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# The search for liberty in the theatre of Alfonso Sastre

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THE SEARCH FOR LIBERTY  
IN THE THEATRE OF ALFONSO SASTRE

BY

DOROTHY THORNTON HUNTER

A THESIS  
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THE SEARCH FOR LIBERTY IN THE THEATRE OF ALFONSO SASTRE

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## PREFACE

Alfonso Sastre, born in 1926, was a child during the Spanish Civil War. His temperament and personality were shaped by a Spain in the state of transition. He has seen coups d' états, dictatorship, a republic and monarchy. With each change of government Spain was searching for a way to unite her divided self, a self which had been divided since the Moors invaded Spain in the eighth century. Sastre has reflected Spain's search for liberty and has produced what he calls a "Theatre of Social Agitation," the fundamental theme of which is revolution. With this type of theatre Sastre proposes to stir the conscience of the Spanish people to the urgency of the need for social action. He expresses in his theatre a profound concern in finding a metaphor for modern man, man left face to face with himself. Man has been left in such a state because in rejecting God to become God Himself, he has cut himself off from his metaphysical and spiritual roots. Proponents of the "God is dead" philosophy stress that man must become God in order to create the society in which man can exist independently of God Almighty.

Through his characters Alfonso Sastre questions man's capacity to exist in a society blighted with social hypocrisy, political injustice, and moral corruption. Each of the protagonists in the plays selected for this thesis seeks to change the status quo through revolutionary means, because present conditions are interfering with his acceptance of his sense of self. The nature of the forces which restrict modern man has frustrated him to the point where he must

either act or be annihilated.

Man wants liberty. He has demanded it since his creation.<sup>1</sup> Sastre, as do other writers of revolutionary theatre, shows that all modern revolt is "born of the spectacle of irrationality, confronted with an unjust and incomprehensible condition." (Albert Camus in L'Homme Révolté).<sup>2</sup> Although Sastre's characters find that the sought-for liberty leads to a new-found servitude, Sastre theorizes that regardless of the consequences, even though they be tragic, man must not become lethargic in his quest for liberty.

Sastre realizes the absurdity of human existence and through a social focus presents modern man's dilemma. He presents the theme of liberty in different situations which cover the gamut of human experiences. The absurdity is dramatized in Isaias Krappo's pronouncement in La mordaza: "Uno es un héroe o un criminal según las circunstancias, aunque el muerto sea el mismo."<sup>3</sup>

Liberty, as expressed in Sastre's theatre, carries with it certain elements of responsibility, and the way the responsibility

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Leonard C. Pronko, in his article "The Revolutionary Theater of Alfonso Sastre," gives us this definition: The revolutionary plays show us an individual or a group who discovers that in order to gain liberty, or to find dignity in his own eyes, or to be faithful to his ideals, he must rebel against some person or force, and this revolt usually entails some act of violence which is irreparable, and often makes life no longer possible. (Tulane Drama Review, Vol. 5 December 1960, p. 113).

2

Robert Brustein, Theatre of Revolt (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1964), p. 8.

3

Alfonso Sastre, Obras Completas (Madrid: Aguilar, 1967), p. 335.

is shouldered determines the destiny of the individual involved. Alfonso Sastre echoes the French existentialist, Jean-Paul Sartre, whose philosophy proposes that the "inescapable freedom of positing values creates a disquieting responsibility; through his actions the individual decides not only what represents value for him, but what represents value for man, for all men." For Sartre man has no choice but to make choices, to exercise his freedom of choice which is the basis of all his acts. In this way man constantly defines himself; he creates his own destiny. This idea is supported in Sastre's theatre. In their search for liberty the characters find themselves in situations in which choice is the prerequisite to freedom. The choices bring tragedy. However, for Sastre, tragedy provides the foundation on which hope for a better future is built.

4

Helen and George Sebba, trans., Sartre and Camus--Literature of Existence, Leo Pollman (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1970), p. 5.

## CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
Preface	i
I. Sastre's Concept of Theatre.....	1
II. The Search for Liberty .....	9
III. The Dilemma: Hero or Criminal--Who Is Guilty? ...	43
IV. Hope from Tragedy .....	68
Conclusion .....	78
Appendix .....	81
Bibliography .....	82
Vita .....	85



## CHAPTER I

### SASTRE'S CONCEPT OF THEATRE

Alfonso Sastre has been regarded by many critics as the most promising dramatist to revitalize the dormant Spanish theatre. Sastre considers the theatre as a "social art" and produces what he calls a "Theatre of Social Agitation." States Sastre in "Manifiesto del T.A.S. (Teatro de Agitación Social)":

- Concebimos el teatro como un "arte social" en dos sentidos:
- (a) Porque el teatro no puede reducir la contemplación estética de una minoría refinada. El teatro lleva en su sangre la exigencia de un gran proyección social.
  - (b) Porque esta proyección social del teatro no puede ser ya meramente artística.<sup>5</sup>

The T.A.S., according to Sastre,

. . . no es un teatro de Partido. El T.A.S. no es, en ningún modo simplemente un "Teatro del Proletariado" . . . , el T.A.S. tiene una visión total de la sociedad, y no trabaja exclusivamente sobre los problemas de una determinada clase.<sup>6</sup>

Thus in explaining what the T.A.S. is not, Sastre is distinguishing his theatre from the traditional concept of popular theatre as theatre of the people, or art for the people. He elevates his theatre above the "burgues" by making it problematic. He presents a problem, but he leaves the solution of the problem to his audience. Hence, Sastre's theatre is not merely entertainment, but it demands an audience which can interpret, form opinions, and draw conclusions.

<sup>5</sup> Alfonso Sastre, Op.cit., p. 99. Hereafter T.A.S. will be used.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 100-102.

Sastre further explains the T.A.S. by saying that although it is a profound negation of all prevailing theatrical order, it attempts to incorporate itself normally to national life with the just and legitimate pretension of establishing itself as the authentic National Theatre. For Sastre, a social theatre as a national theatre fits better into a social state than a teatro burgues which is animated by a weak and vague artistic pretension and loses its strength day by day because of such pretension. Sastre, in this instance, is distinguishing his theatre from the "cinema" in which the audience views reality through rose-colored glasses, and the spectacular takes the place of serious contemplation.

The fundamental theme in Sastre's theatre is revolution. However, this does not mean that the playwright is a political rebel, as the personal convictions of the dramatist have no place in the expression of his art. Robert Brustein describes the modern dramatist as essentially a "metaphysical rebel," one who protests against his condition and against the whole of creation, and his art as the expression of a spiritual condition.<sup>7</sup> The modern dramatist is a militant of the ideal. He tries to reconstruct a disordered, chaotic world, thus making of himself an anarchistic individualist with Quixotic fantasies.

Sastre emphasizes in "Manifiesto. . .":

Nosotros no somos políticos, sino hombres de teatro; pero como hombres. . . ., creemos en la urgencia de una agitación de la vida español.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Brustein, Op. cit., pp. 8-9.

<sup>8</sup> Alfonso Sastre, Op. cit., p. 99.

Sastre feels that the social element is a category superior to the purely artistic and expresses profound concern in bringing together the divided parts of modern man. In each of the plays selected for this thesis the protagonist is dissatisfied with some situations, and in each case the characters seek change through revolutionary means. In Sastre's theatre revolution carries the generally accepted connotations of rebellion, violence, suffering, bloodshed, tyranny, oppression, civil disobedience, anarchy, and even death. All of these elements are present in Tierra roja.

Throughout history rebellion has not occurred to benefit the affluent. The wealthy possess power, influence and prestige. It has been the common man, the proletarian, who has borne the brunt of injustices, who has suffered from humiliation, who has been seeking a better way of life, who has been overtaxed and underpaid, who has felt the deepest despair, and who has experienced the greatest frustration.

Alfonso Sastre presents the human drama of rebellion which is a traditional theme since the Fall. A cry for liberty is heard from the first anarchist, Satan, who with his rebellious host war in heaven against the Almighty, and who, according to tradition, is cast out of heaven and "Hurl'd headlong. . . down to bottomless perdition there to dwell/ In Adamantine Chains and penal fire."<sup>9</sup> Man, created in God's own image, rebels and commits civil

9

John Milton, "Paradise Lost," The Student's Milton (New York: F. S. Croft, 1947), pp. 160-161.

disobedience by eating of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil after having been forbidden to do so. Condemned for his action, Man is driven from the garden of Eden to face an awesome and challenging unknown. Man has liberty, and the effects of that liberty are still being tested. In light of the Fall God is a tyrant who imposes strenuous laws on both his celestial and terrestrial subjects, then condemns them to everlasting torment when they rebel. The God of love and mercy, patience and forgiveness can transform Himself into a ruthless dictator.

In Sastre there is a dominant, totalitarian God-like force which compels his characters to react in a violent manner. The consequences of the rebellious action are tragic for both the tyrant and the oppressed, as both are affected, although in different ways, by liberty.<sup>10</sup>

La categoría del tema es una piedra fundamental del arte y la literatura de todos los tiempos. El "Social realismo" apunta a los grandes temas de un tiempo en que lo social se ha erigido en categoría suprema de la preocupación humana.<sup>11</sup>

Revolution, which is Sastre's fundamental theme, is certainly a contemporary social concern, for from all parts of the globe can be heard pleas for liberty. Sastre cannot limit himself strictly to Spanish sources for the development of his type of theatre. Therefore, in order to present a Theatre of Social Agitation, he has to

<sup>10</sup>For the purpose of this study the term liberty is used, because Sastre implies that his characters are seeking a freedom that carries with it some element of responsibility. The matter of guilt is a main concern of the characters.

<sup>11</sup>Primer Acto 3, p. 113.

draw from diverse writers as he states in "Manifiesto . . .":

Nuestro deseo hubiera sido trabajar solo sobre material español, pero ahora, no existe.<sup>12</sup>

Sastre's dramatic sources cover most of Europe, and he lists such dramatists as Upton Sinclair, Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller, Jean-Paul Sartre, Bertolt Brecht and John Galsworthy as having been

13

influential in the development of his theatre. Thus in depict-

ing modern Spanish man, Sastre has depicted the universal

twentieth century man with his preoccupation with trying to give

meaning to an absurd existence. Nathan Scott, in Man in the Modern

Theatre, explains absurd in this matter:

The absurd has been defined in various ways. It is basically that which man recognizes as the disparity between what he hopes for and what seems to be. He yearns for some measure of happiness in an orderly, a rational, and a reasonably predictable world; when he finds misery in a disorderly world, he is oppressed by the disparity between the universe as he wishes it to be and as he sees it.<sup>14</sup>

Modern man's existence is complicated by the age in which he lives. Living in a technological and scientific era, he has become alienated from nature as a result of mechanization and industrialization. Machines have reduced modern man from a personality to a series of digits; machines have brought him closer to other men in remote parts of the earth while at the same time estranged him from

12

Ibid., p. 101.

13

Primer Acto 3, pp. 100-101.

14

Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1965, p. 77.

his own family; machines have produced in him a feeling of security while at the same time filled him with unprecedented anxieties; machines have carried him to solve the mysteries of the Moon while at the same time increased his problems and pollutions here on Earth; machines have made him wealthy and also increased his poverty. These ambiguities add to the complexity of modern man and make him question the purpose of his existence. Ionesco has said in defining his understanding of absurd:

Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose. . . Cut off from his religious, metaphysical and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless.<sup>15</sup>

Modern man, finding himself in such a predicament, attempts to socialize himself, since he is chiefly an urban creature.

Alfonso Sastre realizes the absurdity of modern man's existence and through a social focus concerns himself with "dramatizing the difficulty of maintaining one's sense of self within the context of demoralizing social forces."<sup>16</sup> The social forces which influence modern man are controlled by an elite minority. This minority of wealthy aristocrats and upper class "newly rich" not only have control of the economic and political strata of society, but also determine taste in art, music, fiction, and drama. Thus Leonard C. Pronko enunciates Sastre's uniqueness by stating that "when we

15

Martin Esslin, Theatre of the Absurd (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1964), p. 5, citing Eugene Ionesco, "Dans les armes de la ville," Cahier de la Compagnie Madeleine Renard-Jean-Louis Barrault, Paris no 20, October 1957.

