western World, p. 5.

99 Quoted by Buero in "Comentario," Madrugada, p. 90.

100 Ibid., p. 91.
Mauricio's money but are unwilling to confess their immoral actions, is a struggle of love against jealousy, greed, and hate. Leandro is motivated by envy, both of Mauricio's artistic success and of Amalia's love for him. Lorenzo, his brother Dámaso, and Dámaso's wife Leonor are motivated primarily by greed. Leonor is also motivated by her hate for Amalia, upon whom she looks down as immoral. As Amalia, under the pressure of the minutes which tick by, tries to force the guilty person to betray himself, the relatives try to prolong the battle as long as possible in the hope that Mauricio may die at any moment. Moreover, two of these relatives, who in their blindness condemn Amalia for what they consider her immorality, actually steal into Mauricio's room in an attempt to murder him--thus injecting into the action a note of intrigue and of melodrama.

The portrayal of this struggle, this "forcejeo" full of anguish for Amalia and of tension for all, requires a utilization of the three classic unities to their limits. The action, as in Greek tragedy, takes place at the culminating moment, when the desenlace is near. Everything happens in the living room not far from the death bed of Mauricio. There is an absolute unity of time and even a clock on stage which visibly marks the identification of theatrical time and real time.
When the tragedy begins, the clock shows the time as quarter past four. The clock runs throughout the entire drama, including a fifteen minute intermission, during which the characters retire to the dining room for coffee; and it strikes six as the drama ends. The ticking of the clock, moreover, adds to the increasing sense of tension and urgency. For only minutes before six does the truth finally come out.

_Madrugada_ is, thus, an excellent example of "la forma cerrada" and a play completely free from extra-theatrical influences. One critic has said that "la realización de _Madrugada_, por lo que respecta a lo ... formal, autoriza a señalar en ... Buero Vallejo, al máxime artífice escénico" of the contemporary Spanish stage. 101

Other devices, besides the ticking of the clock, which accentuate the atmosphere of oppression and tension which is maintained until almost the very end of the tragedy are Lorenzo's constant tapping of his heels and Leonor's nervous hysterical jangling of her bracelets, as well as the prolonged howls of the dog who grieves for his dead master. 102 The tension produced by

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102 These devices have been expertly analyzed by Beth Noble in her article on Buero's use of sound, p. 59.
these sound effects is increased by the presence of the dead body in the adjoining room, a device which we have already seen used very effectively in *La tejedora de sueños*. For, although we do not see the body of Mauricio, the continual risk of its discovery, as well as the attempted murder, make us feel its presence more strongly than if it were visible.

Only minutes before the final curtain falls, Amalia wins her struggle to learn the truth. And this truth signifies the complete triumph of her love. Mauricio omitted Leandro and Lorenzo from his will because they had both slandered Amalia. Lorenzo had told him that she was seeing Leandro; and Leandro had written an anonymous letter saying that she was seeing a former lover, a letter which Mauricio returned upon learning that Leandro had lied. Mauricio's "silencio," his omission of their names, thus signifies, not jealousy, but trust and confidence:

Amalia: Un silencio que no significa celos como temí al principio ... |Un silencio que me rehabilita, que me lo devuelve| ... Un silencio por el que me recobre ... desde el otro lado de la muerte. 103

The positive effects of the triumph of Amalia's love extend, moreover, to the relatives, who, in their greed and ruthlessness, have tried to disgrace and humiliate her. As a result of the

103Buero, *Madrugada*, p. 79.
self-knowledge which they gain through the cathartic experience that they have undergone, they acquire a dignity which they previously lacked. Dámaso speaks for all, as he says to his wife, "Ojalá que esta noche nos sirva a los dos para algo." Sastre, in a review of Madrugada, speaks of the "fuerza aleccionadora" of the drama, which he calls a "pieza dura y purificadora."

The truth which Amalia has attained is symbolized, near the end of the tragedy, by the sunlight, the "claridad del alba." After the relatives have left, as Amalia turns off the lamp and draws back the curtains, the morning light floods the room dissipating the remaining "tinieblas." Love has triumphed, and the dawn announces the termination of her doubts and fears:

Su expresión es ahora bellísima: muestra una calma sobrehumana y un amor sin límites ... va al foro y apaga la luz. Se acerca al ventanal y descorre las cortinas. La limpia claridad del alba penetra en la estancia.

Buero's use of light here is quite similar to Ibsen's at the conclusion of Ghosts. Ibsen's tragedy, during most of which a

104 Ibid.


106 Ibid., p. 81.
steady rain falls, ends with a view of the bright morning light on
the mountain peaks and glaciers, representing the clear self-
knowledge which the heroine, Mrs. Alving, has attained. 107

_Madrugada_, like _La señal que se espera_, thus ends with
hope fulfilled, as the clock strikes six, announcing symbolically
the triumphant termination of Amalia's search for the truth which
will save her. —

**Hoy es fiesta**

Just as Amalia attempts to attain "light" in her relationship
with Mauricio, Silverio in _Hoy es fiesta_ tries desperately to clarify
his relationship with his wife Pilar. Silverio's decision to attain
"light," however, comes only after a long period of evasion and
illusion, of "darkness."

For years Silverio has fled from his responsibility in the
death of Pilar's daughter, whom he had hated as the fruit of an
atrocity committed on the woman he loved during the war. He
attributes the death of the girl to his own deliberate negligence.
His guilt, which he has never had the courage to confess to Pilar,
is the barrier which has always stood between them.

107 Louis Martz, "The Saint as Tragic Hero," _Tragic
Themes in Western Literature_, p. 154.
Silverio has lived years of spiritual torture, trying without success to convince himself of his innocence. In an effort to compensate for his crime, he has dedicated his life to making Pilar, who has never recovered from the blow of her daughter's death, happy, instead of telling her the truth which he owes her. And he has abandoned his ambition to become a painter and sought anonymity among the humble as if fleeing from "algún ojo implacable."

As a result of a crisis in the life of some of his neighbors, however, Silverio finally realizes that he needs Pilar's pardon and that he has hoped for her pardon for years without being aware of it. When Daniela, a young girl, is berated by her disagreeable mother for consulting the neighborhood fortune teller, Doña Nieves, about a problem in her life of anguish and poverty, she looks at Silverio and several other neighbors as if beseeching their help. Silverio sees in the "mirada infantil" and "inocente" of Daniela, that of Pilar's daughter; and he understands that, without realizing it, he has always longed for his wife's pardon. All of this he confesses to his wife, who is deaf, with the "cobarde ilusión" that she can hear him:

Ahora comprendo ... que espero desde años algo enorme, algo inalcanzable ... Ha sido esa niña, esa
But Silverio lacks the courage to write his confession on the notebook which Pilar offers him. For, although Pilar loves him with "rendida adoración," he cannot believe that she could forgive him if she knew the truth.

In the radical solitude of Silverio, we see the same inability to communicate on any meaningful level which we saw in Amalia, who was unable to talk to Mauricio in order to clear up his doubts about her before he died. Although Silverio has the "visión ética" to see clearly both his responsibility in the death of Pilar's daughter and his present cowardliness, he lacks the ability to communicate his problems to his wife. This lack of communication between the couple is symbolized by the deafness of Pilar.

Hoy es fiesta, however, is more than the individual tragedy of Silverio; it is the collective tragedy of his neighbors in the tenement house, who like him, lead lives of "pobres ilusiones" and "angustia real." Silverio's life is closely interwoven with theirs; and it is as a result of something which happens to all of them that he finally finds reason to believe in the possibility of a solution to his own problem.

**Hoy es fiesta,** like *Madrugada,* is written within a "forma cerrada." All three acts take place on the azotea where the occupants of the house gather to have a tertulia. And the entire action takes place on one sunny fiesta day, between sunrise and sunset.

Like Silverio, all of these neighbors hope for something to make their lives less full of anguish and more bearable. Their hopes, however, assume the disguise of various illusions which life offers to them in their poverty:  

1. the realization of the prophecies of the fortune teller or the winning of the lottery prize, the announcement of which they are awaiting so eagerly on this fiesta day.

The hopes of these poor people are chimeric and irrational. What they are hoping for are miracles. But their hopes are what permit them to live. For, without a minimum of hope, life is impossible. As one neighbor says, "de esperanza vive el hombre." And as another neighbor declares, "¡pues hay que esperar, qué demonios! Si no, ¿qué sería de nosotros?"

The idea of hope is present in all of Buero's theater, since, as we have seen, it is for him, the very essence of tragedy. In

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Hoy es fiesta, however, as in La señal que se espera, it becomes an overt theme. There is, in both tragedies, the same atmosphere of waiting and hoping. Just as in La señal que se espera everyone hopes for the music of the harp, the humble occupants of the tenement house hope for the lottery prize. In the first tragedy, each act of which takes place on a different day just before sunset, at the hour when the "senal" is most likely to be heard, time seems almost suspended as everyone waits for the miracle. The same thing happens in Hoy es fiesta, especially in the third act, during the long wait for the newspaper announcing the prize.

In Hoy es fiesta the herald of this hope is Doña Nieves, the poor fortune teller, whose declaration of faith is heard early in the tragedy:

Hay que esperar ... Hay que esperar siempre ... La esperanza nunca termina ... Creamos en la esperanza ... La esperanza es infinita. 111

On this fiesta day, a miracle does happen, but not the miracle of the lottery prize. The numbers of the shares which the neighbors have bought from Balbina turn out to be the winning ones. Balbina, however, in order to stave off hunger, has deceived them with a previous year's décimo. The real miracle, and a more lasting one than a lottery prize, is the neighbors' forgiveness

111 Ibid., p. 21.
of Balbina. Due to the intervention of Silverio, the neighbors, who in their first violent reaction, have beaten doña Balbina, all surrender their lottery receipts and agree not to press charges against her. As Silverio says, "a pesar de todo, son de oro."112

And after the initial disillusion and bitterness, hope returns. The neighbors have lost the money of which they dreamed, but not their hopes, as is evident in the words of Tomasa:

¡Venga, Manola (le da un golpe en el hombro) ¡Al próximo sorteo le compro yo a Vd. el décimo! Y mañana le pago las cartas, que nos van a decir a las dos cosas muy buenas!... Un día sale todo, ya lo verá!113

Moreover, as a result of the miracle of the neighbors' kindness to Balbina, they have more reason to hope than before. For, as one reviewer of the tragedy has commented, "queda, ya que no franqueada, entreabierta, la puerta de la confianza en el porvenir y del consuelo de la solidaridad."114

This miracle which has taken place in the lives of all of the tenement-dwellers is, moreover, for Silverio a "señal" that he

112 Ibid., p. 90. 113 Ibid., p. 89.

too may hope. For perhaps Pilar will somehow be able to forgive him, just as the neighbors have pardoned Balbina:

Hoy sí es un verdadero día de fiesta para mí. Lo que ha ocurrido es como una señal de que también yo ... puedo esperar. 115

For Silverio, this fiesta day is a special one, a day when, as a result of having saved Balbina and of having understood that he may finally be able to obtain Pilar's pardon, he feels in harmony with the universe, a day when hope and happiness still seem possible:

En la vida todo es tan oscuro y tan misterioso ... y los hombres tan pequeños. Quizá cada uno tiene sólo un día, o unos pocos días de clarividencia y de bondad. 116

Pilar, also, somehow has known, with the intuitive understanding which seems to compensate for her deafness, that this would be a unique day, a day of special beauty, when the evils of the world would dissolve into love and peace:

Esta hermoso el día ... Tiene una claridad especial. Y es que hay días extraños ... Días en que parece como si el tiempo se parase, o como si fuese a suceder algo importante ... Como si las cosas familiares dejasen de serlo ... Como si las vieses por primera vez y fuesen todas muy bonitas ... Los vecinos son buena gente sin saberlo ellos mismos; la bruja es simpática precisamente cuando pone cara de vinagre, porque tú sabes que no es bruja, que es una pobre mujer que no entiende

115bid., pp. 89-90. 116bid., p. 53.
And after the miracle of the neighbors' pardon of Balbina, there is a moment of spiritual calm and serenity very similar to the one in *La señal que se espera*:

Pilar: ¿No lo notas? ... Es como una alegría grandisima que nos envolviese a los dos ... Como un río enorme que me invade.

This moment of peace emphasizes the metaphysical tone of the play, suggesting the possibility of a transcendent reality, a reality of mystery and marvel. This transcendent reality, symbolized in *La señal que se espera* by the celestial music at the end, is perhaps represented in *Hoy es fiesta* by the sunlight which falls on the azotea of the squalid tenement:

Todo viejo, desconchado y deslucido ... un taburete caído ... un cajón hecho trizas, un tiesto rajado y una palanca abollada y carcomida. Mas sobre todo ello la tersa maravilla del cielo mañanero y la ternura del sol: que desde la derecha, besa oblicuamente las pobres alturas urbanas.

The metaphysical aspect beneath the very realistic tone of the tragedy is evident, also, in the hopes of the neighbors. It is not really a lottery prize for which they hope in order to alleviate

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the anguish of their lives, but something more transcendental. That their hunger is spiritual as well as material is evident in their eagerness to use the azotea, which is forbidden to them by the portera, in order to breathe "un aire más puro y más alto." And as a result of the miracle of their goodness to Balbina, their spiritual hunger is, to some degree, satisfied.

A spiritual door is opened for Silverio, also, on this day when miracles seem possible. On this special day, which is the anniversary of the death of Pilar's daughter, Silverio is enabled to compensate for his guilt by saving the life of Daniela. For Daniela, berated by her mother Doña Balbina, who does not understand that she revealed the hoax of the lottery tickets only to save her from prison, attempts to commit suicide.

Silverio thus hopes that he has somehow redeemed himself, but he realizes that the final answer must come from Pilar:

A ti te hablo ... casi innombrable, a quien los hombres hablan cuando están solos, sin lograr comprender a quien se dirigen ... ¿Tiene algún sentido este extraño día de fiesta? ¿Debo entenderlo como un día de esperanza y de perdón? ¿Ha sido rescatado la vida de aquella niña por la de Daniela? ... Pero sé muy bien que sólo puedes contestarme a través de unos labios. Lo sé y lo acepto ... aún me falta la prueba más terrible ... Ayúdame a afrontarla. 120

120 Ibid., pp. 94-95.
Silverio, therefore, determines, at last, to confess to Pilar in the hope that she can forgive him: "Tomaré tu cuaderno y te confesaré mi maldad. ... Y si tus ojos me condenan ... aceptaré mi dolor y procuraré recobrar..." 121

But before Silverio can make the confession which can remove the barrier between them and perhaps bind them together definitively, Pilar, who has been ill since the death of her daughter, dies as the result of a blow received during the fight over doña Balbina.

Just as Amalia, in her inability to communicate with Mauricio, puts off reaching an understanding with him until he dies, Silverio has delayed too long in his effort to clarify his relationship with Pilar. But whereas Amalia is able, through the will, to communicate with Mauricio, in a certain sense, and to clarify their relationship, Silverio will never be sure of Pilar's pardon. He can only hope that somehow she can hear him from beyond death and pardon him.

Quizá puedes ofrirme al fin por tus pobres oídos muertos ... Quizá ya sabes. Y yo, ¿cómo sabré? Sólo tu boca podía decirmelo si tengo perdón. Sólo tu boca ... ¡Pilar, Pilar! ... Si aún pudieras decírmelo. 122

121 Ibid., p. 95. 122 Ibid., p. 96.
The tragedy concludes as we hear once again the words of

**doña Nieves:** "Hay que esperar ... Esperar siempre ... La
esperanza nunca termina ... La esperanza es infinita." 123

Buero has commented that *Hoy es fiesta* is "una obra que
procura esbozar el carácter trágico de la esperanza." It is a
work, he says, in which "se exalta la grandeza y la positividad
de la esperanza humana" but in which also "se expone el carácter
irónico, dudoso, con frecuencia inalcanzable de la esperanza."
Thus, although the final words of *doña Nieves, as Pilar dies,
can represent "una afirmación solemne" (the infinite hope that
somehow Pilar can hear Silverio's words and forgive him), they
can also represent "una brutal ironía." 124 This ambivalence,
also to be found in the title, is tragic, but neither pessimistic
nor fatalistic.

**Las cartas boca abajo**

*Las cartas boca abajo* is, one critic has stated, "el sordo
y brutal litigio de cinco seres encerrados entre cuatro paredes." 125

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124 Buero, "Comentario," *Hoy es fiesta* (Ediciones Alfil,

125 Enrique Sordo, Rev. of *Las cartas boca abajo*, from
Revista, reprinted in Sáinz de Robles (ed.), *Teatro español 1957-
It is the tragedy of a family of "fracasados," who long to find success and happiness, that is, to escape from the asphyxiating atmosphere of their "viejo piso" with its "cornisa desconchado" and its ever-widening "grietas."

In their hypocrisy and insincerity, both with themselves and with each other, the members of this family, however, succeed only in destroying one another. We have the same blind incomprehension, the same inability to communicate with oneself and with others which we saw in Silverio. Like Silverio initially, these characters maintain their cards face down. And it is their unwillingness to expose their cards, that is, either to face the truth about themselves or to attempt to clarify their relationship with one another, which causes their failure. Juan, the husband, expresses this when he says, "Nos vamos hundiendo poco a poco en el silencio."

In her youth, Adela, the protagonist, had wanted to marry Carlos Ferrer, a young intellectual who was interested in her sister. She had succeeded in attracting him, but he had finally abandoned both her and her sister. And in her spite, Adela had married Juan, a companion of his, in an effort to make him successful so that Ferrer would see his mistake in leaving her.
But, whereas Ferrer has gained international renown, Juan has remained a "triste encargado de curso."

For Adela the passing years with a mediocre husband whom she does not love have resulted in only boredom and fear: "Los años pasan y... todo me va aplastando... sin que yo pueda hacer nada, ¡nada!, para evitarlo. . . . ¡Yo no se resignarme! . . . Y me siento estafada, y tengo miedo... a hundirme del todo." 126 In an attempt to escape this boredom to which Adela cannot resign herself, she begins to live a fictitious life of illusion, as she dreams of her love for Ferrer.