16

Robert W. Corrigan (ed.), New Theatre of Europe (New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1963), p. 21.

consider that the majority of plays produced in Spain are intended to amuse a public of middle-class spectators without disturbing them too much, Sastre's originality is at once apparent.<sup>17</sup> Sastre, therefore, has taken the steps necessary to change the image of the Spanish theatre, first, by rejecting the traditional notion of "popular theatre"--el T.A.S. no es, en ningun modo simplemente un teatro del Proletariado," and, secondly, by broadening his social vision--"el T.A.S. tiene una vision total de la sociedad, y no trabaja exclusivamente sobre los problemas de una determinada clase."<sup>18</sup> In his total vision of society Alfonso Sastre has shown that there is more than one point of view to every problem and that the problems with which he deals in his theatre are not exclusively Spanish, but European. This broad vision makes him more of a European dramatist than simply another Spanish playwright. In "Coloquios sobre problemas actuales del teatro en España" Sastre makes this provocative statement:

El teatro español es actualmente un teatro provincial, incomunicado con el mundo. Se hace precisa la comunicación con ese mundo, la apertura de plataformas exteriores para nuestro teatro. . .<sup>19</sup>

Thus Sastre offers a cosmopolitan viewpoint of society and its problems, because of his feeling that the time for isolation is over.

17

Tulane Drama Review, 5, December 1960, p. 111.

18

Primer Acto 3, p. 102.

19

Ibid., p. 107.

In Sastre's theatre the theme of liberty is carried out in social situations which cover a wide range of human experiences. "Nosotros no somos politicos. . .," states Sastre in his "Manifiesto del T.A.S." However, when his plays are analyzed, it can be seen that Sastre cannot avoid portraying the times in which he is writing. Sastre's times, our times, are definitely political in scope, as politics has infiltrated every segment of modern man's existence, from the church to the market place, from war to real estate, from medicine to marriage, from the city to the farm. A sociologically-oriented writer like Sastre cannot evade an issue which is so prominent in the life of twentieth century man.

Sastre's theatre is pedagogic in that he uses his plays to convey a message to this politically indoctrinated society. In his message he shows the social and psychological conflicts which plague his characters as they search for liberty. He lays open to interpretation the question of guilt as man finds himself in a dilemma after having acquired liberty. The above revelations are discussed in the following two chapters. It would appear that man is tragically caught in his search for liberty. But in Chapter IV of this paper Sastre uses tragedy as an agent to provide an impetus for man's continued effort to acquire liberty. There is the hope that one day the effort will be rewarded by victory.



## CHAPTER II

### THE SEARCH FOR LIBERTY

Liberty from some force which is interfering with man's finding dignity in his own eyes, or being true to an ideal, becomes an obsession with the characters in Alfonso Sastre's plays.

In Escuadra hacia la muerte Sastre reveals that sought-for liberty leads to a new-found servitude. The soldiers in this play rebel against the God-image and discover that after they remove it, they cannot restore order in their lives. They find themselves in a more chaotic situation than they are before they murder Goban, their commanding officer. The change from monarchy to autonomy leads to anarchy. The freedom which Sastre advocates carries with it responsibility. When each soldier is left face to face with his conscience and the responsibility which being on his own entails, questioning and self-motification begin. When the matter of guilt arises, each soldier tries to find an excuse for his irrationality in killing Goban, and each uses his own method to exonerate himself. They create for themselves a situation in which the inevitable, Death, lay in wait to claim her victims.

Escuadra hacia la muerte is set in a desolate part of an unnamed country during the Third World War. Five soldiers have been assigned to a squad whose mission is to locate the enemies and rout them out before the rest of the army arrives. These men have been designated to this unit because of crimes each has committed at some

prior time. In such a unit as this one the chance for life or death finds the odds on the side of death. Each man knows this, and this knowledge increases the tension, as is evidenced in the following conversation:

Javier-- . . . Somos una escuadra condenados a muerte.  
 Andres-- No es peor. . . , de condenados a esperar la muerte. A los condenados a muerte los matan. Nosotros. . . estamos viviendo.  
 . . . . .  
 Andres-- Nosotros ya estamos muertos.<sup>20</sup>

The five soldiers have been placed under the command of a maniacal disciplinarian whose crime has caused him to be demoted and made commandant of this particular squad.

Goban-- Si queréis saberlo, yo no soy aquí para castigaros. Yo no soy otra cosa que un castigado mas. No soy un Santo. Si lo fuera, no estaría con vosotros.  
 (Cuadro Primero)

Goban, the sergeant who has been demoted to corporal, is totally committed to the military, so much so that he has become insensitive and inhuman. His tyrannical, autocratic demeanor divides the unit into absolute monarch and subjects. His insistence on rigid and inflexible discipline is met with mute, but inward rejection by the soldiers under his command.

Pedro-- El campamento. La instrucción. Seis, Siete horas marchando bajo el sol, cuando el sargento no tiene compasión de ti. . . , ¡un! idos!, ¡un! idos! . . . , y tú sólo pides tumbarte boca arriba como una bestia reventada. Pero no hay piedad. Izquierda, derecha, desplegarse, un! dos! Paso ligero. . . , ¡un! idos! Lo peor es eso. Largas marchas sin sentido. Caminos que no van a ninguna parte. (Cuadro segundo)

Every day the tension mounts until one day it explodes into anger. The anger causes irrational behavior. Thus, on Christmas night during a drinking spree, Goban is murdered.

The soldiers have unburdened themselves of that force which has kept them mentally and physically imprisoned. They have gained liberty. Each soldier can now do exactly what he wants to do. There is no restrictive force. As a result of this freedom, there is a breakdown in discipline, and slowly the unit falls apart. Anarchy becomes evident. The soldiers tiring of the lack of organization, after a while, appoint one of their number to serve as leader and coordinator of the group. This leader is not strong enough to hold the unit together. It finally disintegrates completely. Two of the soldiers go off to see if they can find a village with some signs of life; one of the soldiers hangs himself; the fourth accepts the responsibility for the murder of Goban and decides to wait for the authorities and subsequent court-martial with the fifth, who is innocent because he was on guard duty the night of the crime.

In Escuadra hacia la muerte the order which the soldiers seek to change leads to further disorder, because the soldiers have not realized their dependence on Goban to maintain balance in their lives. Goban can be said to represent the metaphysical aspect of society in that he symbolizes God, whose laws regulate both man and nature. He can also be said to represent the physical aspect of society in that he symbolizes existing moral and social values.

The dilemma in which historic man finds himself after being banished from Eden has been a part of the human drama of contemporary man. The problem of trying to give meaning to an existence independent of God has plagued mankind through the centuries, and it manifests itself in the actions and reactions of the soldiers in Escuadra hacia la muerte. Adam's descendents killed God because they want liberty. God is dead! propounds Nietzsche and, according to Robert Brustein in Theatre of Revolt, Nietzsche remains the most seminal philosophical influence on the theatre of revolt, the intellect against which almost every modern dramatist must measure his own.<sup>21</sup> It has also been noted by Brustein that when Nietzsche declares the death of God, he declares the death of all traditional values as well. For the philosopher, man can create new values only by becoming God; the only alternative to nihilism lies in revolt.

In Escuadra hacia la muerte the murder of Goban is an act of declaring the death to traditional army discipline and routine, a means of changing the "establishment." By removing the creator of their situation, the soldiers immediately set themselves up as gods. Goban has already sought to place himself in the position of God where absolute monarchy has reduced his "subjects" to puppets. Because of his position Goban has made the campsite his universe, shaping it according to his own will. Goban can control the physical movements of his men and their willpower, but evidently he forgets

that he cannot control the will itself.

The will and its relationship to human behavior have been the subject of both lay and theological discussions for centuries. Theologians like Saint Thomas Aquinas see the will as originating from God. Thus the nature of the will is spiritual. Philosophers like Kant and Hegel attribute the will to man alone, equating it to reason. And the discussions continue. Sartre shows that the soldiers in Escuadra hacia la muerte have secretly desired the end which their action obtains. They desire relief from the tormentor who thwart their willpower. They will to have liberty. Jean-Paul Sartre points out in the fourth part of his book Being and Nothing:

. . .to act is to modify the shape of the world; it is to arrange means in view of an end; it is to produce an organized instrument complex such that by a series of concatenations and connections the modification effected on one of the links cause modifications throughout the series and finally produces an anticipated result.<sup>23</sup>

The soldiers in Escuadra hacia la muerte act. There is a modification of circumstances, but instead of bringing about a better situation, the rebellion creates a worse condition, as the anxieties which have led to the murder of Goban bring forth feelings of guilt which produce even greater anxieties. Therefore, for the

22

Will, in this instance, signifies a motivating force which turns thought into action.

23

Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothing, Hazel E. Barnes, (trans) (New York: Citadel Press, 1971), p. 409.

soldiers in this play liberty brings a different type of enslavement, an enslavement to conscience.

La mordaza also shows that sought-for liberty leads to a new-found servitude. After Isaias Krappo has been arrested for his crime and has been killed in his attempt to escape from prison, the family is free from their tyrannical God-image. But the knowledge that they have betrayed him, condemned him, and "crucified" him leads to a mental turmoil even greater than they suffer before they seek release from Isaias' unbearable clutches.

" . . .Es malo el verano. Es cuando se cometen los crímenes. Cuando los hombres sacan las navajas por nada y corre la sangre. Todos los crímenes ocurren en verano. . ."

Antonia, wife of Isaias Krappo, onetime leader of the underground movement, sets the stage for the action of La mordaza in the first scene of the play.

Isaias Krappo has committed two grave sins, both known only to his daughter-in-law Luisa. He has made improper advances to Luisa and has murdered a comrade in war atrocities in order to silence him about his own past inhumanity. Krappo has threatened Luisa if she reveals his secrets. In other words, he gags her into silence, but the psychological discomfort produced by such a binding prompts her to seek relief. After serious thought about the probable consequences she tells her husband and the rest of the family about the murder. When the police begin their investigation after the corpse has been discovered, the family remain silent. The entire Krappo family has been gaged into silence because of loyalty to the head of the family. However, the continuous presence

of the investigating officer and the daily news coverage about the lack of evidence to solve the mysterious murder intensify the feeling of repugnance that Luisa has for the old man. No longer able to contain herself, she goes to the police and tells them what she knows. Krappo is arrested and imprisoned after having predicted that his family will always feel his death on their conscience. He tries to escape and is killed in the attempt.

Isaias Krappo, as the God-image, the head of the household, has his family completely under his control. They fear him because of his strength. He possesses a magnitude and a magnetism which draw from others what he wants. Although the members of the family adhere to his wishes, each has his own secret feelings about him. His wife says in the first scene:

"Yo rezo mucho por ti, Isaias, por la salvación de tu alma..." She has said this before the crimes have been committed, revealing that she may be aware of the type of man that he really is. As his wife she senses his imperfections, but because she is a good, deeply religious woman, she remains loyal to him, catering to him and accepting him as he presents himself.

Teo expresses his feelings for his father in the third scene:

Pues ese es nuestro padre; una especie de demonio que nos atormenta. . . Trata mal a nuestra madre. No puedo sufrir el tono en que le habla. . . ¡El asqueroso viejo!<sup>24</sup>

And at another time in the same scene:

. . . Porque le tengo miedo. Porque nada más verlo estoy temblando como mujer. Porque sé que él se enterara de que lo había delatado y pudiera tenerme un solo momento a su alcance me estrangularía. . .<sup>25</sup>

When Juan, Luisa's husband, is told of the crime, his feeling of compassion for his father comes out in his conversation with his wife:

Yo se lo perdono a mi padre. Para mí no es un criminal. . . Y sin embargo, hay que perdonarle, hay que perdonarle, hay que perdonárselo todo a mi padre! Es muy viejo y tenemos que ser bueno con él en estos momentos. (Cuadro Tercero).<sup>26</sup>

Luisa has restrained herself as long as she has because of fear of losing the love and respect of her husband. But her true feeling reveals itself in her action when Krappo is apprehended by the police. In the sixth scene:

(Luisa entonces se echa a reír nerviosamente. Se ríe de Isaias. Lo mira y se ríe.)<sup>27</sup>

The youngest son, Jandro, has genuine filial love for his father, as he displays in the Epilogue:

. . . pienso que nuestro padre, por muchas cosas terribles que haya hecho, se merece nuestro respecto de hijos. . . Y a ti, Luisa. . . Yo no te perdono. . . No te perdonaré nunca.<sup>28</sup>

25

p. 315.