The free and joyous life for which Adela longs is symbolized by the singing of the birds from a nearby park as they fly by the balcony every afternoon at sunset. Adela, in her desperate thirst for life, has become obsessed with these birds:

Me encantaban ya cuando era pequena. Después de jugar, por las tardes, me sentaba a mirarlos... Me parecia que tambien yo, cuando fuera mayor, seria como ellos, libre y alegre... Que decepcion, verdad? Pero ellos no han cambiado. Vuelven todas las tardes, alegran la casa y resucitan mi alma de nina. Y entonces me olvido de todo, y me parece como si aun tuviese esperanza... No son como nosotros: Vuelan. Luchan por sus hijos; a veces caen bajo la garra de sus enemigos... Pero vuelan. Les sobra siempre vida para despedir al sol en medio de una borrachera de cantos... Celebran su fiesta delirante. Son la alegría del

Anita, the neurotic sister, whose love for Ferrer has been thwarted by Adela, also dreams of Ferrer and of the happiness which has escaped her. She, moreover, has carried her implacable resentment against Adela to the point of becoming permanently mute. The ever-present figure of Anita with her accusing eyes is, as Mauro, her brother, suggests, the tacit incarnation of Adela's conscience: "O acaso . . . acaso . . . , tu consciencia y Anita son la misma cosa." Anita's silence, moreover, like the deafness of Pilar, symbolizes the lack of communication which exists between the members of the family.

Juan, embittered by the scorn of his wife and acutely conscious of his "abasoluta mediocridad," also dreams of the happiness which has escaped him, as he prepares at the age of fifty for the oposiciones in a last attempt to obtain a cátedra.

Juanito, the son, whom Adela has taught to despise his father and to admire Ferrer, longs to escape to another atmosphere where the air is purer, where he can avoid becoming "otro mediocre auxiliar de cátedra." Mauro, the brother of Adela and Anita, a modern "picaro o buscavidas" who frequents the house to

127Ibid., pp. 29-30.
pilfer objects in order to survive, also had dreams one day. Now he is merely the mirror in which Adela, Anita, and Juan see the reflection of their own failures.

Although Carlos Ferrer never appears on stage and only Juanito meets him on one occasion off-stage, his figure acquires the dimensions of a myth, as Sainz de Robles has noted. To Adela, Ferrer represents the love which she has never known; to Ana, the happiness which she has never felt; and to Juanito, the success for which he is striving. 128

The life together of these five characters who all long for happiness, for purer air, who long, in short, for the power to "volar," is, in the words of Juan, "una sorda lucha." This "lucha" is the result of their spiritual blindness, of the "darkness" in which they live, maintaining their cards face down. Juan acknowledges their need for sincerity and clarity, as he tries to reach an understanding with Adela on the night before his final ejercicio:

Esta noche puede ser una noche decisiva, Adela. . . .
Te pido que te sincerés conmigo. Quizá esta noche logremos lo que no hemos logrado durante años: poner las cartas boca arriba, confiar el uno en el otro. 129

But Adela refuses; and "vuelve la lucha, el silencio . . . Todo."


129 Buero, Las cartas boca abajo, p. 63.
In this predominantly psychological tragedy written within a "forma cerrada" there is little exterior action, only the failure of Juan to win the oposiciones. Juan fails because of the indifference of his wife, but also because of his own pride, which prevents him from reading the books of Ferrer. For, ironically, the books of Ferrer, which Juan is too proud to let anyone see him use, contain important information needed for the last question.

It is this final and definitive failure in his life which makes Juan decide to turn up Adela's cards and also his own: "El momento es este! Todos necesitamos claridad!" Letting Adela believe for a moment that he has actually won the cátedra, Juan is able to read in her face what he has suspected, that Adela did not really want him to win: "Te asustaba que, a pesar de todo, pudiese ganar; ¿no?... Intolerable idea, cuando se ha tratado durante, durante la vida entera de convencerlo de lo contrario, de dominarlo." And when Adela reveals unexpectedly that she had, through Mauro, sought a recommendation for Juan from Ferrer in an effort to aid him, Juan also sees the reason for her action: if he won, it would not be through his own merit, and, if he failed in spite of the recommendation, he would have to admit his absolute mediocrity.

130Ibid., p. 75.
Juan realizes, moreover, the need to clarify another matter, that of Ferrer, whose presence has always been between them. And he forces Adela to admit the reason she married him: "Quisiste demostrar a... otra persona que, con tu ayuda, un hombre podía llegar lejos... Y, porque no pudiste demostrarlo, has terminado por odiarme." Juan suggests, moreover, that it was Ferrer about whom Adela dreamed even when she conceived their son, whom she has turned against his father.

It is due perhaps to Adela's hatred, after Juan's first failures, that he has failed in his other attempts: "Acaso la [oposición] habría ganado hace tiempo... habría sido el cumplimiento sereno, con tu ayuda, de mi propio destino." To all of this Adela has no answer: "¿Qué podía hacer? Nunca logré ver claro en mis impulsos... Todo lo hice a destiempo."

And the result, for Adela, is a marriage which has been a lie, a home which has not been one, and only sorrow and disillusion for her old age.

Adela, in her boredom, in the purposelessness of her own life, has dominated the lives of all those about her. She has egoistically sacrificed the happiness of her sister and attempted to use her husband as a means of revenge against Ferrer. Failing

131ibid., p. 78. 132ibid., p. 64.
in the latter, she has tried to use her son to create a new Ferrer. As one critic has pointed out: "Ella es la que con su hipocresía, con su despecho, con su... secreta gravitación al pasado... y su culpable enternecimiento cuando cree que ese pasado puede volver, con su egoísmo... cataliza en torno suyo el drama."133

Adela is quite similar to Hedda Gabler, the protagonist of Ibsen. Both Adela and Hedda are women without aim or purpose in life. In the case of both it is boredom, dissatisfaction with the dullness of their lives, which leads them to dominate others and to destroy them. Just as Hedda drives Löveborg to commit suicide, Adela destroys the lives of Anita and Juan and almost succeeds in ruining that of Juanito.

After exposing Adela's cards, the mediocre but noble Juan shows his own, admitting that he has envied Ferrer all his life and that it is, to a great extent, this envy, which his family has done nothing to help him overcome, that has caused his failure: "Ferrer Díaz vale mucho más que yo... Mi gran error ha sido no atreverme a reconocerlo, mientras... lo envidiaba en secreto. Pero ya no me importa reconocerlo. La experiencia de hoy ha sido suficiente.... Con lo sencillo que hubiera sido, desde años,

admirar y leer como se merece a Carlitos Ferrer ... mi antiguo compañero." 134

Juanito, also, exposes his cards, admitting that he has hated his father and even dreamed of being the son of someone more successful—like Ferrer. Mauro, apparently so jovial but secretly so desperate, has already turned up his cards in a conversation with Juanito. Only Anita remains silent, "como un tribunal para todos," and especially for Adela. 135

Through the cathartic experience which he has undergone, Juan now realizes that he must permit Juanito to leave home to study elsewhere, as Juanito has wanted to do:

Juan: Somos cosa vieja. Error, de la cabeza a los pies. Sin arreglo ya ... , salvo el de verlo lo más claro posible ... Yo lo he visto esta tarde, después de mi fracaso, y trato simplemente de que lo veas tú también.

Adela: ¿Para qué?

Juan: No para nosotros, desde luego. Pero si hemos comprendido que ... estamos demasiado mal hechos, es claro que ya de poco podemos valerle [a Juanito] ... Es el mundo quien debe, ahora, educarlo y salvarlo. 136

It is, thus, the clarity, the "light" which Juan has gained which is responsible for the hope with which the tragedy ends—the hope

134Buero, Las cartas boca abajo, p. 82.

135Ibid., p. 77. 136Ibid., p. 79.
that Juanito will be able to avoid the mistakes of his father and to become the success which Juan has failed to become.

Juan, therefore, although he has failed in his attempt to win the catedra, has nevertheless, won an internal victory. For he has succeeded in seeing, at last, both his own cards and those of his wife and he has, moreover, through the knowledge gained, made the decision which has enabled him to recover the love and respect of his son.

For Adela, however, there seems to remain only the possibility of a future of suffering and punishment. For as Mauro says, "Hay algo dentro de nosotros que no nos deja muy tranquilos cuando pisoteamos a los demás. Y entonces sólo queda padecer..." 137

The fear and terror which Adela feels as she faces life alone, forgotten by Ferrer and abandoned by her son, is symbolized by the sound of the birds as they fly by in the afternoon, a sound which now acquires for her a meaning different from the one which it had before:

Mauro: También en eso te equivocas. Hace tiempo ojeé un libro muy curioso... Decía que los pájaros cantan llenos de alegría por la mañana porque el sol sale y les espera una jornada que suponen llena de aventuras deliciosas... Son como nosotros en la

137 Ibid., p. 85.
mañana de nuestra vida: unos aturdidos.
Pero por la tarde no cantan.

Adela: ¿No los oyes?
Mauro: Esos no son cantos: son gritos... Gritan de terror... Todo eso que a ti te parecía un delirio de felicidad es un delirio de miedo... Al cabo del día han tenido tiempo de recordar que están bajo la dura ley del mundo y de la muerte. Y el sol se va, y dudan de que vuelva. Y entonces se buscan y giran enloquecidos, y tratan de aturdirse... Pero ya no lo consiguen. Quieren cantar, y son gritos los que les salen. 138

The tragedy concludes as the terrified screeching of the birds penetrates the room:

Al fin, [Adela] humilla la cabeza bajo el peso de un horror sin nombre.. La algarabía de los pájaros ha llegado a su mayor estridencia y parece invadir la casa entera. 139

But hope is not completely gone even for Adela; because Juanito before leaving has said to his mother:

Escucha cómo cantan. Cada vez que los oigas te acordarás de mí. Quizá un día podamos todos los de esta casa conocer también esa alegría. Yo volveré para intentarlo. 140

This hope, in the light of the interpretation which Mauro has just given to the songs of the birds, can be, of course, cruelly ironic. Las cartas boca abajo, like Hoy es fiesta, thus ends ambivalently, that is, in a question, the purpose of which is to "conmover y

138Ibid., pp. 85-86. 139Ibid., p. 88. 140Ibid., p. 87.
remover al espectador," to interest him in "el insondable dolor humano," which is, for Buero, as we have seen, the aim of all tragedy. 141

Each of the seven tragedies just discussed deals, as we have seen, with man's efforts to achieve satisfactory human relationships. The six works to be discussed next deal mainly with man's efforts to realize his personality, to accomplish something which gives meaning to life, although the struggle to overcome human loneliness is also present as a secondary theme.

Just as the first seven tragedies represent a search for the truth or "light" which will enable man to establish meaningful personal relationships, these six represent a search for the "light" which will enable man to realize himself.

In three of these six tragedies, El terror inmóvil, Historia de una escalera, and El concierto de San Ovidio, this quest for self-realization is individual; whereas in Aventura en lo gris, Un soñador para un pueblo, and Las Meninas, it is not only individual but also collective. For these last three deal with the struggle not only of the individual but also of society.

141 Buero, "Comentario," En la ardiente oscuridad, p. 83.
As we have seen, the first seven tragedies, about the effort to achieve satisfactory personal relationships, deal with what Buero calls "la tensión o el concierto entre ser humano y ser humano" and "la tensión del hombre consigo mismo." These next six, also, deal with "la tensión entre individuo y colectividad," as man struggles to overcome certain obstacles to his self-fulfillment imposed by society, that is, obstacles of an economic or social nature.

In El terror inmóvil it is suggested that one solution to man's fear of the passage of time and of death lies in his accomplishing something worthwhile, something to give meaning to his life. Historia de una escalera and El concierto de San Ovidio deal with this struggle to achieve something worthwhile, that is, with man's struggle to overcome the limitations to his self-fulfillment, with his struggle against "the darkness" to gain "the light." In Historia de una escalera Urbano, and Fernando, who wants to become an engineer, struggle to overcome the economic obstacles imposed by their environment. In El concierto de San Ovidio, David, the beggar who dreams of becoming a real musician, struggles to overcome the physical obstacle of his blindness and the social obstacles imposed by an egoistic society.

This theme of self-fulfillment has been seen, of course, in various of the plays already discussed: in *Hoy es fiesta*, Silverio's failure to become an artist and in *Las cartas boca abajo*, Juan's failure to win a cátedra. In the latter tragedy, moreover, we have the same concern with the passage of time as it seems to accentuate man's failures which will be seen in *El terror inmóvil* and *Historia de una escalera*. In the plays already discussed, however, these themes are secondary; for it is man's failure in the area of personal relationships which causes his failure in his career.

*El terror inmóvil* is a "tragedia irrepresentable" of grotesque tone. 143 *Historia de una escalera* is a realistic tragedy written within a "forma cerrada"; while *El concierto de San Ovidio* is a historical tragedy which, because of its subject matter, requires a "forma abierta."

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**El terror inmóvil**

The major theme of *El terror inmóvil* is the fear which man feels at the passing of time. Alvaro, the protagonist, fears growing old and dying. Physical aging, for him, is an inescapable reminder of the approaching end, of death, of nothingness. Alvaro's one aim in life is to preserve himself; in what Regino, his brother, calls

143 The discussion of *El terror inmóvil* will be limited to the second act, the only one which has been published.
his "empeño en no vivir," he scarcely moves from his chair and rarely speaks. And in his fear, this "hombre de hierro y de miedo" consumes not only himself but also his wife and young son.

Alvaro, in his fear of growing old, opposes any change which reminds him of the passage of time. He is especially opposed to the factory being constructed by his brother, a factory which, he says, is changing the city into a babel of scurrying people and bringing novelties such as American-style bars. This factory, symbolic of change and of progress, occupies a predominant place in the stage setting. And its mass of buildings sparkling in the afternoon sun forms a vivid contrast with the "paralizada vetustez" of Alvaro's sun room, through the windows of which it is seen. The factory with its "aire moderno," is, thus, a daily reminder to Alvaro of the passing years.

Alvaro is also opposed to photographs, which are a similar reminder. The single incident around which the act is constructed has to do with a photograph which the aunt and uncle have taken of Alvaro's son Víctor in defiance of the father's strict orders. Photographs show the passage of time. They represent, moreover, man's tendency to "give himself" rather than to "preserve himself."
Alvaro has forbidden the picture of his son which his poor wife so desperately wants for her empty scrapbook entitled "Víctor." And when he finally finds the picture, which his wife has hidden, he tears it up, his face contracted in "un paroxismo de ira y angustia," despite the pleas of his son, who begs, "¡No papá! ¡No me rompas!" The anguish which Alvaro feels at the passage of time is often shown by the grotesque distortions of his face; such as the "paroxismo de ira" mentioned above, his "ojos desorbitados," "náusea del pánico," "sonrisa ultrajante," etc.

A solution to this fear of death, suggests Regino, Alvaro's brother, lies in man's achieving something worthwhile, that is, in his accomplishments. (Lack of constructive endeavor was, we have seen, the cause of the unhappiness of Enrique in La señal que se espera.) All men fear growing old, Regino admits. But there is joy in certain changes. In the factory, which Regino is building, for example, he sees the fulfillment of his destiny. Every stone represents a triumph. Man grows old but he gives his life to nourish new generations. This is his consolation:

Á todos nos duele pasar ... y envejecer.... Pero mi vida está allí, en aquellas moles de la fábrica, la he dado espléndidamente. Y ese es el mejor consuelo.... Cada piedra de esos edificios representa un minuto de reflexión y de trabajo, y de alegría.... La vida inunda ya sus naves, y por las mañanas, las sirenas de los pabellones abiertos llaman a miles de obreros ... La ciudad crece, se desarrolla, cambia ....
Envejecemos... ¡Pero damos nuestra vida, nutrimos nuevas generaciones!... Muy pronto habré cumplido mi tarea. Los últimos pabellones se inauguran, y todas las sirenas de la fábrica cantarán juntas el triunfo... Mi triunfo...

Regino has thus won the struggle with which tragedy deals: the struggle to realize one’s personality and to find meaning in life. For, as we have seen, even in tragedy, according to Buero, man is not denied the possibility of victory.

Unable to have a son of his own, Regino has, moreover, practically adopted Víctor, Alvaro’s son, educating him and molding him, just as he has molded the factory. His wife expresses this when she says to him: “Tú lo has hecho [a Víctor] con tus costumbres pacientes de ingeniero, como has hecho la fábrica.” Regino’s triumph, thus, has been double.

Alvaro, on the other hand, has accomplished nothing. He has not written the book which he planned in his youth, he has rejected the position offered him at the factory, and he has neglected his son. Regino once says to Alvaro that on the inauguration of the factory they will take Víctor, perhaps the plant’s future engineer, to the ceremonies and that they will both

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144Buero, El terror inmóvil; fragmentos de una tragedia irrepresentable, in Número 100 (Ediciones Alfil, 1954), pp. 34-35.

145Ibid., p. 32.
be able to rest then in the realization of their accomplishments:

Ese día, tu hijo, que ha crecido con la fábrica, y que será mañana su ingeniero, irá a la inauguración ... Y tú, mi pobre hermano, me pedirás que lo retrate, y yo lo haré, y podemos darnos un gran abrazo por lo que ambos dejamos en el mundo ... y podremos dormir en paz. 146

But as Alvaro hears these words he feels only terror; for Víctor is Regino's contribution more than his own.

In El terror inmóvil we see the two attitudes which man can adopt with respect to time; he can "give himself" or "preserve himself." Regino exemplifies the first attitude. Man's "consuelo," he has said, consists in "giving himself," in nourishing new generations. And that Regino has "given himself," that is, that he has "lived," is seen in the fact that his hair is grey, while that of Alvaro, who has "preserved himself," is "completamente negro."

This symbolism is seen, also, in the cases of the two women. The hair of Alvaro's wife, who has borne a child, that is, who has "given herself," is grey. That of Regino's wife, who has not been able to have the child she wants, is black. She says to her husband on one occasion: "Tienes el pelo gris ... Porque has vivido ... Pero yo lo hago todos los días, lo estoy pariendo

146Ibid., p. 35.
[a mi hijo] a todas horas ... ¡sin acabar de parirlo! ¡Y por eso tengo el pelo negro, negro como una llama oscura que pugna por elevarse y no puede!... 147

Regino and the wife of Alvaro, through their accomplishments, have triumphed. But Alvaro and the wife of Regino have failed, the latter due to an obstacle imposed by an inscrutable destiny but the former due to his own blindness. Alvaro's errors, moreover, have destroyed the happiness of his wife, whose entire life with him has been, like her empty scrapbook, "una ridícula parodia." The act, however, concludes with hope. Just as Las cartas boca abajo ends with the hope that Juanito will be able to avoid the mistakes of Juan, El terror inmóvil ends with the hope that Víctor will be able to succeed where Alvaro has failed. For Víctor's mother believes that the new factory will mean a good future for their son.