26

p. 312.

27

p. 337

28

p. 339



Although the feelings which the members of the Krappo family have for Isaias are far from admiration, they feel bound to him and to each other by the power of love in its different forms. Antonia is bound by her marriage vows. Marriage restricts liberty. Jaun, Luisa and Jandro fear the loss of social status and the respect of friends and neighbors. Thus, they are bound together by family and personal pride. Pride, especially false pride, is a deterrent to liberty. They have gagged themselves because of this kind of pride. Pride replaces love in their case.

Miguel de Unamuno writes in the seventh chapter of Del sentimiento tragico de la vida:

Es el amor . . . lo mas trágico en el mundo y en la vida hay; es el amor hijo del engaño y padre de desengaño; es el amor el consuelo en el desconsuelo, es la única medicina contra la muerte, siendo como es de ella hermana.<sup>29</sup>

Love restricts liberty, because in love space is reduced. Whether the love is erotic, parental or fraternal, the space surrounding the lover always includes someone else. In discussing the spatiality of love, William A. Sadler, Jr. examines this phenomenon and writes:

In love the freedom of one individual interpenetrates that of another. The result is. . . a new structure of human transcendence.<sup>30</sup>

29

Miguel de Unamuno, Del sentimiento trágico de la vida (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe S.A., Austral, lla, 1967), p. 104.

30

William A. Sadler, Jr., Existence and Love (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), p. 174.

This "new structure of human transcendence," this inexplicable magnetism which made the family cling to Isaias and to each other is the very power which has them enchained. However, Teo, the son who hates his father because he fears him intensely and because the father has intimidated him, is the only member of the family who can see reality. Love has blinded the others and has shrouded reality from them. In this instance, hate is a liberator for Teo.

After Isaias has been arrested and killed in his escape bid, the family becomes enslaved by a sense of guilt just as Isaias has predicted. The family have rid themselves of their tyrannical God-image, but the mental chaos which ensued is far worse than anything they endure when they have a "ruler." Liberty for the Krappo family means being able to shoulder the responsibility of living with the death of Isaias on their consciences.

In La sangre de Dios Alfonso Sastre blends mythological, historical and theological concepts of bondage. The protagonist in this play rejects liberty in favor of enslavement because he cannot accept the responsibility of facing his real self. Parthon uses religious faith as a hole in which to bury his head and, like the ostrich, forgets that the rest of himself is still in view and that the world, the real world, is still going on around him. He uses unswerving belief in God as a cloak under which is hidden the dagger with which he will murder his only son, thus closing the door to the future.

This drama parallels that of the Biblical drama of Abraham

and his son Issac. Professor Parthon has lost his second son through death. The other members of the family have been greatly affected by the death, but the professor appears unmoved by the tragedy. His wife, Laura, loses her power of speech; his oldest son, Ben, has been experiencing fits of trembling and intense fear of the dark; the dog, "Grok," has been howling for several nights. It is strangely amazing that the professor is bearing all of the adversities with apparent calm.

Luis Opuls, the professor's former student, visits him shortly after the tragedy and, observing the apparent composure of his teacher in the face of all of his misfortunes, comments in the First Act:

Quiero decir que detrás de todo eso había un  
hombre con fe. . . La fe en Dios.<sup>31</sup>

Parthon relates to Opuls some unusual experiences which he has encountered since his son's death. Parthon tells of having heard the voice of God and later of having seen God in person. Opuls finds the last revelation hard to believe, but Parthon insists:

No es la imagen, Luis. . . Es Dios, que baja hasta mí  
y me habla.<sup>32</sup>

Opuls still is not convinced. However, during Opuls' sojourn Parthon has a visit from God. Since Opuls can neither hear nor see Him, on noticing the pallor of the professor's face, he goes

31  
p. 489.

32  
p. 495.

to summon Ben. While Opuls is out of the room, the voice of God commands Parthon to kill his only surviving son. In obedience to the will of God Parthon prepares himself to commit the act. Ben docilely submits himself to his father's will and wish. A murder is committed.

At the trial the prosecutor asks for the death penalty, but the defense asks that Parthon be incarcerated in a mental institution. The verdict favors the defense attorney.

Upon his return several years later Parthon finds his wife greatly changed. She has regained her power of speech; her color has returned, and, from all outward appearances, she seems happy and in good spirit. The change is so radical that Parthon cannot refrain from expressing his delight:

"Laura, ahora veo que Dios, en su misericordia, al quitarme a mi hijo, me ha devuelto a mi mujer. . ."<sup>33</sup>

Laura, however is not loving in her welcome, but hostile and bitter. Parthon tries to explain the reasoning behind his murderous action and to make Laura understand that he had no choice but to act in the manner that he did. Laura retorts:

"Un hombre ha matado a su hijo."

Parthon counters with:

"Un hombre ha obedecido a Dios, Laura." (Acto II, cuadro 20)<sup>34</sup>

Parthon thinks that he has killed Ben, for it has been his intention

<sup>33</sup> Aguilar, p. 515.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 519.

to slay his only son in obedience to the directions given him by the voice of God. Therefore, he has been judged by everyone to be guilty of murder by intent. He has, in actuality, slain the dog "Grok," who attacks Sofia, Ben's fiancée, as she enters the garden just as Parthon has the knife raised to commit the murder. The mind of Parthon has been set on killing, and he carries out the dictates of his mind.

The parallel between this play and the Biblical account of Abraham's sacrifice is complete.

The Blood of God (La sangre de Dios) is inspired by Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling, according to Cyrus C. De Coster in his article "Alfonso Sastre" in the Tulane Drama Review.<sup>35</sup> De Coster cites Kierkegaard as one of the foremost spokesmen of authoritarian religion. Kierkegaard exhorts his readers "to become a believer-- nota bene: by adoringly humbling himself under the extraordinary."<sup>36</sup> Kierkegaard extolls Abraham as the "Knight of faith," but even Kierkegaard shows the paradox of faith. Even in the stories of Abraham and Parthon is noted an echo of Isaias Krappo's words:<sup>37</sup> "Uno es un héroe o un criminal según las circunstancias. . ."  
Both of these men carry to completion a murderous act demanded of them by God. The question presented by such an act leaves the

35

Vol. 5 December 1960, p. 125

36

Walter Kaufmann, From Shakespeare to Existentialism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 222.

37

Aguilar, p. 335.

answer open to interpretation.

Faith restricts liberty in that it thwarts creative thought and independent action. Blind faith, such as that possessed by Abraham and Parthou, clouds reason and shrouds reality. Fear of losing favor with God is the burden which both shoulder. The merciful God of whom Parthou spoke appears to Laura and to the families and friends of such Biblical characters as Job and Jonah as a heartless being who permits suffering in order to test his subjects' loyalty, a being who reduces his "subjects" to weaklings, trembling in fear and humble submission before Him.

Parthou has hallucinations about God because he needs to get away from himself during his anguish. He cannot face the reality of what is happening to him. He reaches the point where he is making the first step toward what Kierkegaard calls "infinite resignation." Kierkegaard explains this in Fear and Trembling.<sup>38</sup> Parthou, however, has not attained absolute faith because he is not himself. He has become another personality. Faith in God has become the rose-colored glass through which he can view his predicament. Faith has Parthou enslaved. David E. Roberts writes in Existentialism and Religious Belief:

. . . the individual who immerses himself in the service of God avoids having to grapple with the problems of life for himself. God gives all the answers, and in exchange

38

Lee H. Hollander (Translator), Selections from the Writings of Kierkegaard (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc.), pp. 148-149.

for the promise of ultimate security the believer yields up his birthright of freedom.<sup>39</sup>

Kierkegaard, on the other hand, teaches that freedom is perfect obedience to God and that providence educates a man by teaching him how to employ his spiritual gifts.

Alfonso Sastre has Parthon go through the three stages which Kierkegaard schematizes in connection with freedom: the aesthetic in which despair occurs-- the real cause of despair being a paralysis of the will; the ethical stage in which man becomes self-sufficient, and man confronts the Either/Or. But, according to Kierkegaard, man cannot stand still on either of these two stages, because the aesthetic leads eventually to absolute depravity, and the ethical stage leads eventually to absolute religiousness, which is the third stage.

Parthon becomes so involved in solving his problems and changing his dilemma that he becomes insane and has to be removed from society. His incarceration does not alter his faith. Instead of diminishing it, it strengthens it. Even though his wife tries to convince him that God does not exist, Parthon maintains his stand:

Laura-- Te has dado cuenta por fin que Dios no existe.  
Y la existencia de los hombres no es más que un  
error asqueroso!<sup>40</sup>

Parthon-- . . . . . ¡Creo en Dios! . . . ¡Creo en Dios! ¡Creo en Dios!<sup>41</sup>

39

David E. Roberts, Existentialism and Religious Belief (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 222.

40

Aguilar, p. 520.

41

Ibid., p. 522.

Parthon remains bound by his faith in God. He does not want liberty. He, like the mythological Prometheus, prefers to remain chained to the rock of suffering and oppression; he, like the theological Job, who after having suffered disease, the loss of his family and all of his earthly possessions, remains undaunted in his faith. Abraham and Job preface the historical Christ, who preferred the suffering and humiliation of Calvary in order to point the way to man's complete commitment to God, and to show that in order to preserve an ideal, suffering and even bloodshed are necessary. Liberty from God means enslavement by Satanic forces. For Parthon there is freedom in bondage. The sought-for liberty from his adversities has led to a new-found servitude of religious commitment.

In La cornada Alfonso Sastre uses mythology to parallel the human drama of the struggle for liberty and selfhood. By comparing Marcos to Saturn, Sastre shows that modern man is being devoured by the power of capitalism and greed. José Alba is a selfless creature whose individuality has been swallowed by the dominant power which created him.

Juan Marcos, manager of the torero José Alba, "se dedica a lanzar toreros desconocidos." This is to say, he is a creator of bullfighters. In the prologue to the play, the doctor, during a

42

Liberty, as used in this paper, means freedom from some force which is interfering with the individual's capacity to develop his creative and inventive powers to their fullest extent. It entails man's assuming the responsibility for his own destiny without external influences.

43

Aguilar, p. 880.



conversation with Jiménez, describes the bullfighter Ricardo Platero, whom Marcos had formerly managed as "una creación de Marcos."<sup>44</sup>

Hablo de Marcos. . . Es una comparación sin sentido ya lo sé. . . Me acuerdo de ese cuadro en el que se ve a Saturno devorando a uno de sus hijos. . .<sup>45</sup>

This reference to the mythological Saturn, the Roman god who swallows his children because an oracle predicts that one of them will overthrow him, prompts the suspicion that Alfonso Sastre views anthropogamy as a very important part of existential drama. In "Noticia" to La cornada, Sastre writes:

Yo tengo la impresión de haber escrito el drama de una relación casi antropofágica; algo parecido a un cierto tratamiento del mito Cronos-Saturno: un mito que desdichadamente encuentro vivo en esta sociedad. No es clara, que el horror de la situación proceda de un episodio realmente antropofágico, tal como es en el Saturno devorando a un hijo de Goya. . . ; pero si procede, creo yo, de un suceso de esa índole: se trata de alguien que devora a sus criaturas, de alguien--o quizá de algo--cuya supervivencia esta montada sobre la asfixia de sus creaciones.<sup>46</sup>

José Alba is a physical as well as a mental weakling who needs constant reassurance that he can and will succeed. Marcos has taken advantage of these weaknesses and has completely dominated José's life. On the eve of the biggest fight of his career José Alba's wife shows up at the hotel where he and Marcos are staying. José realizes that he still loves his wife and that she loves him in

44

Ibid., p. 881.

45

Ibid.