Historia de una escalera

In Historia de una escalera we see man torn between his limitations and his dreams of self-fulfillment. Fernando and Urbano, tenants of a modest "casa de vecindad," long to "subir," to rise above the sordidness of their environment. Fernando, 147

147 Ibid., p. 32.
a young clerk, dreams of a brilliant engineering career. His
hopes for happiness are seen in his conversation with Carmina,
a young girl who lives in the same apartment house, at the end of
the first act:

Fernando: Desde mañana voy a trabajar de firme
por ti. Quiero salir de esta pobreza,
de este sucio ambiente ... Acabar con
la angustia del dinero escaso ... . Voy
a estudiar mucho ... Primero me haré
delineante ... Estudiaré para aparejador.
Por entonces tú serás ya mi mujercita,
y viviremos en otro barrio, en un piso
limpio y tranquilo. Yo seguiré estudiando
... Puede que para entonces me haga
ingeniero ...

Carmina: ¡Qué felices seremos!

Fernando, however, due to his lack of will power, never quite
brings himself to begin this career and, although he still loves
Carmina, marries Elvira, another neighbor, for her father's
money.

Urbano, a worker who inhabits the same apartment house,
also has dreams of advancement which are never realized. These
dreams are seen in his conversation with Carmina, who finally
marries him in order to solve the financial difficulties of her
family, although she does not love him:

Urbano: Si tú me aceptas, yo subiré. Subiré,
sí1 ¡Porque cuando te tenga a mi lado,

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148 Buero, Historia de una escalera in Teatro español 1949-
50, ed. Sáinz de Robles (Madrid, 1951), p. 117.
me sentiré lleno de energías para trabajar! ¡Para trabajar por ti! Y me perfeccionaré en la mecánica y ganaré más. 149

The hopes and failures of Fernando and Urbano are seen against the background of the unhappiness and poverty of the members of four families which occupy adjacent apartments in the building. Their lives are shown at three successive stages, 1919, 1929, and 1949, corresponding to the three acts of the tragedy. In the course of these years most of the old generation die and are replaced by a third generation, children of the central characters, who have the same hopes as their parents once had. At the end of the tragedy, Fernando, the son, in a conversation reminiscent of the earlier one of his father, describes to Carmina, the daughter, his dreams for the future.

The important role of time in this tragedy is emphasized by the setting, the stairway where the tenants meet. As the years pass this stairway remains practically the same, "pobre y sucia," reminding the tenants of their hopes and failures, of the changelessness of their lives. It symbolizes the "vida rutinaria y mediocre" 150 which remains their fate. The preoccupation of

149 Ibid., p. 125.

the characters with the stairway is similar to the concern of Juan in *Las cartas boca abajo* with the crumbling cornice and the cracks which remind him of the changelessness of his fate, of his failure to succeed, as time passes. "¡Qué vieja estoy!"
says Paca, one of the tenants, caressing its worn railing, "Tan vieja como tú." 151

The anguish experienced by the tenants at the passing of time is quite similar to that felt by Juan in *Las cartas* . . . and also by Regino in *El terror inmóvil*. This anguish is most clearly expressed in the following speech of Fernando early in the tragedy:

¡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 . . . Hemos crecido . . . subiendo y bajando la escalera . . . Buscando mil recursos y soportando humillaciones para pagar la casa, la luz . . . y las patatas. Y mañana o dentro de diez años que pueden pasar como un día, como han pasado estos últimos . . . ¡sería terrible seguir así! Subiendo y bajando la escalera, una escalera que no conduce a ningún sitio; haciendo trampas en el contador, aborreciendo el trabajo . . . , perdiendo día tras día. 152

And at the end of the tragedy Fernando, like Urbano and the other tenants who "se han dejado vencer por la vida," is still "amarrado a esta escalera."

151 Buero, *Historia de una escalera*, p. 132.

Arturo del Hoyo has aptly described this tragedy, which spans thirty years, as the "dramatización del hombre entero ... de hombres completos, clavados en su existencia," stressing the fact that Buero presents "la totalidad" of their existence, rather than a single moment of it. The "sentido trágico" of the tragedy thus comes from

la quietud ... de la vida, la señalada quietud de la escalera, la identidad de los tramos del existir, la filiación del hombre, su ahijamiento, su anclaje en la existencia.... Pues la vida, si lo es, si es existencia, tiene echada su anclaje en el puerto de lo trágico.... Y los hombres de Buero, porque lo son, están anclados en aquella escalera de casa de vecinos.... 153

Historia de una escalera. Buero has commented, "se desenvuelve dentro de una línea de preocupación por el tiempo y el espacio como límites del hombre," a concern quite characteristic of the contemporary theater. 154 The stairway in which the tragedy of all the tenants seems centered, emphasizes not only time, but also space, that is, environment, as a limitation to man's self-realization. The stairway with no exit at the top and with no horizon in view is, like the small room in which Las cartas

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boca abajo takes place, an oppressing, asphyxiating atmosphere.

All of the action takes place on the stairway and on the two landings visible to the spectator. Several critics have commented upon the skillful stage technique of Buero in this play. Marquerié has spoken of the "sobriedad de arquitectura" of the tragedy, which comes from the way in which the presence of the characters is justified at each moment. Another critic speaks of Buero's "carpentería teatral," stating that the tragedy produces the impression of "un ser vertebrado. Hueso, duro hueso, que esconde sustancioso meollo."156

This stairway, which, as we have said, represents time and space as limitations of man, does not, however, in itself, cause the failure of the characters. The stairway does not "imprison the characters," "prevent them from escaping," or "bring them only failure and disappointment," as has often been stated. The stairway merely represents the obstacle of time and the obstacles of an economic and social nature imposed by the environment of the characters. It is the lack of character of the

155 Marquerié, Rev. of Historia de una escalera, from ABC, reprinted in Teatro español 1949-50, p. 95.

tenants themselves which prevents them from overcoming these obstacles. In *Historia de una escalera* there is emphasized the idea of man's freedom and his responsibility, an idea present in all of Buero's theater. The characters' fate is, to a large extent, of their own making.

Fernando, who has plans to become an engineer, "no hace más que leer y pensar, siempre tumbado en la cama, pensando en sus proyectos," and writing poetry. He always plans to begin working "desde mañana." Urbano points this out to him: "¿Por qué no lo has hecho desde ayer, o desde hace un mes? Porque no puedes. Porque eres un soñador. ¡Y un gandul!" Fernando is a dreamer without the will power to develop his potential. He is therefore defeated by his environment. And in the end he takes the cowardly way out, marrying Elvira for her money. Carmina says to him during the violent quarrel into which all the pent-up resentments of the characters burst at the end of the tragedy: "¡Has sido cobarde toda la vida! Lo has sido para las cosas más insignificantes ... y para las más importantes.... ¡Te asustaste como una gallina cuando hacía falta ser un gallo con cresta y espolones!" 157

157Buero, *Historia de una escalera*, p. 144.
Fernando, however, to the end, considers himself a "victima," never realizing that his own egoism and moral blindness have been responsible for his failure both to realize himself and to establish a meaningful relationship with his wife, that is, for his failure in both his career and his marriage, or that his cowardice in marrying Elvira has been the cause of the unhappiness of both Urbano and Carmina.

Urbano, unlike Fernando, has few dreams. He has little hope of bettering himself. And his failure is due to his lack of confidence in himself, that is, his lack of confidence in his ability to make his own destiny. He believes in the inexorability of fate instead of in his own ability to change it: "Sé que no soy más que un obrero. No tengo cultura ni puedo aspirar a ser nada importante... Así es mejor. Así no tendré que sufrir ninguna decepción, como otros sufren." And he refers to himself as a "pobre diablo" who will never go far in life. But dreams are necessary. Urbano fails because of his lack of self-confidence, just as Fernando fails because of his lack of will power. The failure of both is justified. They are victims more of their own blindness than of their environment.

158Ibid., p. 125.
One critic of the tragedy has spoken of the characters as "muñecos ante la obsesionante voluntad superior de la escalera." The characters fail to rebel against their limitations: "quieren vivir y superarse, saltar los escalones y posarse en otras márgenes, pero temen enfrentarse con los nuevos problemas, inertes y cobardes naufragos entre lo que les envuelve."  

The tragedy ends as Fernando, the son, tells Carmina, the daughter, of his dreams for their future, using almost the same words that his father used thirty years ago. This conclusion in which the parents, gazing at each other with melancholy across the stairwell, experience the return of the past in the words of their children is quite reminiscent of Azorín. 

The ending, however, does not close the door on hope. This "'ritornello' de las palabras de los padres en los hijos no prejuzga nada," Buero has commented. "Es el vago alerta que nos da a veces la repetición de las cosas humanas. Quizá los hijos se salven del fracaso de los mayores o--tal vez--fracasen también," The author himself does not know. The tragedy thus concludes in a question, leaving, as Buero has said, "en carne viva el escorzo trágico de las vidas en la escalera."  


The repetition of the parents' mistakes by their children is, a probability, due to their lack of character and due to the environment in which they have grown up. But adverse destiny, Buero has said, although it may be a probability of man, "un grave peligro relacionado con sus torpezas y limitaciones," is never a certainty. The tragedy, therefore, ends with the hope that the children will be able to free themselves from their blindness.

**El concierto de San Ovidio**

David, the protagonist of *El concierto de San Ovidio*, is, like Fernando, a dreamer. Unlike Fernando, however, David has the will power to struggle to realize his dreams. His struggle represents, Buero has said, "una sana rebeldía contra nuestras limitaciones que plantea la posibilidad de superarlas." 162

Whereas the limitations to self-realization which Fernando faces are of a social and economic nature, those of David are physical. David, a beggar of the Hospice des Quinze-Vingts in Paris, is blind. David's blindness represents the obstacle to self-realization which, in one form or another, most men encounter at some time. For the tragedy deals with the problem

161Quoted by Schevill, p. 54.

of all men, not only the blind. In explaining why the theme of blindness is so important in his theater, Buero has said that "la ceguera es una limitación del hombre, algo que se opone a su libre desarrollo." It represents, therefore, very clearly, "el fondo de cualquier problema trágico que es siempre ... el de la lucha del hombre, con sus limitaciones, por su libertad." 163

David's desire to overcome his blindness is never expressed clearly or logically, but poetically, by means of the legend of Melania de Salignac, the beautiful blind lady who can read, and with whose image he is secretly in love. She has become his ideal: "Para ella hablo ... Y a ella es a quien busco ... A esa ciega, que comprendería." 164 And it is of Melania that he dreams when he plays on his violin the "Adagio" from the "Concerto grosso in G minor" of Corelli. This music, repeated several times during the tragedy, becomes symbolic of David's vague yearnings. The greatness of David (probably Buero's most complex character) comes from the fact that he remains slightly mysterious to the end. 165

163 Ibid.


The means of carrying out his aspiration is, however, quite clear: "Yo tengo que tocar." David, who plays the violin as he begs, has the innate ability to become a real musician. This, for him, would be a means of conquering his blindness, of reaching the light. And it becomes the fundamental object of his life. As one critic has stated it, "quiere ser lo que su alma es y que un destino adverso le ha impedido convertir en realidad." 166

Therefore, when Valindin, an impresario, offers to hire six of the beggars from the Hospice to play during the fair of Saint Ovid, David wants to take advantage of this opportunity so that he and his companions may learn to become real musicians and thus overcome their degradation. Although the other beggars do not believe that they can learn to harmonize without being able to read the scores, David believes that it can be done; for he is a man of immense faith. "¡Puede hacerse, hermanos! Cada cual aprenderá su parte, y habrá orquesta de ciegos... Hay que convencer a los que ven de que somos hombres como ellos, no animales enfermos." 167

Valindin, however, it turns out, has no intention of having the beggars taught to play different parts. He wants to use them as a

166 Rafael Vázquez Zamora, "En el Goya, los trágicos ciegos de Buero Vallejo," Insula, XVIII, No. 193 (December, 1962), 16.

167 Buero, El concierto de San Ovidio, p. 19.
ridiculous spectacle for the amusement of the populace, to convert them into "payasos." And the worse they play the better. When this becomes apparent, David wants to break the contract, even at the risk of being imprisoned. However, when Valindin threatens Donato, a young beggar from the Hospice, whom David considers the son whom he has never had, he agrees to remain—to "servir de escarnio a los papanatas."

Not all of the beggars, however, share the resentment of David. "Valindin nos ha atrapado. Pero si no lo hace él, lo habría hecho otro. Estamos para eso," states Nazario, a typical "pícaro de ferias" whose only desires are "comer y folgar." He is the fatalist who has accepted and adjusted to his limitations and who, moreover, is relatively happy. David, on the other hand, is a "negador de las ilusiones confortables." He cannot understand this type of fiction, of hypocrisy, of "alegre negación de la realidad." "Estáis muertos y no lo sabéis. Cobardes," he says to his companions. David's attitude is that of Ignacio in En la ardiente oscuridad: "No debemos conformarnos. Y menos

168Vázquez Zamora, "En el Goya . . .," Insula, XVIII, No. 193 (December, 1962), 16.
169Ibid.
sonreír! Y resignarse con vuestra estúpida alegría de ciegos, nunca!

Buero's David, like that other musician, the Biblical David, is a rebel. He refuses to "cerrar los ojos ante el hecho imperdonable de la ceguera," which he feels "Dios no puede haber querido." For to do so would be to "perder lo más noble de la condición humana." The rebellion of David, however, is against not only his blindness but also the attitude of a society which considers the blind objects of diversion.

*El concierto de San Ovidio* is based upon a historical event. In 1771, at the annual fair of Saint Ovid, an unscrupulous innkeeper had a group of blind beggars from the Hospice des Quinze-Vingts, dressed in dunces' caps, asses' ears, and pasteboard spectacles, give a burlesque concert for the amusement of the bourgeois. It is this episode around which Buero's tragedy is constructed. This farcical concert with the brilliantly colored robes, the enormous painted peacock (the symbol of stupidity) in the center of the stage,


171Vázquez Zamora, "En el Goya . . .," *Insula*, XVIII, No. 193, 16.


173Vázquez Zamora, "En el Goya . . .," *Insula*, XVIII, No. 193, 16.
the grotesque gestures of the players, and the "viva y machacona" music played "a toda fuerza ... con mecánica precisión sin el menor sentimiento" is doubtlessly very effective on the stage.

Vázquez Zamora has stated that "con él ha dado Buero Vallejo una prueba más de su magistral sentido de lo que es, plásticamente, el teatro." 174

Valindin, the empresario, justifies this "número circense" as follows: "Soy filántropo. Yo los redimo [a los ciegos], los enseño a vivir ... Van a ser aplaudidos, van a ganar su pan. Hacer el bien es bello." 175 To David's objections, Valindin replies that to be "payasos" is better than to be "muertos de hambre y orgullo." 176 It is this false sort of charity against which David rebels.

David, unlike Fernando, is a man of tremendous will power, and he struggles until the end both to force Valindin to let them attempt to harmonize during the rest of the year during which they are under contract and to convince his companions that his dreams are possible. For David, "todo es querer." His will

174 Ibid.
175 Buero, El concierto de San Ovidio, p. 25.
176 Ibid., p. 62.
power is seen clearly in the following words to his companions:

¡Hay que querer! ¡Hay que decirle si al violín!... Me creéis un iluso porque os hable de Melania. Pero tú sabes, Nazario, que con mi garrote de ciego te he acertado en la nuca cuando he querido... ¿Y sabes por qué? ¡Porque se me rieron de mozo, cuando quise defenderme a palos de las burlas de unos truhanes! Me empeñé en que mi garrote llegaría a ser para mí como un ojo. Y lo he logrado. ¡Hermanos, empeñémonos todos en que nuestros violines canten juntos y lo logremos! ¡Todo es querer! Y si no lo queréis, resignaos como mujerzuelas a esta muerte en vida que nos aplasta. 177

David, who rebels against the "tinieblas" to reach the light, is a man of action and energy, who, like Ignacio, brings "guerra, y no paz" to his companions. 178 David's efforts, however, are useless, for the other beggars lack his will power as well as his faith.

David's rebellion culminates, near the end of the tragedy, in the murder of Valindin. Because of Valindin David has lost his chance to become a real violinist and may possibly lose his physical liberty if Valindin obtains the lettre de cachet of which he has spoken. Valindin has, moreover, just beaten Adriana, a former prostitute and his present mistress. Adriana, who

177Ibid., p. 21.

178Buero, En la ardiente oscuridad, p. 49.
understands the suffering of the beggars, since she herself has suffered much, has fallen in love with David, and he with her. In her David has found a woman "de carne y hueso" to take the place of the unreal Melania. And Adriana, out of her love for David, has attempted to cure Donato—who knows he is physically repulsive with his pock marked face—of his fear of women; and Valindin, finding them together, beats both despite David's efforts to prevent it.

It is immediately after this incident that David secretly takes the key to Valindin's cafe from Adriana's jewel box. That night David goes to the cafe where Valindin is alone and, after putting out the lantern, kills him with his cane. The murder of Valindin which takes place in the total darkness is, as one critic has stated, "un formidable acierto teatral." And it has been anticipated in several statements, such as that of Nazario, "¡Si pudiese, les reventaba los ojos a todos! Pero ¿cómo? Sólo en la oscuridad podríamos con ellos, y el mundo está lleno de luz. Hasta por las noches hay luna," and that of Bernier, Valindin's carpenter, "Esta noche no hay luna."

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179 Vázquez Zamora, "En el Goya . . .," Insula, XVIII, No. 193, 16.

180 Buero, El concierto de San Ovidio, p. 87.
The motivation behind David's murder of Valindin is not univocal. David kills Valindin as much because of his frustrated love for Adriana as because of his frustrated dreams of becoming a musician. And his repentance is seen only when he tells Adriana that Valindin really loved her, despite his cruelty to her. For her name was the last word Valindin pronounced before dying.