46

Ibid., p. 865-869.

spite of his commitment to Marcos. He begs Marcos to continue their relationship even though Gabriela has presented herself, but Marcos refuses his request. José begs for assurance that the fight will end in victory, but Marcos tells him to seek solace in his wife. Marcos then reveals the truth for the first time by pointing out to José that whenever a bullfighter enters the ring, Death is always overshadowing him. This revelation throws José into a state of anxiety and fear. He feels sicker than he has ever felt before, for he knows that he cannot perform unless Marcos is there with him. Unable to face the truth about the fight and his own weak self, he attempts suicide. He stabs himself, but the wound is not fatal. Instead of taking José to a hospital, Marcos secures the aid of a doctor friend who dresses the wound and advises Marcos to rush José to a hospital. Marcos cannot stand disgrace, and cancelling the fight would mean a loss of money and prestige for him. Therefore, instead of following the doctor's orders, Marcos insists that they go to the bullring first.

Marcos--Haremos de acto de presencia, yo pediré la suspensión por el mal tiempo y tiempo y luego con discreción, nos vamos en coche al hospital. ¿De acuerdo? Hazlo por mí. Es lo último que te pido. No quiero verme envuelto en un escándalo.<sup>47</sup>

José dies in the bullring.

Marcos' very existence is controlled by the need for power. Absolute power is as necessary for him as eating and sleeping are for other men. In fact, these things are secondary to the

commitment that the proteges are obliged to make. His control smothers any initiative on the part of those under his tutelage. Marcos' creations are reduced to puppets to be manipulated for his own benefit. Marcos' demand for total commitment is pointed up in the Second Act when José Alba wants the freedom to have his wife with him:

. . . Yo no puedo hacer nada solo con un poco. . . Yo necesito a todo un hombre. . . No puede compartirlo con una mujer ni con nadie. . . 48

Not once in the play is there evidence of Marcos' concern for anyone except himself. Every winning fighter means more wealth for Marcos. Not only is Marcos smothering others with his mania for wealth and power, but this same mania is keeping him from being free himself. He is bound by his own desires and needs. He cannot exist without someone to dominate.

José Alba, using his God-given free will, desires liberty. He wants to unwind the cords of total commitment and self-sacrifice which hold him bound. He wants to stand on his own weak feet with Gabriela to render support. Yet, when the opportunity comes and he finds himself face to face with freedom, he also finds that he has been so used to the cords of domination that he cannot exist without them. When he tries to stand alone, he finds that his knees buckler under the weight of being responsible for his own destiny. Liberty for José Alba entails a responsibility that he cannot

shoulder. Liberty for José Alba results in self-destruction.

Marcos' need for power is as self-consuming as it has consumed others. The death of José Alba leads him to desperation, and he has to find another "victim." He stalks Rafael Pastor to be the next victim of his cannibalistic tendencies. He stalks him as a wolf stalks a lone sheep, or, if one wants to give a theological interpretation to this episode, it can be compared to the temptation of Christ by Satan. Satan, once a god himself, demands a sacrifice; he also offers a reward. In tempting Pastor, Marcos assumes the characteristics of god-Satan as is brought out in the Epilogue in the conversation between Marcos and Rafael

Pastor:

Pastor-- Es. . . la herencia de mi padre. . . Aquí he crecido yo. . . , entre estas paredes.

Marcos-- Echalo todo por la borda.

Pastor-- Es. . . mucho.

Marcos-- Es precio ridículo por lo que tú podrías conseguir.<sup>49</sup>

Rafael Pastor does not yield to the temptation of the god-Satan because he knows the enslavement which will follow. This act by Pastor is a tremendous sacrifice, but for him, human dignity means more than attaching himself to a Satan-Saturnine dictator. Rafael Pastor stands in his rebellion very much as the Good Shepherd stands against the evils of moral and spiritual decay and the political corruption of His time. Pastor has gained liberty-- the liberty which comes with being able to face himself,

being able to come to grips with his own destiny, whatever it may be. His future will include, in all probability, his being bound to the task of working hard to earn an honest living.

The characters in La cornada gain liberty. For José Alba liberty brings death; for the beggar, a former creation of Marcos, liberty brings poverty and desolation; for Gabriela liberty brings loneliness; and for Marcos, who can only exist in a Satan-Saturn-god position, liberty means continuing his search for another victim.

Alfonso Sastre makes the self a complicated phenomenon in Ana Kleiber. From the impersonality of the prologue to the flashback in the epilogue the complexity of a personality in love, when faced with moral and ethical choices, is shown from different points of view. Ana's sadist-masochistic personality reaches despair when she realizes her insufficiency in dealing with the phenomenon, love. Love is called a phenomenon in this case because of the inability of the participants to understand it and to solve the many problems which being in love invite. Love in Ana Kleiber is felt, but never really expressed, thereby causing increased anxiety and confusion to those experiencing it.

The play opens in the lobby of a hotel in Barcelona where three conversations are going on simultaneously: one between the author and a reporter, another between the desk clerk and another reporter, and the third between a married man and his pregnant mistress. Ana Kleiber's entrance interrupts the conversations as

she staggers into the lobby in a state of apparent exhaustion. She asks for a room and is given Room 66, which reminds her of a hotel room in another city with the same number. Making it explicitly clear that she wants to be awakened at 9 o'clock the next morning, Ana retires to her room. The next morning the desk clerk rings Ana's room as she has requested. Receiving no answer, he and the manager go to investigate. Entering the room, they find Ana Kleiber dead.

Alfred Merton, who is in love with Ana Kleiber, has been waiting for her in his room to begin "una vida nueva en la que Ana y Alfredo serían felices por fin, alcanzarían la paz hasta ahora les había sido negada." (Acto Primero) <sup>50</sup> Alfred learns of Ana's death through the newspaper.

Alfred eulogizes Ana at her grave, leaves with the author, and recounts the unusual relationship that he and Ana experienced. They met when Ana was contemplating suicide. He had consoled her and had fallen in love with her. Ana had loved Alfred, but rather than succumb to passion, she had left him to join a troop of actors. Alfred had followed her to several places and in Germany killed Cohen because he had spoken ill of Ana's character. Alfred had to flee the city in order to avoid prosecution, thus thwarting the relationship which was developing. The Second World War interrupted another reunion. So this meeting in Barcelona was to have been the final reunion, the reunion which was to have been the lasting reunion

to seal their relationship through marriage.

This play with its impersonal setting points up the nameless, faceless situation in which modern man finds himself. The incident of immorality is brought out in the illicit relationship between the nameless man and his non-descript mistress, showing the condition that many marriages are in today. The man wants the freedom to conduct himself as he pleases outside the bonds of marriage, yet he cannot overlook his responsibility to his legal wife. Restrictive marriage laws limit freedom. The mistress is bound by the same laws to feel guilty for her indiscretion. This scene sets the tone for the theme of the play--Love.

Love is a basic human need. Whether it is sought in illicit, clandestine relationships or in open licit relationship, the need to be loved, wanted, desired and desirable places man in a position in which he must either let his reason control his passion or let his passion control his reason. In the case of Ana and Alfredo different aspects of love are displayed. Alfred's need for love is shown in his compassion for Ana and his desire to protect her. Alfred wants to be bound by love. His personality blends masochistically with the sadistic personality of Ana Kleiber. She refuses to be bound by love on its highest level, but she demonstrates her need for love by giving herself freely to whoever would have her.

Ana and Alfred meet when they are both lonely. As Eric Fromm says in his book The Art of Loving:

. . . Man is life being aware of itself; he has awareness of himself, of his fellow man, of his past,

and the possibilities of his future. This awareness of himself as a separate entity, the awareness of his own span, of the fact that without his will he is born and against his will he dies, and the awareness of his aloneness and separateness, of his helplessness before the forces of nature and of society, all this makes his separate disunited existence an unbearable prison.<sup>51</sup>

Alfred and Ana need to break out of their prisons of loneliness and to unite with others--in this case, with each other. Their awareness of the need for someone to complement the other manifests itself in the sadistic-masochistic, master-slave, tyrant-oppressed relationship. However, in Ana Kleiber the relationship is paradoxical. Ana uses love as a vehicle through which she shows both her control and her dependence. Refusing the restrictive nature of licit love with Alfred, Ana still seeks "the Other"<sup>52</sup> by associating with the company of actors. She cannot bear being alone. The reunions with Alfred, though never consummated, emphasize her inner need for a strong, stable, honorable love, the type of love that Alfred can provide. Not only does Ana torment others with her seeming lack of feeling, but she herself experiences inner turmoil.

Cohen can be said to represent the judgment that society places on an individual's actions. Ana rebels against established mores and, according to Cohen, should be castigated for her misconduct. Cohen places himself in the position of God-judge. He is the

51

Eric Fromm, Art of Loving (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1956), pp. 6-7.

52

Jean-Paul Sartre discusses "the Other" in relation to the "being-in-self" in the chapter entitled "The Existence of Others" in his book, Being and Nothing, translated and with introduction by Hazel F. Barnes (New York: Citadel Press, 1971).



voice of conscience. Since modern man does not heed the voice of God-conscience, Cohen has to be eliminated. Conscience acts as a restrictive force to human liberty, and Ana Kleiber, in her search for liberty, ignores the voice of conscience for just this reason. Alfred, because of his love for Ana, does not want Ana to suffer by having the truth about herself revealed in such a blatant manner. Yet, he is not strong enough to face the truth about Ana himself. With the voice of God-Conscience stilled, the lovers are now free to act according to their own impulses, but Ana and Alfred enter into a stage of questioning and self-mortification. The anxieties caused by guilt and shame make Alfred run from the situation at hand. He finds that he cannot run from himself and his basic need to love and protect Ana. The admission of shame and the exoneration for his own sense of guilt are made known in his eulogy of Ana:

. . . Sabía que tú andabas libre, que estarías con tus amigos, que te dejarías besar por uno cualquiera, que te emborracharías, para al final, sola en casa, sobre la almohada, llorar por mí. . . Yo sé que extraña y maravillosa mujer has sido siempre. . . (Acto Primero)<sup>53</sup>

Liberty--freedom from Conscience--for Ana brings death.

Liberty for Alfred means waiting for death. Alfonso Sastre brings to the contemporary scene the mediaeval concept of Death as the liberator. He also alludes to life after death with the words of Alfred:

¡Mientras tanto, guárdala, Muerte! Ahí estás tranquila. . . ¡Adiós, Ana! ¡Hasta pronto! <sup>54</sup>

53

Aguilar, p. 430.

54

Ibid.

In her rebellion against love, the natural phenomenon, Ana tries to upset a spiritual and physical order which is too well rooted for her to change.

In El pan de todos Alfonso Sastre presents several points which make man question his own existence because it appears paradoxical and absurd. Sastre shows that freedom from one unbearable situation leads to enslavement to another just as grotesque. David Harko, the protagonist in this play, thinks that he will be free if he preserves his honor. However, he finds that he has become a slave to his conscience and to the fact that he has betrayed his own mother. Paula, David's aunt, is the voice of conscience, the God-image which man so badly needs in order to restore order to a chaotic and absurd society. David acts, then is unable to face the responsibility which his action entails. He cannot stand erect in the face of Conscience; he cannot face himself. Death is his only means to complete freedom.

Another point which is visible in El pan de todos is that Sastre does not view revolution as a panacea for all social problems, because the social order which man seeks to change leads to further uncertainties. Social change is not readily accepted, and there are those who prefer the status quo and will stand adamantly in their convictions to maintain it. Paula can be said to be one of those who resists social change. Paula is not disillusioned by the Revolution. Her pessimism, in this instance, actually helps her to view the situation objectively. In her conversation with

David Paula affirms that there is a vicious circle, that succeeding generations will be even more confused and permissive than any generation before them and that permissiveness does not lead to an orderly society. It appears that Sastre is showing that man is tragically caught in his search for liberty because he must be capable of shouldering the responsibility for his own destiny. The only relief from this responsibility is death.

The setting for El pan de todos is an unnamed communist country. The Revolution which has just ended had aimed to change the past social and economic order to a better one for the proletariat, not without bloodshed and heartache, nonetheless. In this play Sastre shows that in a communistic society the possibility of party officials using their office to exploit the people is more of an actuality than a supposition. The distribution of wheat, a commodity necessary to subsistence, is the assigned duty of David Harko and Pedro Yudd. The personalities of the two men are opposites, as David is honest and struggles to maintain his integrity by being fair in his dealings with the people, whereas Yudd is one of the officials who will enrich his own coffers at the expense of others, using dubious methods to accomplish his aims. The action of the play revolves around these opposite personalities.