In connection with a very similar situation in another tragedy of his, Buero has commented: "Es constante humano mezclar de forma inseparable la lucha por los ideales con la lucha por nuestros egoismos." This "ganga impura," however, he says, "no rebaja, sino que encandece [la] vocación espiritual," since it comes from "el impulso nobilísimo de superar [la] soledad humana." 181

As the result of his crime, David is hanged. For he is betrayed by Donato. At the moment when David has decided to leave Paris with Adriana, who wants to bear with him the burden of the crime which he will never be able to forget, Donato, who has just understood that it is David whom Adriana really loves, tells the police that he heard David take the key to the café.

David has lost in the struggle to free himself from his limitations; and, although he still believes in his dreams, his

181Buero, "Comentario," En la ardiente oscuridad, p.84.
discouragement is evident, as is seen in the following conversation with Adriana shortly before his betrayal:

David: ¡He matado, Adriana! Yo quería ser músico. Y, no era más que un asesino. Me siento vacío. Todo ha sido... una pesadilla. Sólo sé que no veo, que nunca veré... Y que moriré.

Adriana: Nuestros hijos verán...

David: ¡Pero lo que yo quería puede hacerse, Adriana! ¡Yo sé que puede hacerse! 182 ¡Los ciegos leerán, los ciegos aprenderán a tocar los más bellos conciertos!

Adriana: (Llorando) Otros lo harán.

David: (Muy triste) Sí. Otros lo harán. 183

David, himself, goes down to external defeat. Nevertheless, his dreams live on in the people whom he has influenced: in Adriana who considers him, despite his blindness, the only real man she has ever known; in Donato, who years later walks alone

182 The part of the text within brackets was omitted during the performances due to the traditional two hour time limit in Spain. In the preface to his version of Hamlet, Buero protests this "ridícula presión que ejerce el horario teatral sobre la duración de nuestros espectáculos." In a "nota" to Las Meninas, he states: "Creo hace tiempo en la necesidad de dar a nuestras obras mayor duración que la muy escueta a que el régimen de dobles representaciones los fuerza... Los cortes restituidos representan un paso en el acercamiento a la duración del espectáculo en los teatros del mundo, que añado al que, premeditadamente, doy ya prolongando un tanto la medida habitual del texto representado." Buero's more recent tragedies (Aventura en lo gris, Las Meninas, and El concierto...), all examples of a "técnica libre," are substantially longer than his earlier ones.

183 Buero, El concierto de San Ovidio, p. 108.
through the streets playing only the "Adagio" of Corelli; and most
of all in Valentin Haiiy, who, moved by the sad spectacle in
Valindin's cafe, devotes his life to devising systems to enable
the blind to read.

Historically, Haiiy, the inventor of braille, was among
those who witnessed the concert by the beggars from the Hospice
in 1771. He is reported to have left the scene full of sorrow and
to have said:

Convertiré en verdad esta ridícula farsa. Yo haré leer
a los ciegos; pondré en sus manos libros que ellos
mismos habrán impreso. Trazarán los signos y leerán
su propia escritura. Finalmente, les haré ejecutar
conciertos armoniosos."184

In Buero's tragedy we see Haiiy, as a youth, at the concert.
Then, in the very last scene, thirty years later, we see him again
as an old man. He reminisces about the concert and its effect
upon his own life, as the "Adagio" of Corelli, played by Donato,
is heard in the background:

Ante el insulto inferido a aquellos desdichados,
comprendí que mi vida tenía un sentido. Yo era un
desconocido sin relieve ... amante de la música.
Nadie. Pero el hombre más oscuro puede mover
montañas si lo quiere. 185

Hauy's efforts have made David's dreams come true. The
tragic events which the play has depicted have thus resulted in

184ibid., p. 112. 185ibid.
man's reaching the light. They have led to man's triumph over one of the obstacles to his self-realization. El concierto de San Ovidio thus ends with the explicit idea of hope, not for David and his companions, but for future generations.

The three tragedies just discussed have dealt with the struggle of the individual for self-realization. The next three, Aventura en lo gris, Un soñador para un pueblo, and Las Meninas, however, deal with the struggle, not only of the individual, that is, of the protagonist, but also of society. In these tragedies the protagonists' aim in life is to bring light to society, a society in collective blindness, that is, full of war, social injustice, and moral decadence. These tragedies constitute a search for the "light" which will permit society, as well as the individual to overcome their limitations.

By means of fantasy in one tragedy and by means of a return to a historical past full of meaning for the present in the other two, Buero deals with problems very characteristic of contemporary Spain as well as of man and society in general. In Aventura en lo gris he advocates understanding and love as the only means of reconciling different groups of people in conflict. In Un soñador para un pueblo and Las Meninas the liberal ideology of Buero is obvious, although the tragedies are not
thesis plays. In these two works, Buero, like Galdós in many of his novels and plays, advocates liberty and justice as the only basis for harmony among men.

Sergio Nerva has spoken of "el buerismo" as "una busca del amor, de la fe, de la justicia y, en resumen, de la paz. O, si se prefiere, de la verdad." He has also defined "el buerismo" as "una manera de ser y de entender los problemas de nuestro tiempo ... una manera de combatir en favor de un mundo mejor, donde no sea posible la injusticia y donde el hombre, liberado de su angustia vital ... avance, confiado y seguro, en busca de la perfección común." Buero himself has recently stated that his tragedies have been written out of "el amor a la verdad y la libertad del hombre." And he has described one tragedy in this group, Aventura en lo gris, as "un grito más ... en favor del hombre y de su dolorida humanidad siempre en peligro y tantas veces pisoteada."

Silvano, the history professor of Aventura en lo gris, when his country has just lost a sordid war, dreams of peace and

186 Sergio Nerva, Rev. of Las cartas boca abajo, from España (Tangiers), reprinted in Sáinz de Robles (ed.), Teatro español 1957-58 (Madrid, 1959), pp. 3-5.


sacrifices his life for a child in whom the two enemy bloods may embrace, a child symbolic of his hope for the future. Esquilache, in Un soñador para un pueblo, who is an advocate of the Enlightenment, strives to "curar la terca ceguera del país," to "llevar luz a un pueblo en agonía," a light symbolized by the lanterns which he has installed in the streets of Madrid. Velázquez, in Las Meninas, struggles to "declarar la verdad," to paint the moral blindness of the society of his time, the social injustice and the human grief, but most of all the pretense and hypocrisy.

In technique, Aventura en lo gris is a fantasy with a "técnica libre." Due to the historical nature of the subject matter of these two plays, Buero finds it necessary to abandon theunities of time and of place. Nevertheless, he avoids dividing the plays into a great number of short scenes and thus preserves the continuity and fluidity of the action.

Aventura en lo gris

Silvano in Aventura en lo gris is, like Fernando and David, a dreamer. In this tragedy we see the same contrast between man's limitations and his longings, between "darkness" and "light," which we have seen in the preceding two tragedies. Whereas the dreams of Fernando, however, involve only himself
and those of David involve only a part of society (the blind),
Silvano's dreams involve society in general.

In Aventura en lo gris the sordid grey reality of a country
just defeated in war and overrun by enemy soldiers with machine
guns is contrasted with Silvano's dreams of a land of peace
inhabited by beings similar to angels without wings, who eternally
smile:

Hay un sueño que se repite con frecuencia. . . . Me
encuentro en un campo inmenso y verde inundado
de agua tranquila. A mi lado pasan seres muy
bello que sonríen. Matronas arrogantes, muchachas
y muchachos llenos de majestad, ancianos de melena
plateada y niños de cabellera de ámbar. Son todos
como ángeles sin alas. 189

The tragedy takes place at a government shelter for refugees
in the frontier zone of Surelia, an imaginary European country.
In this dilapidated shelter of "pardas y deslucidas maderas" and
"paredes grises," there is large red poster with the blue and
white figure of a military leader and the words, "Goldmann nos
dice: combatientes de Surelia: ¡Ni un paso atrás!"

Refugees awaiting a train in order to flee include Silvano,
a history professor discharged by the government as a defeatist;
Alejandro, really Goldmann, the leader of the government party,

in disguise; Ana, his secretary and mistress; Isabel, a peasant
girl; her baby born as the result of a violation by an enemy
soldier; Carlos, Isabel's friend and a government soldier; a
sergeant who has deserted; Georgina, a wealthy and arrogant
woman; and an avaricious farmer who refuses to share his bread
with the others.

In Silvano and Goldmann we have a contrast between the
dreamer and the man of action. Silvano has been accused of
advocating surrender and has been relieved of his professorship.
Actually all Silvano has done has been to show the hypocrisy of
the government, which was already preparing for surrender, and
to clarify the real causes of the war, showing that neither side
was entirely right or wrong. Silvano's attitude is that of Juan in
Las cartas boca abajo, who, when speaking of the strife within
his family, says, "todos somos muy inocentes y muy culpables,"
and that of Julián in La señal que se espera, who suggests that
"tal vez tengamos todos que perdonarnos los unos a los otros."191

Silvano, however, is not certain that the position which he
took was the right one: "Yo soy un hombre de dudas, no de
seguridades. ¿Cree que no me he preguntado muchas veces si

190 Buero, Las cartas boca abajo, p. 82.
191 Buero, La señal que se espera, p. 56.
hice bien o mal? . . . Quizá eran verdades inoportunas, peligrosas. . . . Los pueblos necesitan a menudo de la mentira para seguir luchando. ¿Hice mal? ¿Hice bien? Eso lo aclararán acaso los historiadores: mis compañeros del futuro. Ahora nadie podría decirlo; ni Goldmann, que me echó a las fieras, pero que tal vez mañana sea juzgado más duramente que yo."

Nevertheless Silvano hopes to be able to prove to himself that it is he who is more useful to his country, and not Goldmann, who has left behind him a trail of dead comrades and violated women and who is, moreover, now fleeing, even though he once promised to remain, if defeated, and lead the guerrillas:

Silvano: Antes éramos el profesor y el dictador: dos personajes en la farsa del país. [Y todavía no sabemos quién le fue más útil y quién más pernicioso] . . . . [Pero aquí somos hombres, y nada más! . . . . Y aquí podré quizá demostrarte, y demostrarme a mí mismo, que usted no vale nada a mi lado. [Aquí se podrá ver quién cumple mejor ese juramento de abnegación de su partido . . . . , que yo no he prestado.] [Y ahora, mátame, si se atreve] Si lo hace, ya no hará falta otra demostración.

Goldmann: ¡Pobre soñador! Usted está deseando morir, pero no voy a darle ese gusto. Yo no soy un asesino.

192Buero, Aventura en lo gris, pp. 30-31. Words within brackets were omitted during performances due to requirements of time.
Silvano: Habría que saber lo que dirían muchos miles de compatriotas muertos. Pero eso también ha quedado atrás. Ahora es usted ya, por lo menos, un egoísta.

Silvano: ¿Y usted, ¿cómo sabe que no lo es?
Usted no tiene nada que repartir.

Goldmann: Exacto. De mí, todavía no lo sabemos. De usted lo sabemos ya. Empiezo a vencerle. 193

And later, when Ana, who believes that Goldmann will kill Silvano since the latter has discovered his identity, urges Silvano to flee, Silvano speaks of "una partida emprendida" months ago between Goldmann and himself, which he hopes to win.

Shortly before all retire for the night, Silvano speaks of his dreams of a land of peace and of the significance which he attaches to dreams in general. Whereas Goldmann, the man of action who never dreams, believes that "soñar es faena de mujeres . . . , o de contemplativos," Silvano believes that it is necessary to learn to dream in order to learn to live as one ought to:

Aprender a soñar sería aprender a vivir. Todos soñamos con nuestros inconfesables apetitos y soltamos durante la noche a la fiera que nos posee. Pero si aprendiésemos.

......................

193 ibid., pp. 53-54.
... ¿Soñamos mal porque nos portamos mal durante el día, o procedemos mal en la vida porque no sabemos soñar bien? ... Quizá son ciertas las dos cosas. Pero entonces, también hay que aprender a soñar. 194

Silvano suggests, furthermore, that if men could dream the same dream, perhaps there would one day be peace:

¿Y si las personas que se tratan entre sí empezaran a soñar con frecuencia un mismo sueño? ... No es imposible.... Los sueños serían entonces como una prolongación de la vida, pero más desnuda, más impresionante: [soñaríamos lo mismo, y el choque de nuestros egoísmos los haría irrealizables. Nos veríamos tal como somos por dentro y quizá al despertar no podríamos seguir fingiendo. Tendríamos que mejorar a la fuerza. 195

Action, Silverio suggests, is of no use unless men can be led by their dreams: "De poco servirá actuar en comisiones, y gobiernillos, y congresos, si nuestros sueños reconciliados no nos conducen." 196

That night the marvel of which Silvano has spoken actually happens; all except Goldmann have a common dream, although only Silvano and Ana are permitted to understand that this mystery has taken place. During this dream we see the characters as they really are. For as Silvano has stated, "en el sueño es donde tocamos nuestro fondo más verdadero. En el sueño, y no en la vida!"

194Ibid., pp. 44-45, 195Ibid., p. 45. 196Ibid., p. 97.
During this dream which joins the two acts of the fantasy, the setting is transfigured. Against a background of indistinct walls and of windows through which submarine life is visible, is "un raro montículo, de aristas ... en el que destellan algunos írisiados tonos minerales." Slowly "una luz cenital blanca y fría" illuminates the mound revealing the figure of Silvano seated on high dreaming. Ana, dressed in a nurse's uniform enters, also dreaming, and begs Silvano to descend from his height, explaining to him how Goldmann has destroyed her and how she needs someone to whom to give her love:

Sus hombros [de Goldmann] son rojos. Chorrean rojo. Es un hombre de acción. ... El nunca sueña. Lo devora todo. Me ha devorado. ... El nunca da. ... Baja y te daré mis sueños. El nunca los ha tenido. Si bajas te los doy. ¡Baja! ... Las enfermeras dan. Yo quiero dar. 197

Silvano urges Ana to ascend to him; but she cannot: "Ahi arriba hace frío." Throughout the dream the hands of the two reach for each others' and finally clasp just before the end.

The avaricious farmer appears as a rich man who guards his golden bread in his sack and caresses it from time to time; and the sergeant, as a hero who believes he is Goldmann. When the sergeant decides to distribute the farmer's bread, everyone

197Ibid., pp. 61-62.
in the dream except Isabel, and Silvano, who remains on the mound, argue about how it is to be divided. Bread, which as Silvano notes, should be a promise of peace, abundance, and love, thus becomes a ferment of hatred: "El pan debiera ser la paz... Y se convierte en guerra. Esa es la historia." The smiling angels without wings, moreover, of which Silvano has dreamed before, now become enemy soldiers whose faces appear at the windows "con ojos burlones y amenazantes" and comment upon how the refugees argue: "Riñen por el pan. Riñen por todo. Cada cual va a lo suyo. Perderán la guerra. Caeremos sobre ellos como una lluvia de fuego." 198

Shortly after this quarrel Isabel enters as if fleeing from someone invisible and screams that she is being violated once more: "¡Mi niño nace otra vez!" Carlos then accuses her of fleeing from him in order to torment him. For Carlos, who loves Isabel, has suffered much because she has insisted upon considering him a protector and a brother instead of a man like other men. Then, encouraged by Georgina, who offers him what Isabel cannot, Carlos puts his hands to the neck of Isabel as if to strangle her; and slowly Isabel falls to the floor although Carlos' hands have not quite touched her. The dream ends as

198 Ibid., p. 70.
Silvano descends from the mound to contemplate the body of Isabel: "Cándido pan cercado de apetitos. También a ti te ha devorado la guerra."

The second act brings a return to reality, as the pale light of dawn enters through the windows of the shelter. Everything is the same as it was the night before except that Isabel is dead. Carlos, who has been mentally ill, confuses his dream with reality, insisting that he must have killed her. But Silvano proves that the murderer could have been only Goldmann, 

"un hombre sin escrúpulos, acostumbrado a coger a su paso el dinero, el lujo y las mujeres; un engreído, muy seguro de sus dotes de seducción, a pesar del horror de la muchacha por los hombres; un aprovechado que muerde por última vez en la carne de la patria vencida antes de marcharse. . . . Un hombre . . . de acción, que nunca sueña . . . y que obra durante el sueño de los demás."

Using a piece of bread, Goldmann has enticed Isabel from her room and killed her when she refused to comply with his wishes. Goldmann, who has always insisted that he needs this sort of "expansiones" in order to work efficiently, in the words of Ana, "ha reído de todo y lo ha manchado todo . . . en

199 Ibid., p. 91.

Silvano, the dreamer, has thus exposed Goldmann, the man of action, for the egoist that he is. And it is Carlos, who has looked upon his former leader as the only man capable of one day saving Surelia, who now kills him.

When the sergeant reports that there will be no train and that the enemy is approaching, the farmer offers to lead the others to safety through the mountains; and all leave except Ana and Silvano. Silvano, who knows that the enemy soldiers will kill him if he stays, decides to sacrifice his life for Isabel's child: "Es el niño el que no debe morir . . . Y si nos lo llevamos es su muerte segura. Pero hay una probabilidad de que ellos lo evacuen hacia atrás y le den leche . . . si yo acierto a pedírselo."200 And Ana, although she knows that remaining will mean her own death or possibly her violation, decides, because of her love for Silvano, to stay to help him persuade the soldiers. Among the invading soldiers, who arrive shortly after the other refugees have left, is one who has been in the village of Isabel and who may well be the child's father. And at the urging of Silvano and Ana he finally agrees to take the child with him.

200 Ibid., p. 102.
Silvano, the dreamer, has thus won in his contest with Goldmann, the man of action. Whereas Goldman "[ha mordido] por última vez en la carne de la patria vencida antes de marcharse," Silvano has saved the child, an innocent being in whom the bloods of the two enemy races may meet in a definitive embrace, a child who may thus become tomorrow a man free of hatred. Silvano has, therefore, with the help of Ana, accomplished something which has given his life meaning. He has brought hope for peace, for the "light," to others.