The weather is functional in this drama as it has been in other plays by Alfonso Sastre. Rain and a dark sky kindle a doleful feeling and turn the imagination toward melancholy and despair. There is the watching and the waiting for the sky to clear, and there is a surge of happiness when the sun appears. The conversation at the

beginning of the play centers around the weather. The waiting, not only for the sky to clear, but for the figure who will bring hope and sunshine to the group of women whose lives touch his, generates a feeling of expectancy. The women, David's wife, Marta; his mother, Juana; and his aunt Paula, have a different yet interacting relationship with David.

David's father is killed during the Revolution, and Juana fears for her son's safety. Her major concern is to get David and his wife out of the country so that they may live in peace and happiness. She needs money in order to do this and involves herself in a shady deal with Yudd. This deal places her in a position against her son. David, however, is not aware of his mother's involvement nor the reason for her action. When David confronts Yudd with his suspicion about the latter's dealing in illicit trade, Yudd tells David about Juana's implication. David refuses to believe Yudd. Later, at home he converses with his mother and discovers that all Yudd had said about Juana is true. Notwithstanding the consequences, David calls the officials who arrest and imprison Juana and Yudd. They are condemned to die for their crime.

Paula feels that David should not have sacrificed his own mother for the sake of his own honor or for a worthless ideal. She does not hide her contempt for him:

David-- . . . Me estás condenando con tus ojos. Me estás acusando de no se que crimen. Me estás llamando asesino.

Paula-- Lo que has hecho con tu madre es infame. Eso es lo que te digo. (Cuadro tercero)<sup>55</sup>

Marta understands her husband's predicament and reaffirms her love for him. This assurance is not enough to lighten the load which he bears in his conscience. On the day of his mother's execution David commits suicide.

Says Alfonso Sastre about the play:

El pan de todos. . . es una tragedia que yo llame de "tercer grado," fijada quizá de modo unilateral en los grandes sacrificios, muchas veces cruentos que comporta un proceso revolucionario.<sup>56</sup>

The sacrifices about which Sastre is speaking involve the question of honor and duty. Sastre brings this familiar theme to our attention in the choices that his characters have to make. Juana is moved to act by maternal love and by an intense desire for her son's welfare and happiness. By her intent one can say that she is an honorable woman. David is moved to act by a desire to be honest in his dealings with his fellow man. His intention makes him an honorable man, but the actions of these two characters make one ponder the role that honor plays in a corrupt and profane society. Honor becomes a restrictive force in such a society, forces choices, and places responsibility on modern man which makes honor appear the exception rather than the rule.

Duty becomes another restrictive force for David Harko. A matter of a principle about which he feels very strongly prompts him to place duty above personalities. His burning desire to live up to an ideal and see justice rendered makes any other choice than the one he makes impossible. Loyalty to an ideal restricts David and hinders

<sup>56</sup> Alfonso Sastre, Teatro Selecto (Madrid: Escelicer, 1966), p. 7.

him from predicting his own reaction to his actions. David has liberty when he makes his choice. The price for such freedom is paid on the day of his mother's execution. Honor, duty, loyalty, liberty mean nothing to David when he cannot face himself. The strength of Paula's accusation has overpowered Marta's love and support. David rebels against an unjust situation; he has righted a wrong, but death is his only consolation.

The death of Yudd is intended to put hope into the cause of the Revolution. However, Paula thinks differently:

¡Servirás de ejemplo a unas juventudes malditas, y desde ahora todas las madres miraran a sus hijos de otra forma! ¡Contigo empieza un nuevo tiempo, David! ¡Un tiempo en el que todo estará permitido!

.....  
El sacrificio no servirá de nada, y seguirá habiendo hambre en el pueblo y otros se comerán el pan de todos, tú exigirás que los demás derramen la sangre de los suyos, y seguirá habiendo años de sangre y de hambre como hasta ahora.  
(Cuadro cuatro)<sup>57</sup>

The allusion to life after death which appears in Ana Kleiber reappears here as Marta expresses faith, hope and love in her eulogy to David:

. . . Estás salvado. . . En donde estés, espera. . .  
Yo llegaré una tarde en que tú estés un poco triste. . .<sup>58</sup>

Liberty for Marta meant waiting for death.

Alfonso Sastre uses the term liberty in a manner that entails elements of responsibility. In Tierra roja he brings this idea to light. Advocates of social change must realize the responsibility

<sup>57</sup>Aguilar, p. 274.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 279.

which change incurs. Failure to realize this fact can cause a more chaotic situation than before the change. The miners recognize this fact after they rebel against seemingly unbearable conditions. Survival is a strong motivating force. Since time immemorial the desire to live and to keep one's family alive has made men suffer pain and endure suffering. Therefore, responsibility is a restrictive force in the life of modern man. Since there can be no liberty without responsibility, and responsibility is a restrictive force, the idea of freedom seems paradoxically tragic. The miners in Tierra roja discover that man is tragically caught in his search for liberty.

Pedro, an old miner, is leaving his company-owned home with his family because he cannot tolerate any longer conditions at the mines nor the apathetic attitude of the mine owners toward the problems of the miners. For years Pedro has tried to persuade the other miners to make their dissatisfaction known in a tangible manner. But he cannot gain any support.

On the night before Pedro's planned departure, Pablo, a new miner, arrives in town and comes to Pedro's house. Through conversation with Inés, Pedro's daughter, Pablo learns of the situation and begins making plans to correct the injustices. Going to the town tavern, he is successful in soliciting the cooperation of some of the miners who use their influence and friendships to persuade the miners to thwart Pedro's departure.

At dawn the next day, instead of going to the mines, the miners gather in front of Pedro's house. When the bosses discover

that the miners are not at their jobs, they send the police to force the miners to return to work. During the confrontation between the police and the miners a baby is accidentally shot and killed by a police officer. This pathetic and tragic incident incites the men to burn the homes of the bosses and to kill the chief engineer. Many on both sides are wounded, but negotiations bring feeble results.

Years later, Pablo, having married Inés, is preparing to leave his company-owned house under the same conditions that caused his father-in-law to want to leave when he had come to town. A circle has been completed. A generation has lived in hope and then disillusionment and frustration, and has finally given up to accept the seemingly inevitable life of hard work and poverty.

Several ideas about liberty are brought out in this play. Especially noticeable is that although the aims of revolution are positive, the results are negative. Conditions do not change for the miners because other bosses, as powerful as the first ones, come into control. The power of wealth and economic necessity has made the miners acquiesce to the undesirable conditions of mines. The miners have families to support; therefore, subsistence takes precedence over resistance. The hope which the rebellion has engendered soon turns to disillusionment for the miners who realize the hopelessness of trying to better their situation.

Pablo, with his youth and vitality, represents hope for a better day for the despairing miners. He has planned and organized



the rebellion which, at the time, seems the only solution to the problems of the miners. However, after the rebellion has subsided and emotions have cooled, the miners are able to look at their plight from a different point of view. Mining is the only means they have of keeping their families and themselves from starving to death. They have no alternative but to return to the unchanged conditions of the mines. The miners are enslaved by their desire to live. Family obligations have them chained to their jobs. The miners cannot gain liberty.

The young miner, who appears as Pablo and Inés are preparing to depart, is energetic and full of enthusiasm. Pablo tries to dissuade him with:

Escucha, muchacho. . . Esa historia va ha ocurrido.  
No va a empezar otra vez. . . Fue sangriente. . ., inútil  
. . .y tan sombría que. . .todavía hay noches en que no  
puedo dormir. . .¡Para nada!  
Joven--(Con entusiasmo) Para nada, no, señor Pablo. . .<sup>59</sup>

Hope for a victory is what the young miner represents. It is the same idea which William Giuliano expresses in his critique of

Tierra roja:

Parece que el autor nos dice. . . que para llevar a cabo una revolución hay que correr sangre, aunque sea sangre de inocentes. Cada acto de rebelión, sea individual o en conjunto con otros, lleva adelante la revolución que un día terminará en victoria.<sup>60</sup>

In the plays reviewed above Alfonso Sastre uses the theatre to present many facets of society which modern man feels the need

<sup>59</sup>Aguilar, p. 408.

<sup>60</sup>William Giuliano, Buero Vallejo, Sastre y el teatro de su tiempo (New York: Las Americas, 1971), p. 192.

to alter in some way. He has shown that those who search for liberty become entangled in life's labyrinth. The paradoxical mazes confuse and frustrate them, and they must struggle until they find an exit which will lead to total freedom. Some become so immobilized by despair that they cannot go on; José Alba is this kind of personality. Some run headlong into a maze of mirrors and, upon seeing their reflection, recoil when their true selves are revealed. David Harko and Isaias Krappo cannot face the responsibility of their own acts. Others become so confused that they run in all directions. The soldiers in Escuadra hacia la muerte use individual methods to exonerate themselves. Parthon thinks that he can escape from the labyrinth by assuming a different personality. Ana Kleiber debauches her way to the exit. Each of the protagonists in these plays with the exception of Parthon finds liberty in death. Parthon refuses liberty; thus he survives. The fact that man is tragically caught in his search for liberty does not diminish man's continuous effort to try to conquer life's labyrinth.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE DILEMMA: HERO OR CRIMINAL-

#### WHO IS GUILTY?

The previous chapter deals with the search for liberty by the characters in selected plays by Alfonso Sastre. Certain ideas are suggested as to the effect that liberty has on certain individuals. It can be observed that the more desperate each protagonist becomes in his desire to rid himself of some unbearable situation, the more violent he becomes in his means of obtaining liberty from it. The intensity of the desire for freedom reaches about the same pitch in each case, but the situations which lead to the desire vary from individual to individual. In fact, some of the situations from which Sastre's characters seek freedom are generally regarded as normal occurrences. But, then, there is the debatable question as to what constitutes the normal.<sup>61</sup> Herein lies the paradox. External forces may make that which appears normal to one group or individual appear abnormal to another. "Uno es un héroe o un criminal según las circunstancias, aunque el muerto sea el mismo,"<sup>62</sup> said Isaiás Krappo in La mordaza. The standard or law which is used to determine normality is certainly subject to human foibles. The gauge which is used depends on the

61

Normal is generally defined as that which is in accordance with an established law or standard.

62

Sastre, Op. cit., p. 335.

society that is setting the standard. Psychologically, normal generally means well adjusted to the outside world: without undue mental tension. Therefore, in a modern problem-plagued, anxiety-causing society normality is hard to define and even more difficult to test. Thus the characters in the sociologically-oriented plays of Alfonso Sastre present in themselves an interesting and arresting study in normalcy.

In every instance the characters in the plays selected for this thesis find that the established order that they seek to upset only leads to further disorder and chaos. The personalities of the characters and their normal/abnormal behavior tend to cause the situations in which they find themselves to deviate from what is generally considered normal. A deeper probe into the situations and their relationship to the characters reveals the effect that liberty produces on the personages involved.

#### ESCUADRA HACIA LA MUERTE

Escuadra hacia la muerte has war for its background. The justification for war has been debated for centuries. The militarists say that wars are necessary for the maintenance of a balance of power among nations. They advocate war as a justifiable means to peace. Each war is to end all wars. Yet, wars continue. The pacifists say that peace can be maintained without war. They claim that war destroys the economy of a country, disrupts family life, is bad for international and human relations, and that the number of lives lost because of war is senseless. War is a tragic occurrence which should

be abolished.

Some critics have labeled Escuadra hacia la muerte antimilitaristic. Eduardo Haro Tecglen, in "Introducción a Alfonso Sastre," writes:

¿Qué es Escuadra hacia la muerte? Para unos, una comedia antimilitarista, un grito contra la guerra y los errores de la disciplina a ultranza. . . Pero para otros, resulta totalmente opuesto: un elogio a la disciplina y la severidad militar, por que cuando en la obra faltan esta digamos virtudes, todo se derrumba.<sup>63</sup>

Gonzalo Torrente Ballester in his critique of Escuadra hacia la muerte is cited as saying:

. . . Este drama, que fue recibido como antimilitarista y, como tal, dificultado en su difusión es, a fin de cuentas, una clarísima (aunque quizá involuntaria) apología de la ordenanza.<sup>64</sup>

Alfonso Sastre writes in "Nota escrita a los nueve años del estreno . . ." in 1962:

Escuadra hacia la muerte fue, en 1953, un grito de protesta ante la perspectiva amenazante de una nueva guerra mundial; una negación de la validez de las grandes palabras con que se camufla el horror del heroísmo y de toda mística de la muerte. . .

Hoy, a los casi diez años de su estreno. . . pienso que escribiría de un modo distinto. . . Pero también sería una afirmación de paz, una propuesta positiva de paz. . .<sup>65</sup>

A look into the personalities of the characters in Escuadra hacia la muerte reveals that each is at war with himself. Each

63

Primer Acto 3, p. 73.

64

Gonzalo Torrente Ballester, Teatro español contemporáneo, segunda edición (Madrid: Guadarrama, 1968), p. 526.

65

Obras completas (Madrid: Aguilar, 1967), I, pp. 161-162.

soldier in the squad has been a criminal, according to military and civilian standards. Each is a social misfit, and, therefore, the squadron to which he has been assigned is a prison, and he is, figuratively speaking, in death row. This penal existence could hardly be considered normal, and within such confines the men developed a burning desire for freedom. Each carried within himself the ray of hope that somehow his sentence would be reprieved and the doors of his cell would be flung open. Goban stands in the way of their eventual freedom.

Goban's personality is not above question as his mania for power is a cover for an inner tension. Goban is merely one rank above his men. One mistake can reduce him to their level. He has to struggle to maintain the appearance of strength in the face of his inner weakness of fear. Goban is powerful because he wills himself to be so. The men under his command think of him as a sadistic tyrant, and, therefore, they will to eliminate that power which is keeping them physically and mentally imprisoned. Thus, within the squad a war is going on--a war of wills.

Karl von Clausewitz, nineteenth century Prussian army general and theorist of war in his treatise Vom Kriege (On War), defines war as "an act of force to compel our adversary to do our will." For Goban the adversary is the company of soldiers. He is outnumbered,

66

Karl von Clausewitz, "What Is War," On War, O. J. Mattijs Jolles (Translator), in Gateway to the Great Books I, Robert M. Hutchingson, Mortimer J. Adler, (Editors-in-Chief) (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1968), p. 479.

which increases his fear of being overpowered, a fear later proving to be justified. The force he uses in compelling his adversary to do his will is strict, unrelenting discipline.

Clausewitz continues his discussion on war by saying that the aim of military action is to disarm the enemy by putting him in a position more disadvantageous to him than the sacrifice would be that we demand. Goban uses war strategy on his company. He places them in a position subservient to himself by recounting to them their criminal histories and by pointing up the fact that being in this squad is the lesser of several evils, the evils of being court-martialed, imprisoned, or even executed for their crimes. The soldiers fear death, but a continuous reminder that they face death does not reduce the intensity of their desire to want liberty and a chance to thwart death. They have to take a gamble; they want to change destiny. The chance comes on Christmas night when they murder Goban. The restraint has been removed, but, paradoxically, the soldiers find themselves enslaved by another force, a sense of guilt. They discover, to their amazement, that they have a conscience. In their delirium of freedom they have not looked beyond the moment. The positive action which destroys the unity of the company only accelerates the approach of death. Liberty has a negative effect on the soldiers in Escuadra hacia la muerte.

Implied in each of the plays studied is the question of guilt. There is the question also of who is to blame for the situations in which the protagonists find themselves. Both the external and internal conflicts of war result from forces which are beyond the control of the

individual involved. Society has created and shaped the personalities of the soldiers. There are social forces which turn them into criminals instead of law-abiding citizens. Again we see a paradox. Society creates criminals, then stipulates that the criminal pays for the crime. In Escuadra hacia la muerte each soldier pays his debt to society in his own way. Luis is condemned by his friend to life imprisonment.

Pedro--Tu te quedas aquí en este mundo. Quizá sea ese tu castigo. . . Apénate por ti. . . por la larga condena que te queda por cumplir; tu vida. (Cuadro duodécimo)<sup>67</sup>

Luis' existence is tragic in that he has a long time to reflect on what happens to the squad.

War leaves scars which only time can heal. Goban's personality is the result of wartime experiences. In time of war men are trained to be abusive, to maim, and to kill. War encourages murder under the guise of heroism. Homicide is homicide, whether justifiable or not, but society glorifies murder in one instance and abhors it in another. A society in which wars flourish is responsible for the effects that wars leave. This can also be seen in La mordaza.

#### LA MORDAZA

A personality developed during wartime that is carried over into civilian life is seen in that of Isaias Krappo. Isaias uses typical war strategy to compel his adversary to do his will. The greatest adversary of Isaias Krappo is himself. He tries to smother the voice of conscience.

<sup>67</sup> Aguilar, p. 220.



Isaias Krappo uses the background of war to commit inhuman atrocities. As a result of his actions during the war his personality undergoes certain changes which he cannot shake off when he returns to civilian life. A physical war has led to a metaphysical war. The peace which the physical war seeks to bring about leads to a turmoil of just as great intensity within the conscience of Isaias Krappo.

The position Krappo has held during the war has called for a strong inhumane person, one who can give orders in such a manner that they are obeyed without question, one who can kill without remorse, one who can witness sickness and suffering without flinching, one who can bear the sounds of screams and groans, one who can see death and shed no tears. Krappo brings this war-molded personality to his household. Murder during the Resistance has made him a hero, but the same act in civilian life makes him a criminal. "Uno es un héroe o un criminal según las circunstancias," Isaias says.

Ricardo Domenech, in his essay "Tres obras de un autor revolucionario," points out an important question which can be applied to the personality development of the characters in Sastre's theatre. In discussing Asalto nocturno Domenech writes:

. . . La investigación podría resumir en una pregunta: ¿quién es el culpable verdadero originario de los crímenes. . . ?<sup>68</sup>

The effects of war and the responsibility which society in general has for the personality development of individuals warrant investigation because of the tragic state of affairs resulting from social pressures

and influences. Sastre himself sees tragedy as a form of criminal investigation, <sup>69</sup> according to Domenech, and wars are certainly tragic occurrences. He is cited in the same article:

Sastre escribió una vez que concibía la tragedia "como una forma de investigación criminal." Y añadía: A partir de los crímenes sociales y los sufrimientos colectivos de nuestro tiempo, emprendo una investigación. Pregunta: ¿quién es culpable?

Liberty from one situation leads Isaiás Krappo into enslavement by another. The struggle to free himself from himself frustrates him to the point of homicide and then suicide. The murder committed in post-war times is executed to cover up the murder committed in time of war. Rather than accept the distinction between "hero" and "criminal," he chooses self destruction, leaving a confused family to ponder the reason for his acts. Alfonso Sastre leaves open for investigation the question of guilt.

#### ANA KLEIBER

Ana Kleiber can easily be labeled a schizophrenic personality. Her sadistic-masochistic expression of love for others, as well as for herself, causes the spatial relationship between herself and others to fluctuate. This self-destructive/self-preservative tendency of Ana's

69

Tragedy is the effect of certain causes. The cause may be external, or it may be the result of the individual or group's own lack or neglect. When a crime is committed, the investigator aims to find the reason for the crime. There are logical steps which he follows to reach a solution. There is a victim of both a crime and a tragedy. The influences which produce the crime or the tragedy are not visible until the incident has occurred.

Sastre presents tragic cases in his theatre and leaves them open to investigation by an audience which must propose a solution.

personality makes it hard to regard Ana Kleiber as normal. Yet, psychologists tell us that everyone has in him sadistic and masochistic tendencies in varying degrees. So, Ana Kleiber may be considered normal or abnormal depending on the degree of sadism and masochism that she displays and the circumstances under which she displays one or the other.

The life she has chosen for herself, that of being an actress, gives her a chance to escape life's uncertainties by playing a character with whom she could either identify or lose her identity. The real Ana Kleiber is never visible. Even her prostitution is a role; she plays the role of a lover when, in reality, she loathes herself and her transient partners. The pure licit love which Alfred offers would have taken her out of her role-playing and thrust her into a real and sensitive world. This Ana refuses to let happen. She all but wills herself to die rather than face reality and reveal her true personality. Thus Ana Kleiber cannot be represented as a weak individual, but as a very strong-willed person. Her desire for freedom is intense enough for her to fight for it until death.

In this play the perennial battle of the sexes casts flickering shadows of Jean-Paul Sartre's philosophy of "the Other." Ana does not want to become an object in a licit love affair, although that is exactly what she is in her prostitution. This desire not to become a "thing" makes her use this same desire as a manipulative device in her relationship with Alfred. Ana's attitude about love

makes her appear abnormal. Some recessive trait in her personality caused by society's view of love and marriage makes her resort to a regressive or primitive type of behavior. Ana cannot face the possibility of failure. With her illicit lovers she shoulders no responsibility for the failure or success of the relationship. But with Alfred things would be different. Therefore, she feigns love instead of experiencing it.

Echoing in this play are the words of Krappo, "Uno es un héroe o un criminal según las circunstancias, aunque el muerto sea el mismo." Some of the more adamant voices of the modern Woman's Liberation Movement proclaim that there is only a shade of difference between a wife and a prostitute. Ana's premature death does not alter the opinion made of her by Cohen before he dies. Only marriage to Alfred can save her reputation.

Ana Kleiber is a drama about love. There is a point that is open to interpretation in the episode between the married man and his mistress. In the situation in which these two find themselves the question of guilt and blame arises once more. It is evident that the young woman has been an object to be used and discarded.

Senora-- . . . Yo era una mujer honrada! Yo hubiera podido casarme y tener hijos y ser feliz en un hogar! Y ahora, ¡Oh Dios mío!

Senor-- . . . Creo que no debe nacer. Creo que eso no debe nacer.<sup>70</sup>

Looming over this unfortunate pair is the question of abortion. The

alternative of having an illegitimate child and being solely responsible for its upbringing, or of freeing herself of her burden through abortion, is a decision which only she can make. Her lover seeks freedom from one responsibility by assuming another, the welfare of his legitimate wife and children.

Ana Kleiber is spared the burden of being either the wronged wife or the wronged mistress by assuming her role, but she also denies herself the experience of having children either legitimately or illegitimately. Ana Kleiber desires liberty. She searches for it in the way that gives her the satisfaction that she desires. Ana finds herself trapped in life's labyrinth and takes the only exit which leads to absolute freedom. It must be noted, however, that Ana Kleiber displays more courage in her struggle for freedom than does Jose Alba in La cornada.

### LA CORNADA

The personalities in this play are engaged in a Freudian sex battle, one being sadistic, the other masochistic. This master/slave relationship can also be translated into the type of relationship that Ana Kleiber is trying to avoid with Alfred. Gabriela alludes to this dominant-submissive attitude of male-female relationship when she tells Jose Alba in Marcos' presence:

¡Te quiere como una mujer, más que una mujer, porque no puede ni pensar que alguien participe de algún modo en tu vida! (Acto segundo)<sup>71</sup>

71

Ibid., p. 917.

Alfonso Sastre refers to anthropogamy in his description of Marcos. This can be tied to the idea of total consumption, total possession of an object or individual. Cannibalism among civilized human beings is viewed with incredibility, but Sastre has shown that this act of devouring one another, of the complete enveloping of one individual or group by another, is more commonplace than is imagined. Ana Kleiber fights against being put into the boiling pot of total commitment; José Alba does not possess the strength to escape until it is too late.

Some critics have inferred that Marcos represents capitalism, but Alfonso Sastre says of the writers of the T.A.S., "No somos políticos." However, when certain of Sastre's plays are analyzed, it becomes obvious that he cannot avoid portraying the times in which he is writing. Sastre's times, our times, are definitely political in scope, as politics has infiltrated every segment of modern man's existence. A sociologically-oriented writer like Sastre cannot evade an issue which is so prominent in the life of twentieth century man. It is impossible to separate man from environmental influences. Therefore, Sastre is almost forced to involve himself in political ideologies.