The central theme of the tragedy, Buero has commented, is "el de la acción recta, personificada en un aparente abulico y soñador que es capaz, sin énfasis, del más denodado heroísmo. El héroe y el heroísmo que sa necesitan como ingredientes de esta tragedia moderna que en mi obra se narra."201

Goldmann has lost because, without dreams, the man of action becomes corrupt. Silvano, on the other hand, has won because he has been able to put his dreams into action. Ana, too, has triumphed, for she has been able to ascend to the height of Silvano, where she has learned the meaning of love and of sacrifice. And she, like Silvano, "[ha] servido para algo."

For both Silvano and Ana their dreams have led to victory. For as Silvano has stated earlier, "aprender a soñar" is "aprender a vivir." The other refugees, however, have learned neither to dream or to live.

For Silvano and Ana, who have been able to live their dreams, their last moments are ones of happiness. For both, this has been "una aventura en lo gris." Both have been able at last to illuminate the greyness of their lives with their love for each other. And the child of Isabel seems like their own: "Este es nuestro hijo, Ana," says Silvano, "y lo vamos a salvar con nuestra sangre, como los padres hacen con sus hijos."

The happiness of both comes from the internal victory which they have won. For they have learned, in the words of Silvano, "lo que es vencer y lo que es vencerse."

Ana: Tú me enseñaste a hacerlo, ¡Silvano!
¿Es así? ¿Es esto vencer?
Silvano: ¡Sí! Esto es vencer.202

And as the enemy soldiers raise their guns, Ana and Silvano, bathed in the rays of the morning sun, face death without fear:

(Sus manos se aprietan fuertemente: se sueldan para la eternidad cercana. Los soldados elevan despacio sus armas, a punto de disparar. Pero Silvano y Ana están ya por encima de todo temor: ellos han vencido.

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202Buero, Aventura en lo gris, p. 111.
Erguidos y sonrientes contemplan la boca de los fusiles.\textsuperscript{203}

The sordid grey of reality has not been changed; Silvano's dreams of peace have not been realized; the light has not been reached. Men have not learned to "soñar acordes"; and the enemy soldiers are still "exterminadores," not angels. Nevertheless, one of these soldiers has saved the child, a child symbolic of hope for the future.

\textit{Un Soñador para un pueblo}

Like Silvano, Esquilache in \textit{Un soñador para un pueblo}, dreams of bringing "light" to a nation in spiritual darkness. This tragedy, dedicated to the memory of Antonio Machado, "quien soñó una España joven," deals with the efforts of the Marqués de Esquilache, the minister of Carlos III, to transform Spain into "una nación moderna y ejemplar."\textsuperscript{204} "Los ilustrados," Buero has stated, "han sufrido en estos tiempos, mala prensa. A mí me pareció necesario darles ... una reparación escénica." \textit{Un soñador para un pueblo} is, therefore, "una defensa de la España 'ilustrada'--que Esquilache, figura históricamente discutible,

\textsuperscript{203}Ibid.

personifica por convenientes dramáticos." The tragic struggle of the "ilustrados" against the reactionary forces which opposed them is one, the author says, "cuyas derivaciones conservan actualidad": "Muchas de nuestras cosas se siguen pareciendo demasiado a aquellas otras contra las que el rey, Esquilache y los demás creyeron obligado luchar."205

We have, in this tragedy, the same contrast between reality and the dreams of the protagonist as in Aventura en lo gris. Esquilache, like Silvano, is the idealist, the dreamer, who longs to "curar la terca ceguera de [su] país."206 He longs to "educar al pueblo" and to "conseguir una mayor higiene de los cuerpos y de las almas."

To this end Esquilache institutes various reforms, such as having the streets of Madrid paved, having lanterns installed in the streets, and forbidding the wearing of long capes and oversized hats. The tragedy is a "versión libre" of the famous "motín" which occurred in Madrid on March 23, 1776, as the result of Esquilache's edict concerning the size of capes and hats. Esquilache believes that this "descubrirá las caras ... y evitará

205Ibid., pp. 2, 14.

tanto crim en y tanta impunidad. " It represents, to him, "un
buen tanto en la partida emprendida." 207

But the dreamer who wants to bring "luz al pueblo" is mis-
understood and rejected. As in Aventura en lo gris, we see the
loneliness of the dreamer, a loneliness which extends even to his
personal life. "Le temo a tu quijotismo," Esquilache’s wife says
to him, "Por lo demás, no presumas tanto de idealista." 208

The attitude of the reactionary nobles toward both Esquilache’s
reforms and the "Ilustración" in general is seen in the words of the
Duke of Villasanta. In the following conversation we see what has
been called the problem of "las dos Españas": 209

| Esquilache:         | ¿Cree que soy enemigo de lo español? |
|                    | He aprendido a amar a esta tierra y a |
|                    | sus cosas. Pero no es culpa nuestra si |
|                    | sus señorías, los que se creen genuinas |
|                    | representantes del alma española, no son |
|                    | capaces de añadir nueva gloria a tantas |
|                    | glorias muertas . . . |

| Villasanta:        | ¿Muertitas? |
|                    | Creame, duque: no hay cosa peor que |
|                    | estar muerta y no advertirlo. Sus señorías |
|                    | lamentan que los principales ministros sean |
|                    | extranjeros, pero el rey nos trajo . . . |
|                    | porque el pais nos necesitaba para levantarse. |
|                    | Las naciones tienen que cambiar si no quieren |
|                    | morir definitivamente. |

207 Ibid., p. 22. 208 Ibid., p. 27.

209 Rafael Vázquez Zamora, Rev. of Un soñador para un
pueblo, from Insula, reprinted in Teatro español 1958-59 (Madrid,

These reactionary forces exemplified by Villasanta succeed in inciting the worse elements of the "pueblo" (the "pícaros," "alcahuetas," "chulos," "chisperos," etc.) against the idealist who wishes to civilize them, to bring them the "light." For the mob breaks the five thousand lanterns installed by Esquilache, ransacks his house, and threatens uprisings throughout the country.

But the "pueblo" is deceived and incited to rebellion, not only by the reactionary nobles who oppose all change, but also by those intelligent nobles, who, although they realize what Spain needs, desire power above all else. The Marquis of la Ensenada, who originally advocated many of the very reforms which Esquilache attempts to carry out, initiates the rebellion against Esquilache out of personal jealousy, even though Esquilache has spoken favorably of Ensenada to the king.

The dreamer is misunderstood and betrayed by everyone except Fernandita, a humble servant girl, the "chocolatera," of the queen. Fernandita, who, alone, is grateful for Esquilache's

210Buero, Un soñador ..., pp. 42-43.
efforts to elevate the "pueblo," becomes his confidant and only friend. The situation of Esquilache is quite similar to that of Dr. Stockmann in Ibsen's play, An Enemy of the People. Stockmann, like Esquilache, tries to "educar al pueblo" and to "conseguir una mayor higiene de los cuerpos y de las almas." He tries to convince the people of his town that their famous Baths, the source of the town's prosperity, are contaminated and causing illnesses. But Stockmann, who like Esquilache, tries to bring "light" or truth to society, is misunderstood and branded "an enemy of the people." He is rejected, not only by the reactionary officials, but by the liberals and by the "ignorant majority," who are afraid that the income of the town will be lost if his report is made public. Stockmann, reviled and ridiculed on all sides, is encouraged only by his daughter, Petra, who, alone, is able to understand him.

The rejection of Esquilache and of the light or truth which he attempts to bring, is symbolized by the destruction of the lanterns which he has had constructed for the streets of Madrid. The spiritual blindness of the nation is thus represented visually by Buero's ingenious use of contrasting light and darkness on the
stage. Near the end of the first of the two parts into which the tragedy is divided, Esquilache remarks to Fernandita:

Ya oscurece. . . . Somos como niños sumidos en la oscuridad. (De pronto encienden en el exterior algún farol cercano y su luz ilumina a la pareja en el ventanal. . . .) Mira. La oscuridad termina. Dentro de poco lucirán todos los faroles de Madrid. La ciudad más sucia de Europa es ahora la más hermosa gracias a mí. Es imposible que no me lo agradecan. 211

One by one other lanterns are lit in front of the house of Esquilache until the stage is brightly illuminated. But shortly after Esquilache has commented upon the beauty of the lights, various "figuras embozadas" appear with rocks. And "con secos estallidos, los faroles de escena se apagan a sus gestos. Oscuridad." 212 The next night, that of the "motín," after Esquilache's house has been ransacked and he and Fernandita have taken refuge in the royal palace, he remarks:

Ya es de noche. . . . Y muy oscura. . . . Madrid no brilla como otras veces. 213

The night of the "motín" Esquilache believes for a time that even the king has abandoned him and decided to sacrifice him to the mob. But when the king finally comes to tell him the demands

211 Ibid., p. 64. 212 Ibid., p. 66. 213 Ibid., p. 81.
of the rioters, he leaves the decision as to what course to follow up to Esquilache:

**El Rey:** En uno de los platillos de la balanza estás tú. . . . En el otro platillo está la subversión contra todo lo que hemos traído, la terca ceguera de un país infinitamente menos adelantado que sus gobernantes. . . . La necesidad, tal vez, de defender todo eso a sangre y fuego antes de que lo destruyan . . . Pero con el riesgo, con la seguridad casi . . . de una guerra fratricida. 214

Esquilache must now make the decision which involves all his dreams and hopes:

De un lado, la fuerza . . . La ocasión de atrapar y fusilar a los traidores . . . Y de seguir moldeando a esta bella España, y de dar un poco de luz, de alegría . . . La vida de nuevo. Con sus luchas, . . . su calor . . . (Grave) Y también, el fuego. El infierno en la tierra y ahora por mi mano . . . España entera, roja de sangre . . . El poder, pero cueste lo que cueste . . . Sí. Sería una hermosa embriaguez. Mandar de nuevo. Restituir todavía la sonrisa a un rostro amado. . . . 215

Esquilache answers that the king should accept all the petitions of the rioters in order to avoid a war. He makes this decision, moreover, supposing that the mob is demanding his trial and probable imprisonment. For only after Esquilache gives his answer does the king tell him that the mob asks only for his exile. Esquilache has lost all that he has struggled for,

214Ibid., p. 94. 215Ibid.
but he has made the right decision. When the king asks, "¿Hemos
soñado, Leopoldo? Hay un pueblo ahí abajo?", his answer is
"Hemos hecho lo que debíamos." The sacrifice of Esquilache
is, moreover, double. For he must leave Fernandita.

Just as in Aventura en lo gris we have the external defeat
of the history professor, we have, in Un soñador para un pueblo,
the external defeat of the minister who wishes to reform his
nation. But in both tragedies we have the internal victory of the
man, who, in the moment of crisis, conquers himself. Society
may bring about the external defeat of the dreamer, but it cannot
prevent him from winning the internal struggle. "Les acaba de
decir que seré desterrado," Esquilache says to Villasanta as he
hears the mob cheer the king, "Pero no importa. Ahora sé que
he vencido."217

This victory of Esquilache, like that of Silvano, is possible
because of the catharsis or internal ennoblement which he has
undergone as the result of suffering and of grief. This purification
or internal ennoblement, moreover, permits Esquilache to accept
with serenity his external defeat, realizing that it is justified:
"He sido abnegado en mi vejez porque mi juventud fué ambiciosa.
Intrigué, adulé durante años ... Mi castigo es justo ... No se

216Ibid., p. 95. 217Ibid., p. 97.
puede intentar la reforma de un país cuando no se ha sabido conducir el hogar propio. Nada se puede construir sobre fango... Fernandita... Perdóname... en tu nombre y en el de todos." 218

The words of Fernandita, however, are words of gratitude, not of pardon. Esquilache has failed in what he considers his mission in life, that is, in his reforms. Nevertheless, "ha evitado una inmensidad de dolor," whereas Ensenada, who is intellectually superior to Esquilache and who should have been able to do more for Spain than Esquilache, has conspired with the reactionary forces to "encender un infierno en toda España."

In Esquilache and in Ensenada we have a contrast between the dreamer and the practical man. Ensenada is the sceptic. To him the dreams of Esquilache are "ilusiones." Whereas Esquilache believes that "el pueblo es todavía menor de edad," Ensenada believes that "el pueblo es siempre menor de edad" and should be treated accordingly. Reforms, he says, should be enforced "con mano dura." Ensenada lacks the faith of Esquilache in the "pueblo." In their final conversation at the end of the tragedy, Ensenada asks, "¿En qué podemos creer nosotros, los que

218bid., p. 103.
trabajamos para el pueblo? Ya ves que no hay pueblo. La tragedia del gobernante es descubrirla."219

As in Aventura en lo gris, it is the dreamer, not the practical man, who ultimately does the most for the good of society. Esquilache sacrifices himself in order not to "aumentar el sufrimiento de esa pobre carne triste, ultrajada ... de los de abajo," who, like Fernandita, "todo lo soportan"; in order to end the "infierno en la tierra" which Ensenada has brought about in order to further his own personal ambition.

The last official act of Esquilache is to give Ensenada a letter from the king, a letter which Esquilache supposes is an appointment but which is actually an order for Ensenada's exile. "El rey," says Esquilache, who now realizes for the first time that it is Ensenada who has been the secret instigator of the uprising, "nos enfrenta para compararnos."

Ensenada, the anti-hero, says that he is a greater politician than Esquilache: "Tú vales menos que yo ... Yo empecé todo esto! Y tú te has limitado a continuarlo ..., trabajando incansablemente, sí; pero con bastante mediocridad." Esquilache does not deny this. "Sin embargo," he says,

soy más grande que tú. El hombre más insignificante es más grande que tú si vive para algo que no sea él

219Ibid., p. 100.
mismo! Desde hace veinte años tú ya no crees en nada. 220

Without dreams it is impossible for a governor to remain free from corruption: "Ningún gobernante puede dejar de corromperse si no sueña ese sueño," says Esquilache. We have, thus, in this tragedy, the same idea as in Aventura en lo gris: "Aprender a soñar" is "aprender a vivir."

The rationalist or "razonador" who, like Ensenada, does not learn to dream becomes corrupt because life becomes a search for power, for advantage, as we have already seen in the cases of Ulysses in La tejedora de sueños and of Armando in Casi un cuento de hadas.

The king aptly describes the character of Esquilache when he asks: "¿Sabes por qué eres mi predilecto, Leopoldo? Porque eres un soñador. Los demás se llenan la boca de las grandes palabras y en el fondo sólo esconden mezquindad, egoísmos. Tú estás hecho al revés: te ven por fuera como el más astuto y ambicioso, y eres un soñador ingenuo..." 221 And it is this kind of dreamer that Spain, as well as society in general, needs. The major idea of this tragedy, as of Aventura en lo gris, is expressed by the king: "España necesita soñadores." 222

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220 Ibid., pp. 99-100. 221 Ibid., p. 57. 222 Ibid.
At the end of this tragedy, as at the end of *Aventura en lo gris*, the dreams of the protagonist are unfulfilled. Nevertheless, hope remains. This hope is represented by Fernandita, who, as one critic has stated, "atraída por el grande hombre, simboliza al buen pueblo lleno de posibilidad." Fernandita is pursued by Bernardo el Calesero, "un majo de malas entrañas" who is one of the leaders of the mob. During the riot Bernardo locks her up with him in one of the rooms of Esquilache's house and seduces her. And she, although she knows that he wants only to deceive her, does not resist for she loves him. Even though he represents for her "toda la torpeza y toda la brutalidad" which she hates, she seems unable to forget him, as she confesses to Esquilache:

> He tratado de olvidarlo, de aborrecerlo ... ¡Y he querido salir de esa noche, de ese horror ... y no puedo! Yo he querido curarme con un poco de luz, con un poco de piedad! ¡Huir hacia su merced y hacia todo lo que su merced representaba! ... ¡Y no puedo!...

> Me pareció que un sentimiento más grande me llenaba las entrañas ... Una ternura nueva, limpia ..., hacia un anciano bondadoso, triste, solitario ... Y esa ternura no ha cesado ... Pero, ¿qué puede contra este demonio que me habita?  

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223 Vázquez Zamora, Rev. of *Un soñador* ...., *Teatro español* 1958-59, p. 199.

224 Buero, *Un soñador* ...., p. 91.
Fernandita, who represents all the good qualities of the "pueblo," is "perdida en una pasión ciega." "Es la cruel ceguera de la vida," says Esquilache. "Pero tú puedes abrir los ojos... Tú has visto ya." The destiny of the "pueblo," he implies, is up to it:

Tú debes vencer con tu propia libertad... ¡Creo en ti, Fernandita! El pueblo no es el infierno que has visto: ¡el pueblo eres tú! Está en ti... Tal vez nunca cambie su triste oscuridad por la luz... ¡Pero de vosotros depende! ¿Seréis capaces?

In this tragedy, Buero has said, "se proclama la necesidad de que el pueblo supere sus fallos históricos y de que el mismo y ninguna otra fuerza encuentre los caminos de una sociedad más justa." And hope in this, that is, in the "pueblo's" one day reaching the "light" is exalted at the end of the tragedy. For Fernandita breaks definitively her relationship with Bernardo, who represents "la oscuridad." Fernandita thus represents hope for a future Spain, or a future society, in which the dreams of Esquilache will become realities. For tragedy, according to Buero, is, "un género abierto y no cerrado," which proposes "el encuentro con aquellas verdades

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225Ibid., p. 104.

o, al menos, aquellas búsquedas que podrían liberarnos de nuestras cequeras."227

**Las Meninas**

Velázquez, likeSilvano and Esquilache, is the intellectual who attempts to bring to society the "light" or truth which will permit it to overcome its limitations. Buero's Velázquez, as one critic of *Las Meninas* has stated, "resume la lucha que el intelectual mantiene ... por defender su libertad, y usando de ella, declarar la verdad de las cosas que pasan."228 He is the rebel who protests against the injustice, oppression, and abuses of his time. As Pedro, the beggar who is Velázquez' friend, suggests, perhaps the artist, who sees the beauty of the world, can best understand "lo intolerable de su dolor."

Velázquez, Buero has stated, has always interested him, "no sólo por su pintura sino por su calidad humana, mal conocida y merecedora ... de reivindicaciones." The little information which exists about Velázquez' life, says Buero, "contra los usuales tópicos de su adhesión a las instituciones vigentes ... y du su vida supuestamente acomodativa ... revela a un hombre

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independiente, internamente desapegado, crítico, entero. Eso era ya claro en su pintura, para quien supiera verlo. "229

Velázquez was, Buero says, "un alma grande, lúcida y desenfrenada, como algunas otras de la decadencia española de aquella época ... Como un Quevedo, como un Gracián, ... mantuvo los ojos de su cuerpo y de su mente, abiertos ante un mundo ciego y enajenado de errores, supersticiones, milagrerías, injusticias." Buero, therefore, considered the figure of Velázquez an appropriate one to express, "sin violentación esencial de la verdad histórica," various problems "de sostenida importancia y actualidad," problems which are not only Spanish but universal: "problemas inherentes al enmascaramiento de la realidad por los tópicos y engaños vigentes, a las injusticias sociales y al dolor humano; a la responsabilidad del creador, del intelectual, ante todo ello."230 Buero's Velázquez is, thus, much closer to the problems of our time than the traditional aristocratic courtier.

The central problem of Las Meninas is the choice which the intellectual, the writer, or the artist must make "entre la verdad


230 Ibid.
o la mentira, entre el compromiso o la evasión, entre ser el hombre rebelde o el hombre domesticado. "231

The truth is the economic, social, and moral decadence of Spain. "El país entero muere de hambre," says Pedro, "y le responden con palos, con ejecuciones." Dialogues such as the following are frequent in the palace:

El Marqués: El abastecimiento está y asegurado.
El Rey: ¿De qué modo?
El Marques: Medidas de excepción contra ... los mercaderes.

But worst of all is the hypocrisy and pretense that all is well. One critic has summed up the moral decadence of the Spain of Velázquez' time as follows:

... periclitadas sus ideas morales y oculto el enorme vacío tras unas formas rígidas, hipócritas, implacables del orden aparente; coaccionadas las libertades expresivas del artista y del ciudadano; posibilitados los mayores abusos y las más injustas condenas por obra y gracia de ese formalismo; fermentadas las insidias, las delaciones, las habladurías que pueden tener carácter de reconocida legalidad; incubado el terror, abonada la superchería y nacida la angustia por el incierto porvenir, esta sociedad en que se desenvuelve Velázquez tiene bastante de mundo agonico, terrible. 232

Spain, in short, "se había convertido en una enorme mentira en la que la verdad era delito--en una inmensa farsa


en la cual lo único cierto era el dolor"233 or, as Velázquez expresses it, "un país de ciegos y de locos."

In such an atmosphere, Velázquez, the man of superior intelligence, struggles to "declarar la verdad." The nude Venus which he paints in defiance of the prohibitions of the Inquisition is symbolic of the truth which he seeks to reveal: "El hambre crece, el dolor crece, el aire se envenena y ya no se tolera la verdad que tiene que esconderse como mi Venus, porque está desnuda."

The truth which Velázquez attempts to paint about the Spain of his time is seen in his sketch for his proposed painting "Las Meninas," which will be, he says, "un cuadro donde se resume cuanto sé." Esthetically, Velázquez' technique of painting, his "manera abreviada," represents an innovation in his time. Instead of painting things in all their detail, he attempts to depict with light and color the impression which they leave on the eye. "Vos creéis que hay que pintar las cosas," he says to Nardi, another court painter, "Yo pinto el ver." This method represents for Velázquez a truer way of painting. And by means of this truer method Velázquez attempts

to paint his vision of the truth about Spain. This truth does not lie in her pomp or grandeur, but in her profound "tristeza" and "dolor." The meaning of the sketch is explained by Pedro, the near blind beggar, who, despite his "ojos apagados," is the only one who sees the truth which the picture represents:

Un cuadro sereno: pero con toda la tristeza de España dentro. Quien vea a estos seres comprenderá lo irremediablemente condenados al dolor que están. Son fantasmas vivos de personas cuya verdad es la muerte. Quien los mire mañana, lo advertirá con espanto...
Sí, con espanto, pues llegará un momento, como a mí me sucede ahora, en que ya no sabrá si el el fantasma ante las miradas de estas figuras... Y querrá salvarse con ellas, embarcarse en el navío inmóvil de esta sala, puesto que ellas lo miran, puesto que él está ya en el cuadro cuando lo miran... Y tal vez, mientras busca su propia cara en el espejo del fondo, se salve por un momento de morir.... Vuestra pintura muestra que aún en Palacio se puede abrir los ojos, si se quiere.234

But it is not only the problem of Spain which Velázquez attempts to express in Las Meninas but also the question about the ultimate meaning of "la luz," that is, of reality:

Velázquez: Un cuadro de pobres seres salvados por la luz... He llegado a sospechar que la forma misma de Dios, si alguna tiene, sería la luz... Ella me cura de todas las insanias del mundo. De pronto, veo... y me invade la paz. [Veó] cualquier cosa: un rincón, el perfil coloreado de una cara... y me posee una emoción terrible y, al tiempo,

una calma total. Luego, eso pasa...
y no sé cómo he podido gozar de tanta belleza en medio de tanto dolor.235

"La verdad es una carga terrible: cuesta quedarse solo," says Velázquez, "Y en la corte, nadie ... pregunta para que le digan la verdad." With these words Velázquez expresses the loneliness of the superior man in a world of lies and of hypocrisy which he cannot accept, the same loneliness experienced by Silvano and by Esquilache.

Juana, the wife of Velázquez, tormented by jealousy, is utterly incapable of understanding either her husband or his painting. Having refused to pose for his Venuses, she now unjustly suspects that he has love affairs with the women who serve as his models:

Doña Juana: Antes, Diego, yo era tu confidente ... tú buscabas mi mano con la tuya. Míralas. Desde tu vuelta [de Italia], se buscan solas ... ¿A quién busca esa mano desde entonces, Diego? ¿A otra mujer?

Velázquez: (Oprimiéndose con furia las manos)
¡Estás enloquecida!... Acaso busquen a alguien sin yo saberlo. No a otra, como tú piensas. A alguien que me ayude a soportar el tormento de ver claro en este país de ciegos y de locos. Tienes razón: estoy solo. Y sin embargo ... Conocí hace años a alguien que hubiese

235Ibid., pp. 101-102.
podido ser como un hermano... El sólo sabía lo que era la vida. Por eso le fue mal. Era un mendigo.  

Pedro, the old beggar who served as the model for Velázquez' "Esopo" sixteen years before the tragedy takes place, returns shortly after these words of Velázquez. And Velázquez now realizes that it is for Pedro that he has painted all these years: "Durante estos años creí pintar para mí solo. Ahora sé que pintaba para vos." Velázquez, lonely and misunderstood, finds truth in Pedro, the near blind beggar who believes as he does. Pedro, indeed, is the kindred spirit of Velázquez, which has expressed itself in the struggle for social justice. For Pedro, who has fought against oppression and injustice, also wanted to paint, a longing which he has never been able to forget and which has led him back to Velázquez. Adverse circumstances, six years in the galleys for a theft which he did not commit, have made Pedro's dreams of painting impossible: "El mar es muy bello, don Diego: pero el remo no es un pincel. Al salir de galeras, quedan pocas ganas de pintar y hay que ganar el pan como se puede."  

Pedro, after his six years in the galleys, has spent his life fighting against injustice, killing a captain who deprived his

236 Ibid., pp. 43-44. 237 Ibid., p. 103.
men of food and leading rebellions against unjust taxes in various cities throughout the country. To do this he has had to give up not only his painting but also the hope of having a family. And now, an old man pursued by the authorities, "cansado y deseoso de morir tranquilo," he has come to seek shelter with Velázquez.

Both Pedro and Velázquez are rebels, but Pedro, perhaps the real protagonist of the tragedy, has been a rebel in action, whereas Velázquez has been one in silence. "Me llenáis de humildad . . . Me siento en deuda con vos," acknowledges Velázquez to Pedro, who, had he had the opportunity, might have been as great or greater a painter than Velázquez himself.

It is for sheltering Pedro as well as for his nude Venus and his sketch of "Las Meninas" that Velázquez is finally denounced and tried. This trial, in which the conflict between the values of society and the values which Velázquez holds "toma el vuelo de una mutua réplica dialéctica," as one critic has remarked, 238 constitutes the most important part of the tragedy. In it Velázquez defends himself against the false morality of those jealous of him and of his painting.

Velázquez is accused first of painting the nude Venus. He has been denounced for this to the Inquisition by José Nieto, a jealous cousin, who pretending to be Velázquez' friend, has deceived Juana into showing him the hidden picture. Velázquez protests against "las mentes lascivas [como la de Nieto] que en todo ven lascivia" and against this sort of limitation to his artistic freedom: "Yo soy pintor ... Un pintor es un ojo que ve la creación en toda su gloria. La carne es pecadora, mas también es muy bella ... La mujer que he pintado es muy bella; pero también es bello el cuerpo del Crucificado ..." Velázquez, moreover, forces Nieto to admit that he has denounced him in order to obtain his position as Harbinger.

Velázquez must next defend the sketch of "Las Meninas" against the accusations of the painter Nardi, who, in order to obtain Velázquez' post as court painter, denounces its lack of solemnity and majesty. To Velázquez, however, servants, dwarfs, and even animals are as important as kings and nobles, for all are "criaturas reveladoras del gran milagro de la realidad." Velázquez proves, moreover, that Nardi is incompetent to judge his work, that he has, in fact, copied,

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without understanding it, one of Velázquez' techniques in the use of color: "Yo sé aun muy poco de los grandes misterios de la luz: él, nada. ¿Es éste el hombre que pueda juzgar mi pintura?"

Velazquez is charged, finally, with sheltering Pedro, a fugitive from justice. And when the Marqués reveals the fact that Pedro has attempted to escape and that in so doing he has fallen down a hillside to his death, Velázquez makes his decision between "la verdad" and "la mentira." For he confesses to the king his "profunda e irremediable rebeldía":

De un lado, la mentira ... Una mentira tentadora: sólo puede traerme beneficios. Del otro, la verdad. Una verdad peligrosa que ya no remedia nada ... Si viviera Pedro Briones me repetiría lo que me dijo antes de venir aquí; mentid si es menester. Vos debéis pintar. Pero él ha muerto ... ¿Qué valen nuestras cautelas ante esa muerte? ¿Qué puedo dar yo para ser digno de él; si él ha dado su vida? Ya no podría mentir, aunque deba mentir. Ese pobre muerto me lo impide ... Yo le ofrezco mi verdad ... La verdad estéril ... La verdad, señor, de mi profunda, de mi irremediable rebeldía.²⁴⁰

As in Un soñador para un pueblo, we have the interior victory of the protagonist in the moment of crisis. Surprisingly the king reacts nobly and pardons Velázquez; so that the painter

²⁴⁰Buero, Las Meninas, p. 163.
and his work are saved. But he does so with bitterness and with a feeling of failure which he attributes to his weakness. 241

The tragedy illustrates, as has been stated "la responsabilidad de [la] elección irrecusable entre la verdad y la mentira." The intellectual cannot be "ajeno al reclamo de su tiempo." 242 After the death of Pedro, Velázquez can no longer be silent. For Pedro, a fictional character like Fernandita in Un soñador para un pueblo, is a symbol of "el pueblo sano y saludable." 243 The victim of oppression, like Isabel in Aventura en lo gris, and like Fernandita, Pedro represents to Velázquez a people who suffer and who dream of liberty and of justice. And Velázquez, who weeps at the death of his friend Pedro, symbolizes, like Esquilache, "el intelectual rebelde que ha entendido y hermando consigo la tragedia de su país y se ha incorporado a lo que en el hay de mas auténtico—el pueblo." 244

In Velázquez, as in Esquilache, Buero creates a protagonist who represents the ideal in any age and in any circumstances.

241 Alfredo Marquerié, Rev. of Las Meninas, from ABC, reprinted in Teatro español 1960-61, p. 72.


244 Angel Fernández-Santos, Rev. of Las Meninas from Indice, reprinted in Teatro español 1960-61, p. 78.
"¿Destrarréis a vuestra conciencia del Palacio?" the Infantita María Teresa, the only friend of Velázquez besides Pedro, asks her father. And in this tragedy, as in Un soñador para un pueblo, Buero returns to one of the periods of greatest decadence in Spanish history to illustrate certain problems the essence and reality of which are still present today and to express his hopes for a better future.

The thirteen tragedies discussed so far deal primarily with man's struggle for self-realization. These works constitute a search for the "light" which will permit man to establish meaningful personal relationships and to achieve something which gives significance to life, that is, to fulfill himself. The next two works deal mainly with man's struggle to overcome human loneliness is also present. These two tragedies illustrate primarily what the author has called "la tensión o el concierto del hombre con lo Absoluto."245

In En la ardiente oscuridad and in Irene y el tesoro Buero suggests that reality may have more than one facet, that it is more than "esa realidad de tejas para abajo donde se desarrolla

nuestra vulgar existencia,"\textsuperscript{246} an idea seen most clearly in the words of Daniel, a character in \textit{Irene o el tesoro}:

\ldots todos los sonádores sabemos que el mundo no es esta sucia realidad que nos rodea: que \ldots también hay, aunque no lo parezca, una permanente y misteriosa maravilla que nos envuelve. \ldots Y esa maravilla nos mira y nos vigila, y nos penetra \ldots y algún día puede que logremos verla cara a cara.\textsuperscript{247}

These two tragedies, then, represent a search for metaphysical truth or "light," for what one critic describes as "un mundo auténtico y verdadero donde la vida es bella y está cargada de luz y claridad."\textsuperscript{248} In \textit{En la ardiente oscuridad} we see the longing of Ignacio, the dreamer, to reach a transcendent symbolized by the distant stars. In \textit{Irene o el tesoro} we see the dreams of Irene to escape from the sordid reality about her to a world of "diamantina claridad."

This metaphysical preoccupation has, of course, been seen to some extent in many of the tragedies already discussed. In \textit{La señal que se espera} the characters experience a unique moment of "paz y comprensión," like those which made the


\textsuperscript{247}Buero, \textit{Irene o el tesoro}, p. 86.

Ancients believe in the possibility of hearing the harmony of the spheres. In *Hoy es fiesta* Pilar experiences a moment of "claridad especial," in which the evils of the world seem to dissolve into light. In *Las Meninas* Velázquez searches for the ultimate meaning of light, or of reality. One critic has indeed suggested that the major characteristic of Buero's theater is his "intento de abrir una esfera de trascendencia a la vida del hombre," his "preocupación por el misterio y lo maravilloso."249

In technique, *En la ardiente oscuridad* is a semi-realistic work, while *Irene o el tesoro*, like *Casi un cuento de hadas* and *Aventura en lo gris*, is a fantasy.

*En la ardiente oscuridad*

Whereas in *El concierto de San Ovidio*, the longing of David, the blind violinist, to see represents, for the most part, man's desire to overcome the physical limitations to his self-realization, that of Ignacio, the blind student in *En la ardiente oscuridad*, represents man's desire to attain metaphysical truth or vision.

"La ceguera," Buero has said, "es una no visión, vencerla... es por lo tanto lograr una visión, o... descubrir una faceta

249Ibid.
And the physical light for which Ignacio longs really symbolizes metaphysical truth. That Ignacio, being blind, merges his desire to overcome his physical handicap with his metaphysical anguish is obvious. For he knows that if he could see the stars, "moriría de pesar por no poder alcanzarlas."

Ignacio's preoccupation with physical light is, thus, as Buero himself has pointed out, quite similar to that of Velázquez. For Velázquez' questions as a painter about the ultimate meaning of light are equivalent to his questions as a man about the ultimate meaning of reality.251

En la ardiente oscuridad takes place in a school for young people who have been blind from birth. There is an atmosphere of gaiety and happiness as the young people study, laugh, joke, fall in love, and marry. This optimism is due to the fact that they do not long for what they have never known. They have, in fact, ceased to consider themselves different from other people, whom they refer to as "videntes."

But the students, apparently so realistic in their attitude towards life, are actually living in a world of illusion, a world of illusion, a world...

250Buero, "La ceguera en mi teatro," La Carreta, No. 12 (September, 1963), p. 5.

which several critics have compared to that of Plato's cave. Isolated in the cavern of their physical blindness, the obvious symbol of spiritual blindness, they are content with their placid world of shadows, of darkness, and oblivious to the light which shines outside. This idea is well expressed by the epigraph which precedes the tragedy": Y la luz en las tinieblas resplandece, mas las tinieblas no la comprendieron" (Juan, I 5).

The institution for the blind thus represents this world "de tejas para abajo" and the students, man in general, who is spiritually blind. "No es a ellos [a los ciegos], en realidad, a quienes intenté retratar," Buero has stated, "sino a todos nosotros." That the blindness with which the play deals is not something purely physical is emphasized, moreover, by the fact that the students call themselves "invidentes" rather than "ciegos."

Into this artificial atmosphere of false happiness, which is dominated by Carlos, the leader of the students, who has been called "el perfecto Abel Sánchez," comes a new student, "el Joaquín unamunesco, espíritu rebelde, inquieto, trágico, que


trae la guerra y no la paz." Ignacio, who is acutely conscious of his blindness, points out to the other students the fiction and hypocrisy upon which their existence is based: "Este contraste está fundado sobre una mentira... la de que somos seres normales."

Their life, says Ignacio, is only a parody of what it could be if they could see, if they had "la luz que puede dar a las cosas su plenitud de existencia." And to pretend otherwise is insincerity:

Estáis envenenados de alegría. Creí que encontraría ... a mis verdaderos compañeros; no a unos ilusos ...

.............

No tenéis derecho a vivir porque os empeñáis en no sufrir; porque os negáis a enfrentaros con vuestra tragedia, fingiendo una normalidad que no existe, procurando olvidar e incluso aconsejando duchas de alegría para reanimar a los tristes.255

For Ignacio, the meaning of life is found only through facing reality without evasion, despite the suffering which this implies. This existentialist anguish or suffering is, indeed, for Ignacio, part of his "razón de ser," the very basis of his existence. He is, as one critic says, "el individuo ardiente y solitario:

Kierkegaard, Nietzsche o Unamuno."256 The difference between


Ignacio and the other students is expressed by the protagonist himself in a speech to Juana, who has finally persuaded him to remain at the institution:

**Ignacio:** Vosotros sois demasiado pacíficos ... demasiado fríos. Pero yo estoy ardiendo por dentro; ardiendo con un fuego terrible, que no me deja vivir y que puede haceros arder a todos ... Ardiendo en esto que los videntes llaman oscuridad, y que es horroroso, ... porque no sabemos lo que es.  