Sastre shows his awareness of the evils of an economic system based on capitalism in the conversation in the second act of La cornada. Gabriela makes a blunt statement to Marcos:

¡Yo te diré lo que quiere! ¡Lo quiere todo! . . .  
 ¡Porque sabe que todo eso le roba algo de lo que él necesita para echarlo al ruedo, a pelearse con los toros y a llenarle los bolsillos de ese dinero que luego tira por las noches, mientras tú tratas de descansar,

deshecho de los nervios, roto, entre pesadillas!<sup>72</sup>

In such an economic system individuality is stifled. The individual becomes an object, a commodity. The complete control of a powerful minority over a powerless majority, the manipulation of power by the strong to keep the weak submissive, and the greed caused by wealth to further increase his capital are indeed evils that should be eliminated.

The point of view that modern man has become a commodity is advanced by Eric Fromm in his discussion of "Love and Its Disintegration in Contemporary Western Society."

. . . Modern man is alienated from himself, from his fellow man, from nature. He has been transformed into a commodity, experiences his life force as an investment which must bring him the maximum profit obtainable under existing market conditions. Human relations are essentially those of alienated automatons, each basing his security on staying close to the herd, and not being different in thought and action.<sup>73</sup>

Alfonso Sastre shows in this play how mass-man José Alba is sapped of his energy and desire to be creative. He is part of an assembly line. Mass-man has to struggle to maintain his place in the assembly line, because when he is no longer useful to management, he is discarded and another mass-man takes his place. He tries to free himself from the claws of management, but the need to subsist binds him tighter and tighter. José Alba, because of his weakness,

72

Ibid., p. 917.

73

Eric Fromm, Art of Loving (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1956), p. 72.

finds himself thus enslaved. Rafael Pastor represents the strength needed to overthrow capitalism, but capitalism is neither annihilated nor weakened by rejection. It only goes in search of another victim whom it can control.

### TIERRA ROJA

Moving from capitalism, which is rejected in La cornada, Sastre alludes to socialism in Tierra roja. The proletariat, portrayed by the miners, try to upset and replace capitalism, which is represented by the company bosses. Socialism does not materialize because the need for survival forces the working class to relinquish their goals.

The setting of Tierra roja gives a contrast which cannot be overlooked. The subterranean existence which the miners have to endure is in direct contrast to the hilltop existence which the company bosses enjoy. Therefore, the rebellion leads the miners straight to the bosses' homes, which they set aflame. The shocked and exiled landlords must have questioned the reason for this apparent outburst of rage. They must have wondered, "¿quién es culpable?"

The mine is like a prison cell, dark, dirty and cold with the possibility of death ever present, either from cave-in or asphyxiation. The miners are slowly suffocating under the demands of their bosses; they are suffocating from the standard of living they are forced to maintain; they are suffocating from the apparent hopelessness of their situation. Inés expresses the feeling of the miners when she says to Pablo in the first scene:



No tengo ninguna esperanza. La vida me ha enseñado a no tener esperanza.<sup>74</sup>

The miners are suffocating from the lack of freedom to conduct their own lives. Ines and her family live in a company-owned house as do the other miners. The complete dependence on la compania is stifling their manhood. They know how their careers will end:

Pablo-- Y cuando ya está viejo y enfermo y no le sirve,  
lo tira como una basura.

Ines -- Lo tira como basura. Sin piedad.<sup>75</sup>

In this play Sastre displays an economic system in which a few control the masses. The power of management saps labor of its initiative, for even when it unites, the power of mass-man is limited. Tierra roja brings out the fact that the poor is doubtful of its own power of leadership. Pedro has been trying for years to get the miners to revolt, but he cannot raise a following. Yet, when an outsider comes to provide leadership, the fire of hope is ignited. This fire of hope, however, is quenched by the fountain of need. Most of the miners have families to support, and, for them, living in poverty is better than not living at all. Thus the miners have resigned themselves to their lot.

The newly self-appointed leader of the miners, Pablo, is a fugitive from the law. The words of Isaias Krappo are heard again in this play, this time in relation to Pablo: "Uno es un héroe o un criminal según las circunstancias. . ." The murder which Pablo

74

Sastre, p. 353.

75

Ibid., p. 354.

has committed is, for him, an honorable thing to have done in view of the circumstances. A young woman's honor has been violated and the misdeed should be atoned for. The one responsible for the disgrace has to pay for his misconduct, according to the dictates of Pablo's conscience. In Ana Kleiber a young woman's honor is at stake, but the married man is able to return to his family free of any guilt placed on him by society, and his mistress has to bear her distress alone. The paradoxical judgments that society render make it difficult to identify the criminal in all cases, for, although Pablo's conscience is clear insofar as his feeling of guilt and the reason for his action can be explained, society has placed restrictions on the exercise of the freedom to act according to one's conscience under certain circumstances. ¿Quién es culpable?. The finger of accountability points to a social order in which laws, regardless of the absurdity of them, must be obeyed and the consequences for their disobedience accepted.

Pablo has to pay in some way for the crime he has committed. Although he knows that he has acted according to his conscience, his conscience also makes him aware of the debt he owes society for having committed a crime. Helping the miners is one way of liquidating the debt; marrying Ines is another way of exonerating himself for the crime. There is no indication in the play that Pablo expresses any romantic attachment to Ines or she for him. Their relationship appears to be more of a partnership or mutual agreement than a romantic encounter. In the Epilogue when the two of them reflect upon their

meeting and eventual union, they bring up the loneliness that each of them has felt at that particular time, and their need for solace and comfort in time of distress. This points up the fact that in time of crisis man does not like to be alone. He wants to be close to the herd. Pablo pays off his debt to society in the way that best clears his conscience.

The revolt of the miners can be viewed as an attempt to destroy an economic system which is suffocating them. However, shadows of Marxist socialism cast a gloomy picture on the rise of a new middle class, for instead of elevating themselves, the proletariat only sink deeper and deeper in their misery, while the bourgeois grow richer and more powerful. Socialism falters and a new system of government is instituted.

### EL PAN DE TODOS

Two economic systems based on political ideologies coexist in el pan de todos. In a socialistic state and in a communistic state there are vestiges of one form of government within the other. The three main characters in this play, Yudd, David Harko, and Juana, can well represent the trend in both political and economic thought. Yudd, with his socialistic leaning, displayed by the fact that he wanted more than his share of the common property, represents the past political state; David Harko, with his idealistic fanaticism about the "Fair share," represents the present state of affairs; Juana, with her foresight, seeing a different solution to the problems of the proletariat, represents the future with its possibilities,

probabilities and conditionality.

The situation in El pan de todos brings out the impersonality of human relations in modern society. The background of the play is an unnamed communist country where party officials are the authority. The Partido Proletario of which David Harko is an official results from a revolution in which the aim is to replace the former type of government with a different type of government, a type of government which will benefit the proletariat.

El pan de todos has been labeled by some critics as anti-communistic. Sastre reveals a weakness in such an economic system by highlighting the corruption which can and does occur in the arrangement of distribution of commonly owned property. David Harko's personality has been shaped by the ideals of communism. The Revolution is to have brought honesty to an otherwise corrupt form of government. Pedro Yudd's personality is entirely different from David's, and it is reflected in his actions. He sees in his office the opportunity to infiltrate a bit of the old form of government into the new. The human desire for power, to have more than someone else, to be able to manipulate the weakness of another, reduces the effectiveness of the pure communistic idealism of David Harko and the other who believes as David does. Yudd's personality also shows that inherent traits cannot be arrested by a superficial change. Yudd's actions show that he still clings to the idea that wealth is power.

Juana thinks of wealth as a means toward the realization of a dream--peace and security for David and his wife, Marta, and as

hope for her yet unborn grandchildren. However, the futility of the Revolution is also seen in these ambitions of Juana. By her actions she shows open dissatisfaction with the present form of government by wanting her son and his family to live outside of such a system. David, through his actions, tries to mask the futility of the Revolution. With his aunt Paula acting as the voice of conscience, he chooses death rather than face the truth. One would hesitate to call David a strong-willed person or even classify him as normal. A victim of an ideal which has consumed him completely, he may be called fanatic. Once again is heard the voice of Isaiás Krappo, "Uno es un héroe o un criminal según las circunstancias, aunque el muerto sea el mismo." David is, in the eyes of Paula, a demonic, opprobrious, despicable criminal. To her point of view he has upset moral law, and such a person as he should never have been born. On the other hand, upon learning of David's suicide and the reason for it, Jacob Fessler makes this announcement:

David . . . es un héroe de la Revolución.<sup>76</sup>

The blame for this paradox of personalities, Harko and Yudd's, can be laid on a perverted social order, a social order which accepts and rejects, at the same time, the same action depending on the circumstances.

Alfonso Sastre states in his "Noticia" to El pan de todos:

<sup>76</sup>

Ibid., p. 278.

Esta obra ha sido una muy discutida. Su destino ha sido como queda dicho, complicado y azaroso. Se ha considerado una 'subversiva'; y la prueba está en que se prohibió. Pero ha sido considerado también obra "antirrevolucionaria" o, por lo menos, "quietista"; la prueba está en que luego esta se autorizó.<sup>77</sup>

The point of view, that Sastre emphasizes constantly, makes the difference between acceptance and rejection, whether it is an individual or a work of art that is being scrutinized.

### LA SANGRE DE DIOS

The "sickness unto death" psychology of Soren Kierkegaard is very prominent in La sangre de Dios. Alfonso Sastre writes in his "Noticia" to the play:

Este drama es un homenaje del autor a Søren Kierkegaard. Leyendo su Temo y temblor tuvo la idea de escribirlo.<sup>78</sup>

In this play is one of the ideas which is to be pursued in this thesis: Having rejected God to become God himself, man finds that he needs God or a God-image to restore order to the chaos which he has created for himself.

Although Jacobo Parthon is a professor, he exhibits in this play a disappointing lack of intellectual stability. As an intellectual one would think that he would have been capable of applying rational, logical and analytical thinking to the understanding of various phenomena. Jacobo is as much a puppet in the hands of his religious conviction as are the soldiers in Escuadra hacia la muerte under Goban, or José Alba in La cornada has been under Marcos. He is

77

Ibid., p. 226.

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Ibid., p. 479.

as intellectually dead as his elder son is physically dead, and the other members of the family are as inert as he.

Parthon's misfortune has frustrated him to the point where he is doubtful of his own capacity to cope with the situation. He has become so full of anxiety that he has become lethargic and has alienated himself from his family with his apparent bravado. In reality, he has lost his sense of self. That is, he cannot relate to himself or to others in terms of being conscious of his responsibility to society or in terms of being aware of his place among the universe of things. In his solitude he has gone in search of a self and has found it in God. In his delirium of superficial faith he has turned his scepticism and doubt inward. F. H. Heinemann explains Kierkegaard's philosophy of doubt in this manner:

Despair. . . is the misproportion in the relation of the self to itself, or every disturbance in the process of becoming a Self, a sort of self-consumption, a specific illness of man as a spiritual being, arising from his attempt to separate himself from the power which created him, or from the fact that he neglects what is eternal in him and forgets his spiritual nature.<sup>79</sup>

Kierkegaard has stated that if one wants to find the Absolute, one must start not with doubt, but with despair. When Parthon looks into the mirror of his soul, he despairs, then panicks at what he sees there. Ralph Harper writes:

The light shining into the world of personal despair reveals little or nothing definite, and the dread of self and the self's movement toward nothingness--which we call death--is either a foretaste of the self's ceasing to be,

or as Christianity would have it, a symbol of the incomprehensibility of the Creator.<sup>80</sup>

Parthon's behavior solicits an answer to the question of who is guilty. Mentioned above is the fact that Parthon is a professor. He has accumulated a wealth of knowledge in his particular field, and, evidently, is a dynamic and magnetic teacher to which the presence of his former student, Luis Opuls, attests. However, the knowledge which Parthon has amassed is what Kierkegaard regards as "inessential knowledge." Ethical and moral knowledge are for the philosopher "essential knowledge," because they alone essentially relate to the fact that the knowing subject exists; they alone are in contact with reality. Parthon must have had some ethical knowledge stored in the recesses of his mind, or else he would not have turned to God in his despair.