Ignacio, like David, is the proud rebel, the dreamer of things unknown who cannot be content with his limitations:

**Juana:** ¿Qué es lo que quieres?

**Ignacio:** (Con tremenda energía contenida) ¡Ver!

**Juana:** (Se separa de él y queda sobrecogida) ¿Qué?

**Ignacio:** ¡Sí! ¡Ver! Aunque sé que es imposible, ¡Ver! Aunque en este deseo se consume esterilmente mi vida entera, ¡quiero ver! No puedo conformarme. No debemos conformarnos. ¡Y menos sonreír! Y resignarse con vuestra estúpida alegría de ciegos, ¡nunca! 258

"¡Sí! ¡Ver! Aunque sé que es imposible!" With these words Ignacio expresses the essence of his tragic struggle between doubt and faith.

The message of Ignacio is that the world of the students, their "cavern" of shadows and darkness, is not the only world, that there is a world of "videntes," an authentic world full of


light. This new world is symbolized by the stars, as is seen in
the following speech to Carlos:

¿No te has dado cuenta al pasar por la terraza de que
la noche estaba seca y fría? ¿No sabes lo que eso
significa?... Quiere decir que ahora están brillando
las estrellas con todo su esplendor y que los videntes
gozan de la maravilla de su presencia. Esos mundos
lejanísimos están ahí,... tras los cristales [de la
ventanal], al alcance de nuestra vista ..., si la
tuviéramos 259

This message, apparently so full of despair, is actually
one of profound hope. For, if the blind students represent man
in general, Ignacio represents the mystic who brings to them the
hope in another world, a transcendent world to which most men
are spiritually blind. The tragedy of the other students lies,
thus, in their failure to experience this hope, "la esperanza de
la luz":

Ignacio: Y ésas es tu desgracia: no sentir la esperanza
que yo os he traído.
Carlos: ¿Qué esperanza?
Ignacio: La esperanza de la luz.
Carlos: ¿De la luz?
Ignacio: ¡De la luz, sí! Porque nos dicen incurables;
pero, ¿qué sabemos nosotros de eso? Nadie
sabe lo que el mundo puede reservarnos,
desde el descubrimiento científico ..., hasta
... el milagro.
Carlos: (Despectivo) ¡Ah, bah!
Ignacio: Ya, ya sé que lo rechazas. Rechazas la fe que
te traigo. 260

259 Ibid., p. 105. 260 Ibid., pp. 105-106.
Ignacio has an ardent faith in the "noche oscura de su alma." He feels himself touched by the rays of the light: "Siento gravitar su dulce luz [de las estrellas] sobre mi rostro, y me parece que casi las veo!"

Both David and Ignacio, as Vázquez Zamora has pointed out, are men of immense faith, David, in "borrar con lo que le queda a su persona aparte de la ceguera—nada menos que el alma y el cuerpo menos los ojos—. . . la injusta capacidad que le ha tocado"; Ignacio, in "la posibilidad, en la necesidad de que los ciegos recuperen la vista." Ignacio's attitude toward his blindness is, moreover, as diametrically opposed to that of Carlos as that of David is to that of Nazario. Whereas Ignacio and David are men of faith, Carlos and Nazario are, despite their apparent optimism, sceptics and fatalists. For both are content to accept their limitations. The opposition between Ignacio and Carlos, however, is developed to the extent that the two become antagonists; whereas that between David and Nazario is merely touched upon. For it is the innkeeper, and not Nazario, who is, as we have seen, the antagonist of David.


262Vázquez Zamora, "En el Goya . . .," Insula, XVIII, No. 193 (December, 1962), 16.
Ignacio, like David, influences all around him, bringing "guerra, y no paz." "No puedo contenerme," he says to Juana, who criticizes him for not concealing his suffering, "No puedo dejar en la mentira a la gente cuando me pregunta... ¡Me horroriza el engaño en que viven!" And Ignacio, in a climactic scene finally succeeds in making Carlos understand his anguish. In this same scene, by means of a remarkable stage effect, the author succeeds, moreover, in making the spectator identify with the problem of the characters.

As Ignacio describes to Carlos the terror which people experience when they try to imagine what it would be like to be blind, all of the house and stage lights are gradually extinguished until only the stars are visible through the window. Then the stars themselves disappear, and there is absolute darkness. Then, when Ignacio describes the joy which people feel at the coming of the dawn and their ability to identify objects by form and color, the stars begin to shine and light gradually returns to the stage. We have, thus, in this scene the same skillful use of contrasting light and darkness which we have already seen in El concierto de San Ovidio and in Un soñador para un pueblo.

The influence of Ignacio begins gradually not only to be seen in Carlos but to be reflected in the entire group of students, who, like the beggars in El concierto de San Ovidio, form a sort of chorus. The atmosphere of superficial optimism and of gaiety becomes one of anguish; and what Buero has called the passive "ceguera tranquila" of the students becomes an active "consciencia dolorosa," as Ignacio succeeds in his aim, which is to "despertar la sinceridad de cada cual." Both the anguish of Ignacio and the growing uneasiness of the other students is emphasized by the use of music, which has formed an integral part of so many of Buero's plays. Shortly after Ignacio's arrival, Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" is played over the loudspeaker of the school, creating a powerful mood of melancholy. According to Beth Noble, legend has it that this sonata was inspired by a blind boy.265

This influence of Ignacio upon the other students is, however, by no means completely beneficial. For in the process of "awakening their sincerity" he destroys their morale. What Carlos says to Ignacio is true when he tells him, "Mis palabras pueden servir para que nuestros compañeros consigan una vida relativamente


Not everyone, moreover, can live without illusion. And Ignacio, who, unlike David, is not a very good person, is aware of much of the damage which he is causing. When Carlos points it out to him, he answers, "A mí no me interesa."

We have in this play the same problem found in *The Wild Duck* of Ibsen, whom Buero acknowledges as a major source of inspiration: illusion versus truth, escapism versus realism. Just as Ignacio tries to make Carlos see that the sheltered, artificial world of the institution is false, Gregers Werle tries to open the eyes of Hjalmar Ekdal to the fact that his home is built upon a lie. Gregers' mission is, like that of Ignacio, to "bring the truth." The truth, in Hjalmar's case is that he is married to the former mistress of the older Werle. Werle is, moreover, the real father of Hedvig, whom Hjalmar adores as his only child. Gregers considers Hjalmar, who is unaware of all of this, similar to the wounded wild duck which, when shot by the older Werle, dived to the bottom of the water and got trapped there. Like the duck, Hjalmar has, according to Gregers, "sunk to the bottom to die in the dark." And Gregers succeeds in making Hjalmar see the truth, the "swamp of deceit" in which he has been living.
Although based upon illusion and self-deception, the Ekdal household was, however, like the institution for the blind, a happy place. And the family's illusions were precisely what made this happiness possible. Gregers, like Ignacio, succeeds only in hurting those whom he intended to help. For Hedvig fearing that she has lost her father's love, kills herself.

The opposition between the two main characters of En la ardiente oscuridad terminates in the murder of Ignacio by Carlos when it is apparent to him that Ignacio is destroying the students' happiness and their "moral de acero." This murder, unlike the one in El concierto de San Ovidio, takes place off-stage and under mysterious circumstances. As we hear the music of "Aase's Death" by Grieg, Doña Pepita, the wife of the director of the school and the only person in the school who is not blind, looks out of the window into the darkness, and, it is strongly suggested, sees Carlos throw the body of Ignacio down the toboggan run. She alone knows that the death of Ignacio was not an accident.

As Doña Pepita insinuates to Carlos, his action has not been motivated completely by his concern for the welfare of his companions. Just as the murder of Valindin is motivated partially by David's love for Adriana, the murder of Ignacio is motivated in part by Carlos' love for Juana, in whom Ignacio has become very
interested. "Tan intrincada el mezcla entre nuestro barro y nuestro espíritu," comments Buero, "que la costumbre de separarlos... conduce... a comedias convencionales. Yo no quise en la mía desintrincar la mezcla... Ignacio y Carlos pelean tanto por una mujer como por una idea."266

At the end of the tragedy, however, as Buero points out, "un altruismo final envuelve a su pesar a los protagonistas."

For Ignacio, who has come to the institution to find his "verdaderos compañeros," as he tells Juana, "arde en amor" for those whom he once knowingly harmed. His love for Juana is symbolic of the love which he has found for all of his companions, a love which is reflected in his words during his last conversation with Carlos:

"¡Los compañeros, y tú con ellos, me interesáis más de lo que crees! Me duele como una mutilación propia vuestra ceguera. Me duele, a mí, por todos vosotros." And Carlos, at the end, "ama con fatídica irreversibilidad al hombre que acaba de asesinar hasta el extremo de hacer suyas sus palabras."267

For Carlos is, at the end, convinced that the world of the institution is not the only one, that there exists another world

266Buero, "Comentario," En la ardiente oscuridad (Madrid: Ediciones Alfíl, 1951), p. 84.

267Ibid., p. 85.
symbolized by the stars, a world of light to which he is blind.

Falling on his knees beside the body of Ignacio, he touches his face as if attempting to awaken him, then goes to the window, through which the stars are visible. And, standing in the same place where Ignacio once stood, he repeats some of the words of the boy whom he has murdered:

Y ahora están brillando las estrellas en todo su esplendor, y los videntes gozan de su presencia maravillosa. Esos mundos lejanísimos están ahí... ¡Al alcance de nuestra vista!... si la tuviéramos. 268

The presence of Ignacio's dead body on the stage during a large part of the third act thus symbolizes the survival of his passionate longings. For Carlos can no longer be happy with his artificial world of darkness. His life will be an agonizing struggle between faith and doubt, just as Ignacio's has been. And the cry of Ignacio will become his: "Quiero ver... Aunque sé que es imposible, ¡ver!" and although he knows that death may be the only way of obtaining the "definitiva visión."

For Buero, the function of tragedy, as we have seen continually, is not to present solutions for problems for which there can be no definitive ones, but to show "la condición humana de la

duda y la fe en lucha ... con su eterna resultante de esperanza. 269

And this hope is present in this tragedy as it is in all of the author's. In the play, Buero says, there is raised "la cuestión de una sana rebeldía contra nuestras limitaciones que plantee la posibilidad de superarlas,"270 a question which is the essence of his tragedies.

The despair of Carlos, the conflict between "reason and life" will be, moreover, the basis, not only for hope in the ultimate attainment of the light, but also for hope in the attainment of a more authentic form of existence. We may compare a similar idea expressed by Unamuno, to whom Buero is sometimes indebted:

He aquí que en el fondo del abismo se encuentran la desesperación sentimental y volitiva y el escepticismo racional frente a frente, y se abrazan como hermanos. Y va ser de este abrazo, un abrazo tragico, es decir, entranadamente amoroso, de donde va a brotar manantial de vida, de una vida seria y terrible.271

This more authentic form of existence, this "vida seria" will be possible, Buero comments, if "Carlos y su colegio armonizan felizmente algun día sus limitados optimismos

269 Buero, "La tragedia," El teatro ... , p. 77.

270 Buero, "La ceguera en mi teatro," La Carreta, No. 12 (September, 1963), p. 5.

271 Miguel de Unamuno, Del sentimiento tragico de la vida (Buenos Aires, 1947), p. 91.
colectivos con las dianas más altas de la individualidad." And hope in this seems justified, as Carlos, even before the death of Ignacio, says:

"Yo defiendo la vida... Porque quiero vivirla a fondo, cumplirla; aunque no sea pacífica ni feliz. Aunque sea dura y amarga... la vida sabe a algo, nos pide algo, nos reclama."

Life, Carlos admits, is "dura y amarga." It is, nevertheless, worth living. And to this end, the author implies, man must admit his blindness and suffering, a suffering which is indeed the very proof of his existence, so that he may, at least, illuminate his existence with a love born of mutual compassion, with a love such as that which Ignacio sought with Juana.

If this harmonization, this conciliation, takes place, "será Ignacio el sacrificado ante las estrellas que confesó, el promotor de la nueva realidad conseguida." One theme of the tragedy is, in Buero's words, "el sacrificio de quien se atrevió a negar la sociedad en que vivía y fué inmolado por esa misma sociedad que, de paso, quedó influída por su palabra." We have, thus, the

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same theme as in *Un soñador para un pueblo*: the sacrifice of the
dreamer who sees, or who tries to see, the light and to guide
society toward it. Ignacio's role is, then, partially messianic,
although Buero makes it clear that he is not intended to be any
Messiah: "Anhela la 'luz,' pero no la tiene ni la tuvo ... No
puede serlo [un mesías] porque es un pobre ser humano cargado
de pasiones encontradas, que busca la luz ... sin ser, a veces,
demasiado bueno. Y tal vez por ello, la luz se le niegue. Pero
se le ha dado el anhelo, y no es poco." 275

And this "anhelo," this dream of a new world or reality
full of light, lives on in Carlos. The defeat of Ignacio thus means
the survival of his dreams, as is the case with Esquilache and
with David. For the result of tragedy is always hope, even in
the case of those which seem the most full of despair. 276

*Irene o el tesoro*

As in *En la ardiente oscuridad*, we have, in *Irene o el
tesoro*, a contrast between this world of shadows and of darkness
and a new world of light to which most men are spiritually blind.

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275Ibid.

The world of darkness in which man lives unaware of the light, represented in the last tragedy by the institution for the blind, is represented in *Irene o el tesoro* by the "habitación desstartalada" of the userer Dimas with its "rameadas cortinas" of "deslucidos colores." In this sordid, grey world, very similar to that of *Aventura en lo gris*, lives a family tyrannized by the avarice of Dimas. With this family lives Irene, the sad and disillusioned daughter-in-law, who, widowed after only one month of marriage, has lost her son at birth. Treated as a domestic servant, Irene is the victim of the abuses of Dimas, who threatens to send her away because she does not contribute financially to the support of the household, of his selfish wife Justina, and of their daughter Aurelia.

To escape this sordid reality Irene thinks of the stories which she read as a child, stories full of fairies, of ogres, and of elves who look for diamonds and buried treasure. And she dreams of the child for whom she longs, as she hums the lullaby which we hear several times during the play:

*Irene:* Cuando canto la nana, lo veo mejor ... Yo sé cómo hubiera sido. Con el pelo rizado y los ojos azules y una sonrisa muy pícara. Hubiera sido ... Hijo de
Irene, like Ignacio, dreams of a new reality, or a new world full of light. "Todo está oscuro," she says to Sofía, the kind but simple-minded sister-in-law of Dimas who tries to console her. "Dios mío," she prays, "si es verdad que tú puedes dar el consuelo que cada uno necesita, alviamé esta horrible oscuridad." Irene dreams of escaping from this world of "negrura" represented by the house of the miser: "¿No te gusta a ti que las cosas sean maravillosas?" she asks Sofía. "Yo sé que lo son. Y quisiera que me ocurriese algo maravilloso, algo increíble... como aquellas historias de mi infancia... tan bonitas." And in this "casa triste" inhabited, except for Irene, by "pobres seres que sólo alientan para sus mezquindades, sin sospechar siquiera que el misterio los envuelve," one day, las faldas de la mesa se abren y una graciosa cabecita de niño se asoma... El niño salta fuera.... Parece tener todo lo más unos seis años, pero nadie podría decir su edad, porque es un duendecito de pecosos moletes y ágiles piernecillas, enfundado en su medieval atuendo verde. El capirote oculta sus rizados cabellos, y a la cintura lleva una voluminosa escarcela. Un ligero pico de plata reluce en su mano.

277 Buero, Irene o el tesoro, p. 30.
278 Ibid., p. 42. 279 Ibid., p. 30. 280 Ibid., p. 31.
This "duende," whose name is Juanito, has been sent by "La Voz" to find a treasure in the house of Dimas. "La Voz," which directs the search of Juanito throughout the play, is invisible and heard only by Juanito and the audience. Juanito is seen and heard only by Irene and the audience. Irene, herself, is unable to see him immediately. But she gradually feels his presence. And immediately after Irene's words, "Aléviame esta horrible oscuridad y dame el mió ... pronto," "La Voz" tells Juanito to put his face between her hands, which are caressing the head of an imaginary child as she sings; and

( ... sus ojos [de Irene] muy fijos en la carita que tiene entre las manos, acusan la tremenda sorpresa. De repente, le baja el capirote, y es como si ella misma le hubiese convertido, ... en el hijo que anhela. Entonces estrecha frenética a Juanito entre sus brazos y lo cubre de besos, mientras profiere, en un alarido de alegría:

|Hijo mío| Hijo mío|

Juanito is, thus, a compensation for Irene's frustrated motherhood; and he is, at the same time, the incarnation of the world of light and of clarity for which Irene has longed, the world represented in En la ardiente oscuridad by the stars. For, at the command of "La Voz," he twirls his magic pick above his head; and Irene's world of "oscuridad" or "negrura" is filled

\[281\textit{ibid.}, pp. 43-44.\]
with "una brillante claridad roja" which then becomes blue and, later, orange. Juanito then tells Irene to open the balcony, and, instead of "tejados y gatos,"

(muéstrase ... un milagro de viva luz blanca. Parece como un corredor que, en rampa suave, llega hasta el balcón entre extrañas e irregulares paredes de diamantina claridad. El mismo duende se queda arrobado y suelta su pico.)

Irene: Mira ... Parece como si estuviese dispuesto para que viniera alguien ...

Juanito: (Temblando) Todo podría ser. 282

Irene, who has asked Juanito to give her the treasure, the gold coins, when he finds them, in order that Dimas will not send her away, has thus received a greater treasure: light or vision.

Irene is the only one in the house who sees this light; for the other members of the family are as spiritually blind as are the students in En la ardiente oscuridad. They consider Irene mad by now because of her conversations with the "duende" whom they cannot see. Even Daniel, a poor scholar who rooms in the house and who loves Irene, is unaware of this light. For a moment, however, it has seemed that he might be able to share Irene's world:

Daniel: Yo ya no quiero comprenderte, sino quererte. ¿Qué vale la razón? Esta engañosa razón de tejas para abajo puede ser, quizá, una gran locura ... ¡No

282 Ibid., pp. 62-63.
Las palabras no valen nada. Lo mismo que la razón, poco más o menos. Es el sentimiento el que nos salva...

Irene: Si tú superaras, Daniel... Yo vivo en un mundo muy distinto del tuyo donde pasan cosas extrañas...

Daniel: Ya sabes que no soy más que un pobre soñador... Y todos los soñadores sabemos... que hay... una permanente y misteriosa maravilla que nos envuelve... Y que, algún día, puede que logremos verla cara a cara.

Irene: (Agitada) Cara a cara... ¡Daniel! Pero no. Tú no puedes comprender.

Daniel: ¡Yo comprenderé todo lo que tú quieras! Cuando estudiaba, comprendía a Santa Teresa, y a San Juan de la Cruz. También ellos vivían en un mundo donde les pasaban cosas maravillosas... Locos, les decían... 283

Juanito and "La Voz" symbolize this new reality full of light, the "permanente y misteriosa maravilla que nos rodea," of which Daniel speaks, the world for which Ignacio has longed but has not been able to see. As one critic has stated, there has been opened "una luminosa ventana al infinito a la sordidez de una vida triste."284

And this new world full of light is, according to "La Voz," the true world. For when Juanito, who, since he is seen only

283Ibid., pp. 85-86.

by Irene begins to have some doubts as to his reality and asks "La Voz" if he really exists, it replies:

**La Voz:** La sabiduría de los hombres es locura, y su locura puede ser sabiduría.

**Juanito:** Entonces, ¿todo es verdad? No me he engañado?

**La Voz:** Para la loca sabiduría de los hombres, tú y yo somos un engaño. Pero el mundo tiene dos caras... Y desde la nuestra, que engloba a la otra. ¡Esta es la realidad! ¡Esta es la verdadera realidad!

Juanita and "La Voz" may represent, thus, as Buero comments, "la más consistente realidad de cuantas realidades componen la obra. Entonces participan en la tragedia como seres providenciales y, ... pueden conferirle el carácter trascendente, de sutil conciliación con el misterioso sentido del mundo, que parece ser la última consecuencia posible de este género." 286

But the "duende" and "La Voz" may also be mere hallucinations of Irene; in which case the preceding conversation has taken place only in her mind. "No puede rechazarse del todo tal idea," says Buero. The other characters all consider Irene mad. The doctor, moreover, suggests to Dimas, who wants to have her put into a mental institution in order to avoid supporting her, that if

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285 Buero, Irene o el tesoro, p. 110.

286 Buero, "Comentario," Irene o el tesoro, p. 121.
she sees things which do not exist, she may be a victim of schizophrenia: "Puede . . . ver que los objetos cambian de tamaño, o de color . . . O bien ver a otros seres y hablar con ellos . . . Don Quijote era hombre y veía gigantes con quienes combatir. Ella es mujer y puede ver un duende, o un niño, a quien besar." 287

The "duende" and "La Voz" may, thus, exist only in the imagination of the protagonist, as "La Voz" itself ironically suggests when Juanito expresses his alarm after hearing the words of the doctor:

Juanito: En medio de todo, es un consuelo oírte. Es una prueba de que existo.
La Voz: No, hijo mío. Eso no prueba nada . . .
Las mentes humanas con muy complicadas. Todas tienen un sótano muy amplio, donde hay guardada mucha inteligencia. Y tú podrías haber salido de ese sótano . . .
Esto es tan cierto que hasta los torpes médicos humanos han averiguado su existencia.

Juanito: ¿La del sótano?
La Voz: Sí. Y ellos le han llamado el subconsciente. 288

The mere fact that Irene talks to the "duende" but does not seem to hear "La Voz" does not mean that they cannot both be imaginary. For, the "duende-niño" may be "una clara alucinación

287 Buero, Irene o el tesoro, pp. 65-66.
288 Ibid., pp. 91-92.
de loca que invade el primer plano de su consciencia en ciertos momentos, mientras en otros acompaña a la Voz en la retaguardia vagamente imaginativa del subconsciente de Irene. 289

Neither does the fact that, whereas the "duende" doubts his existence, "La Voz," after playing with the doubts of Juanito as if to test his faith, 290 affirms, as we have seen, the existence of both: "Esta es la verdadera realidad," etc. For the "duende" may represent reason, that is, the doubts of Irene, while "La Voz" may represent her faith, both of which are struggling for existence in her mind. They may, Buero comments, be "viviendo la tragedia de su propia existencia y de su pugna por existir"—a struggle which is very Unamunian. We would have, then, the same tragic struggle between the doubt and the faith of the protagonist in a transcendent reality full of light which we saw in the case of Ignacio.

The fact that the protagonist, who is considered mad, does not hear the voice while the spectator does, is necessary to maintain the "equivoco" upon which the tragedy is based. The "duende," likewise, must be perceived physically by the spectator. For,

289 Buero, "Comentario," Irene o el tesoro, p. 121.
290 Ibid., pp. 121-122.
otherwise, it would be certain that both were mere hallucinations. Therefore the fact that they are perceived as objective does not justify considering them real.

This "equivoco" is maintained throughout the entire play. When Juanito finally finds the gold coins in Irene's room, only he and Irene can see them. For the word written on them is "Bondad," and as "La Voz" says, "Son pocos los que pueden ver el oro de la bondad." Sofía has some of these coins, also, but lacks the imagination to see them. When Irene calls Dimas and the rest of the family to see the coins, which she hopes will prevent him from having her sent away, he believes that they are an hallucination, the proof which he needs to have her committed.

But when the doctor comes, we are surprised to see that it is Dimas, himself, who is taken away. Justina, his wife, has, secretly, convinced the gullible doctor that Dimas' avarice is pathological and that the condition of Irene is the result of the pernicious atmosphere created by him. She has been aided by a business partner of Dimas, who has taken this opportunity to avenge himself upon Dimas for enslaving him for years as the result of a bad debt. The object of the scheme is to obtain Dimas' money.

291Ibid.
While Irene is locked in her room terrified lest the doctor take her away, "La Voz" tells Juanito that the treasure for which he has been sent to search is really Irene: "¡El tesoro es ella! Tú viniste por ese tesoro y me lo vas a traer ahora mismo." "No tengas miedo, porque nos vamos ... a mi país," Juanito says to Irene, "Allí te espera la felicidad." And we see Irene, with Juanito in her arms, singing the lullaby, "su cara transfigurada por el gozo," move slowly away on the "maravilloso camino de luz" outside of the balcony.

The path of light which we see, however, may be, just as the "duende" and "La Voz" may be, merely an hallucination of the protagonist. For, as the spectator hears the lullaby and sees Irene disappear on the "camino increíble," he also hears the shouts of the other characters, who see her dead body on the cobblestones of the street below. The "equívoco" is thus maintained in the stage effect with which the tragedy ends.

Irene may have been able to escape from the sordid reality which surrounds her to a new reality of light. She may, thus, have reached the world for which Ignacio longed but could not find—perhaps because she, unlike Ignacio, represents "la bondad."

The other members of the household, however, remain trapped in their world of darkness. Daniel, who longs to share
Irene's world, must "aprender a salvarse . . . solo," says "La Voz," "Esta es la prueba que le está destinada." The mother, as the result of her plot against her husband, is now imprisoned by a tyranny far greater than Dimas' avarice, that of her conscience.

Some reviewers have criticized the failure of the author to "atreverse a marcar claramente la realidad de lo maravilloso." But, as we have seen, tragedy, according to Buero, except in cases of extreme affirmation, presents, however hopefully, a "problemática" for which there is rarely any conclusive solution. It depicts the "human condition": the struggle between doubt and faith, between "darkness" and "light."

Irene may, like Silvano in Aventura en lo gris, have lived her dreams, which, according to the epigraph, is the secret of "the soul which has been saved." "El secreto del alma redimada: vivir los sueños al soñar la vida." (Miguel de Unamuno, Cancionero.) She may, on the other hand, have been the victim of hallucinations; for as we have seen, hope is often "íronica" and "dudosa." By maintaining this "equivoco," the author hopes to "inquietar y hacer

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292 Torrente, Rev. of Irene o el tesoro, from Arriba, reprinted in Teatro español 1954-55, p. 184.

pensar," and to "mostrar que las cosas del mundo nunca tienen una sola perspectiva." 294

This tragedy, like En la ardiente oscuridad, may be called "multifacética por lo abundante de sus planos y los interrogantes que plantea."295 This ambivalence, so characteristic of Buero's works, is, of course, neither pessimistic nor fatalistic. For in this tragedy, as in En la ardiente oscuridad, there is suggested, although not affirmed, the possibility of man's reaching a transcendent reality, a new world of "light."

294 Buero, "Comentario," Irene ----, pp. 122-123.

V. CONCLUSION

Buero's theater has been viewed, in Buero's terms, as a "search for truth," the truth which will permit man to realize himself and to find a metaphysical basis for life. This truth is symbolized by "la luz." Buero often uses in his theater a double metaphor: "luz-tinieblas" and "ceguera-visión." The struggle for "luz" is a struggle against "las tinieblas": one's own, those imposed by others, or those imposed by an inscrutable destiny.

We have divided Buero's tragedies into two major categories according to the two major themes with which, in his own words, tragedy deals: the difficult struggle of man to (1) "realizar su personalidad" and (2) "encontrar una razón al mundo."¹ These two struggles, however, are almost never mutually exclusive; for "lo trascendente" is rooted in everyday life. The first group is subdivided into those tragedies which deal primarily with man's struggle to attain satisfactory personal relationships, or what Buero has called to "superar la soledad

¹Buero, "La tragedia," El teatro ..., p. 68.
humana, " and those which deal primarily with man's struggle to achieve something worthwhile to give meaning to life.

In all of Buero's tragedies man is depicted as searching for something, for truth, for hope, for the "light." We see man torn between his limitations and his longings, between his dreams and reality, between "darkness" and "light."

Buero defines tragedy as "el perenne conflicto entre libertad y necesidad,"\(^2\) or as "la lucha del hombre, con sus limitaciones, por su libertad."\(^3\) In those works which deal mainly with the struggle to establish meaningful personal relationships, this struggle takes the form of "la tensión entre ser humano y ser humano," to use Buero's terminology, as we have seen in the cases of Penelope and Ulysses, Enrique and Susana in *La señal que se espera*, Silverio and Pilar in *Hoy es fiesta*, Juan and Adela in *Las cartas boca abajo*, etc. In those tragedies which deal mainly with man's effort to realize something to give meaning to life, this struggle takes the form of "la tensión entre individuo y colectividad," as man struggles to overcome certain obstacles of a social or economic nature imposed by society, as is seen in the cases of Fernando and Urbano, David, Esquilache, and Velázquez.\(^4\)

\(^{2}\)Ibid., p. 85.

\(^{3}\)Buero, "La ceguera en mi teatro," *La Carreta*, No. 12 (September, 1963), p. 5.
In those tragedies which deal with man's effort to find a metaphysical basis for life, it takes the form of "la tensión del hombre con lo Absoluto," as we have seen in the cases of Ignacio, Carlos, and Irene. In all three groups the struggle which tragedy proposes often takes the form of "la tensión del hombre consigo mismo," illustrated by Silverio, by Juan in Las cartas boca abajo, by Esquilache and many others.

This tragic struggle does not inexorably result in the triumph of "necessity"; for tragedy is not, for Buero, an expression of a "destino adverso" or a "necesidad inexorable." Tragedy, Buero has stated, may often end, not only in "superación espiritual" or "ennoblecimiento interno," but also in "el vencimiento del hado." Many of Buero's tragedies end with the internal victory of the protagonist, a term which Buero has used in connection with one of his protagonists, Penelope. Internal victory comes as the result of spiritual ennoblement, as the protagonist in his poetic world undergoes, as the result of suffering, a fictional catharsis or purification which brings a calmness, serenity, and understanding. This purification or spiritual elevation of the protagonist leads at times to an actual triumph over destiny, that is, to a victory which is external as well as internal, in hope fulfilled.

\[4\text{Ibid., p. 71.}\]
In the first group of tragedies, *La señal que se espera* and *Madrugada* end with the fulfillment of hope. Susana, Enrique, Luis, and Julián, through their faith and will to believe, gain the understanding which will permit them to avoid the errors which caused their past unhappiness. Amalia wins her struggle to learn the truth about her relationship with Mauricio, and this truth signifies the complete triumph of her love.

*La tejedora de sueños*, *Casi un cuento de hadas*, and *Hoy es fiesta* all end with the internal victory of the protagonists. Penelope will always be young and beautiful in the "sueño eterno" of Amphinomous; and from her internal victory springs her infinite hope in the day when she will meet him in a world beyond death. Leticia, by choosing the real love of Riquet, which it will be difficult, if not impossible, to fulfill, wins an interior victory similar to that of Penelope. And it is this interior victory which enables her, like Penelope, to live in hope, although she can no longer see the handsome prince which was her ideal. Silverio in *Hoy es fiesta* likewise wins an internal victory as he compensates for the death of Pilar's daughter by saving Daniela and as he decides to clarify his relationship with his wife by confessing his guilt. Since she dies first, however, he will never be certain of her pardon, and can only hope that somehow she can hear his
words beyond death. As we see in *La tejedora de sueños* and *Hoy es fiesta*, hope in the earthly solution of human sorrow and in the metaphysical justification of the world are often closely bound together and may be, as Buero has suggested, in essence the same.

*Las cartas boca abajo* ends with the internal victory of Juan who succeeds in clarifying his relationship with his wife and in gaining the respect and love of his son. For Adela, however, who has resisted showing her cards, there remains but loneliness and fear. Only *Las palabras en la arena* ends in unmitigated catastrophe; but it too orientates the spectator toward hope. For, as Buero has implied, by clarifying the mistakes of Asaf, it invites us to avoid them.

The tragedies in the second group, likewise, conclude often with the interior triumph of the protagonists. Silvano, the history professor of *Aventura en lo gris*, sacrifices himself for a child symbolic of his hopes of peace for the future. Esquilache, who tries to "curar la terca ceguera del país," goes voluntarily into exile in order to avoid causing a civil war. Velázquez, who strives to paint the moral blindness of his times, risks royal disfavor by declaring his "profunda e irremediable rebeldía." Although all three go down to external defeat, to death, exile, or
royal disfavor, their external defeat obviously implies the survival of their inner ideals and hopes.

*El terror inmóvil* concludes with the internal victory of Regino, for whom every brick in his factory represents a triumph; but in failure for Alvaro, who has accomplished nothing to give his life meaning. *Historia de una escalera*, likewise, ends in defeat for the protagonist, who wants to become an engineer but who lacks the will power to overcome the economic and social obstacles imposed by his environment. There remains, however, hope for his son, *El concierto de San Ovidio*, likewise ends in complete defeat for the protagonist who is unable to overcome the obstacle imposed by his physical handicap. His hopes, however, live on in those whom he has influenced.

In the third group, Ignacio suffers an external defeat; but his hopes in a transcendent reality symbolized by the stars live on in his murderer. The ending of *Irene o el tesoro* is equivocal. The tragedy may conclude in hope fulfilled as the protagonist discovers a world of "diamantina claridad," or simply in the death of the protagonist.

From an analysis of Buero's tragedies it is evident that he has followed very closely his own concept of "lo trágico" as an idea open, either implicitly or explicitly, to "las mayores
There are usually, however, no definitive solutions presented to problems of either of a social or of a metaphysical nature. For "lo trágico," as Buero conceives of it, is founded, not on concrete affirmations, but on hope.

The purpose of tragedy is, according to Buero, to depict the "human condition," which he considers a continuing struggle between doubt and faith, with the "eternal result of hope." As we have seen, Buero conceives of all tragedies as lying between two opposite poles, those of faith and of doubt. Their position between these poles determines the degree of hope found within them, or "el grado en que la fe y la duda combaten en su seno." Some of Buero's tragedies, such as La señal que se espera and Madrugada, are obviously nearer the pole of faith; others, such as Las palabras en la arena, are nearer the opposite pole of doubt. But hope, to some extent, is always present; for it is, according to Buero, essential to tragedy.

Buero has stated that "el meollo de toda tragedia está formado por el problema de la esperanza incluso en las

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5Buero, "La tragedia," El teatro . . ., p. 77.
más aparentemente desesperanzada." In Buero's protagonists faith constantly struggles with doubt. They doubt, but at the same time, they have faith, even when the obstacles are the greatest. For they desire the "light" intensely.

The constant result of this conflict is a continuing hope. This hope is often desperate and anguished; but it is, nevertheless, hope. For, according to Buero, a man could not despair were he not able to hope. Moreover, states Buero, "desesperanza" and "esperanza" are "sólo grados, o caras falaces, de algo grandioso e inmutable que está más allá de todas las tragedias, pero a lo que sólo por ellas podemos arribar."7

The heroes in Buero's theater are the dreamers who rebel against their limitations. More mystical than rational, they always strive for what Buero has called a "si lleno de luz—even though there may be no rational possibility of realizing their dreams. Buero's heroes are not the cynics or the rationalists, such as Ulysses, Armando in Casi un cuento de hadas, Ensenada in Un soñador para un pueblo.

7Ibid., p. 100.
Nazario in *El concierto de San Ovidio*, or Carlos in *En la ardiente oscuridad*, but men of immense faith, despite their doubts, and men of great will power. Amphinomus, Penelope, Amalia, David, Ignacio, Silvano, Esquilache and many others stand as symbols of man's hope in attaining the "light" as they strive desperately to realize themselves and to find a meaning in life.

Thus, "lo trágico," as conceived by Buero is always positive, never negative. Buero's tragedies propose "el encuentro con aquellas verdades ... que podrían, acaso, liberarnos de nuestras cegueras." They propose this, but they do not affirm it. The attitude of Buero toward the struggle for truth or "light" which tragedy proposes, is therefore, hardly the "'sí' lleno de luz" for which he says the writer of tragedy longs, that is, an attitude of faith or of complete affirmation. Since most of Buero's tragedies end with a question rather than with any definitive solution, his attitude is, rather, one of unending hope, that heralded by doña Nieves in *Hoy es fiesta*: "Hay que esperar ... esperar siempre ... La esperanza nunca termina ... La esperanza es infinita."

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1 Date in parentheses indicates the year of initial performance.

2 For convenience the series _Colección Teatro_, published weekly by Ediciones Alfil, Madrid, will be abbreviated as C. T., followed by the number of the publication.

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