Alfonso Sastre writes in an autocritique of La sangre de Dios:

Me declaro al margen del problema teológica, que puede plantearse, de si es concebible que el Dios del Nuevo Testamento ordene un sacrificio semejante.<sup>81</sup>

In this phrase there is an allusion to a change in the theological concept of God from that of former times. Sastre refers to a God of the New Testament as if he differs from the God of the Old Testament. Abraham, whom Parthon parallels, follows the God of the Old Testament, the God who demands total commitment and unflinching sacrifice, the God who tests His believers almost beyond human endurance. It is

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Ralph Harper, Existentialism, A Theory of Man (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1948), p. 58.

81

Sastre, p. 479.



suspected that Sastre is subtly alluding to the Church of Spain, the Roman Catholic Church, that under the guise of following New Testament Christianity, is still making demands of Old Testament caliber. The dogmas and tenets of the Church must be adhered to. To deny a dogma is to commit the sin of heresy. An individual who is placed under certain obligations under the pain of mortal sin and hell's fire is limited in his actions. The Church with its attributes of visibility, perpetuity, indefectability and infallibility acts as a deterrent to individual liberty and freedom.

The New Testament God is God-man and is determined to set up a new set of values, values which the world is not ready to accept. This New Testament God is an anarchist, a rebel, a revolutionary, according to then accepted standards. He stresses faith, but not blind faith; He emphasizes activity, not inertia; He does not isolate himself from His people, but walks among them, teaching them, not dictating to them.

The apparent need for a change of religious emphasis is seen in Laura's attitude toward her husband's deep involvement in the spiritual rather than the physical. Sastre brings together in the play the similarity between the theological, mythological, historical and psychological concepts of tyranny. The God of the Old Testament, according to Laura's question and self answer, is an Absolute Superior Essence, a Saturn-Chronos, an anthropogate, and a sadist-tyrant:

¿Es que a ese Señor le gustan los espectáculos sangrientos? Lo habrá pasado bien con este. Se habrá divertido.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 517.

From Laura's point of view Parthon's faith has reached the point of absurdity, and Parthon's God has become absurd in his demands:

El buen Dios ha calculado mal la resistencia de  
este pobre cuerpo mío. . .y de mi miserable alma. . .  
He sufrido demasiado, sí. . .<sup>83</sup>

Parthon, the teacher, is acting absurdly to the point of insanity to Luis Opuls. It must have been a disappointing experience for Opuls, seeing his teacher in such a position of dependence.

Parthon is out of touch with the real world; he is living outside of himself; he is playing a role. The only way out of his dilemma is to withdraw into himself.

Speaking of teaching, one cannot ignore the fact that the God of the New Testament is a teacher. His teaching is in a form that His listeners can understand and is not filled with high-flung meaningless intellectual jargon which only a philosopher can decipher. The Teacher does not use a textbook; he uses the Old Testament prophets only to substantiate what he is saying. Christ provides the example for good teaching.

The God of the Old Testament demands a sacrifice of His only son. Jesus Christ, like Isaac and Ben, has faith that the absurd will pass. A choice has been there for the mob, just as there has been a ram in the bushes for Abraham, and just as the dog, Grok, has appeared in the garden for Parthon. Barabbas is there. But humanity wanting to continue following old Testament concepts crucifies the New Testament God. Society balks at change. Therefore, the liberal democratic concept of man's relation to God has been rejected in

favor of the old theological and mythological concept of tyranny. Man wants to remain bound to a higher and superior Self.

In this chapter many types of personalities have been shown as they search for liberty. It must be noted that the normality of the situations from which the characters seek to have liberty, as well as the capacity of those under stress to adjust to the altered situation, is analyzed. Alfonso Sastre has shown that man is faced with many choices in life and that man determines his own destiny by the choices he makes. The influences of such philosophers as Søren Kierkegaard with his Either/Or hypothesis and Jean-Paul Sartre with his concept of "the Other," are visible in Sastre's theatre. Alfonso Sastre is a contemporary writer, and the dilemmas which his characters face place the burden of guilt on society. History witnesses the fact that man has continually resisted totalitarianism. Man has continually rebelled in order to relieve himself of the burden of tyranny.

Although in each case studied the search for liberty brings tragic consequences, Sastre cannot be considered a pessimistic dramatist. In analyzing the reasons for the tragedy it is found that social, economic, and religious restrictions have frustrated the characters to the point where they either have to act or be annihilated. Contemporary man, as represented by the characters in Sastre's theatre, is tragically caught in a labyrinth of paradoxes. However, gloomy tragedy appears, Sastre closes his plays on a note of hope which prompts some of his characters and others like them to continue their search for liberty.

## CHAPTER IV

### HOPE FROM TRAGEDY

The search for liberty brings tragic consequences to the characters in selected plays by Alfonso Sastre, but Sastre underscores the fact that twentieth century man is living in a tragic age. The period is tragic because technology has forced man to live in a collective rather than a communal society. The term "collective" is used in light of the definition which Robert Corrigan gives in "Five Dramas of Selfhood." Corrigan makes this distinction between a community and a collective:

A community is a group in which all of its members communicate directly with one another. . . . A community is a group which "precedes" its individual members, and the individual's place in it is clearly defined the moment he is born into it.

A collective, on the other hand, is post-individual. It is a group brought into being by previously existing individual members who have gathered together because they share common ends.<sup>84</sup>

A collective society divides man. Instead of a man being able to contribute to many areas of the community, he has now become a specialist in one particular area. He is only a small part of the total community. In such a society the hero, in the generally accepted sense, is hard to identify. A good example of this can be found in the space program. No one man can claim all the credit for its success, because thousands of people in all parts of the world are

minutely important. However, mass-man is less concerned with possibilities and probabilities than he is with the present state of affairs. This attitude is demonstrated by Sastre's characters in their search for liberty. Modern man has made tremendous strides and has become master and specialist of everything except himself. Herein lies the tragedy of this great age.

Edith Hamilton noted in The Greek Way that the temper of the mind that sees tragedy has not for its opposite the temper that sees joy. The opposite pole to the tragic view of life is the sordid view of life.<sup>85</sup> Karl Jaspers observes that we find genuine tragedy only in that destruction which does not permanently cut short development and success, but which, instead, grows out of success itself. Tragedy can be understood when man sees that when he is most highly successful, he most truly fails.<sup>86</sup>

Instead of viewing life from the sordid point of view, seeing humanity in terms of dignity and significance constitutes the tragic view. It is from this viewpoint that Alfonso Sastre writes. In his dissertation, "The Dialectics of Alfonso Sastre," Farris Furman Anderson comments:

In Sastre's most representative and most effective plays, the frequent suffering and even death which afflict the characters cannot be taken as absolute pronouncement

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The Greek Way, New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1942, p. 232.

86

Karl Jaspers, "Fundamental Interpretations of the Tragic," Art of the Theatre, Robert W. Corrigan and James Rosenberg (eds.) (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1964), p. 471.

of man's eternal condition. The fact that Sastre refuses to answer conclusively his own questions suggest not pessimism or optimism, but the esperanza which transcends both these attitudes.<sup>87</sup>

The esperanza with which Sastre's plays end can be translated to mean a better future, a different future, or a future with some promise of betterment.

In Escuadra hacia la muerte all of the characters die or can look forward to death except Luis, who is also the youngest of the group. It is evident that Sastre has a reason for allowing the youngest to live. In youth there is promise. Youth represents a new set of values, a new trend of thought, a new type of freedom. Youth has seen the mistakes of the present generation and has already set in motion the changes he would like to see effected. Sastre does not predict what will happen to Luis, but there is speculation that his life will be different from the others and that, as a result of his experiences, his contribution to society, whether positive or negative, will determine the value of his existence. His freedom lies in the fact that he has the freedom to choose his own destiny from this point, and it is likely that he will profit from his experience and his association with the soldiers in the squad. If he does not make a positive contribution to society, he might as well have died with the others. The esperanza is in the possibility that Luis will work toward making the world a place where physical and spiritual warfare will be minimized.

The life after death alluded to in Ana Kleiber does not necessarily mean a transcendental heaven or hell. Alfred is left alone either to build a new life or to waste away in morbid grief and self-recrimination. His existence on this earth will either be a heaven or a hell depending on his reaction to his tragic experience. The recounting of the story of his and Ana's relationship can be viewed as an act of purification. Alfred's salvation is left up to him. The esperanza is in his eventual salvation. Salvation projects the individual beyond his present state onto a higher state of being. Therefore, life after death can be taken to mean the state which the individual reaches after having survived a crisis in which he had to make a choice, and that choice led him to a greater awareness of himself and his place in the universe. Life after death can mean a resurrecting of dormant, latent ideas and ideals and putting them into action. Alfonso Sastre leaves the choice which his characters will make open and undetermined. The esperanza is in the possibility that they will make a noble choice, a choice which will eventually lead to a better society.

Gabriela remains alone in la cornada. Her solitude will give her time for reflective thinking. "What's in a name?" asks Shakespeare in another tragic age. Gabriela is the feminine for Gabriel, the archangel whose name means "the power of God."<sup>88</sup>

88

Gabriel appeared under the form of man to the prophet Daniel (Daniel 8:16, 9:21), to the priest Zachary to announce the forthcoming birth of St. John the Baptist (Luke 1:11, 19), and to the Blessed Virgin Mary to announce the birth of our Savior (Lukel:26ff.).

Gabriela's presence has stirred the consciences of both José Alba and Marcos, but in different ways. Her presence foretells the end of Marcos-Saturn-Satan's reign and alludes to the sacrificial death of José Alba. Rafael rejects the offer to follow Marcos Satan-Saturn. Pastor can be translated to mean shepherd. In La cornada can be seen a parallel between mythology and theology. In the Saturn-Chronos myth Saturn swallows his first five children because an oracle has predicted that one of them would overthrow him. Through the cunningness of his wife the sixth, Jupiter, is spared, grows up, and forces the father to cast up the other children and give up his throne. Viewing La cornada from a theological standpoint, one can say that Gabriela announces the impending doom of the Satanic force, Marcos, and the doom of paganism and idolatry, and prefaces the appearance of Pastor. The Good Shepherd does not destroy completely Satanic forces on earth; he places emphasis on a new set of values. Rafael Pastor does not destroy Marcos; he too emphasizes a new set of values. Satanic forces are still present in the world today, but the esperanza is in the consciousness of what is right, what ought to be, and what can be.

Tierra roja does not show the futility of rebellion in the search for liberty. Instead, it shows that "Cada acto de rebelión, sea individual o en conjunto con otros, lleva adelante la revolución que un día terminará en victoria.<sup>90</sup> The esperanza reveals itself in

90

William Guilliano, Op. cit., p. 192.



the determination of the young miner who appears in town when the other miners have given up and have resigned themselves to accept the status quo. Thus, Alfonso Sastre once again expresses faith in youth with its new set of values, its determination and enthusiasm, and its vision for a better world. Each generation preceding the present generation feels the same way, and each succeeding generation holds on to its hopes for a better future.

With the deaths of Yudd, Juana, and David one might hesitate before viewing the esperanza in El pan de todos. But, they die that others might live. An allusion to life after death is seen in this instance. Left to view life from either a tragic or sordid point of view and Paula and Marta. Paula demonstrates her lack of faith in the future when she rebukes David with:

Y como todo continuará igual, y el sacrificio no servirá de nada y seguirá habiendo hambre en el pueblo y otros se comerán el pan de todos, tu que los demás derramen la sangre de los suyos, y seguirá habiendo años<sup>91</sup> de sangre y de hambre como hasta ahora. (Cuadro Cuarto)

Paula's vantage point produces only a sordid view of life. She does not possess a tragic personality. She cannot see beyond the misery and the evil. She sees humanity sunk in dreary hopelessness. She sees death as the end. Marta must choose a life which will enable her to join David in the Great Beyond.

To Jacobo Fessler there is life after death, but it starts on earth. He sees in David's death an opportunity to give new life to the cause of the Revolution. Fessler gives this order to his

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Aguilar, pp. 274-275.

assistant:

Telefonia a los periódicos. . . David Harko ha muerto en un accidente. Sus últimas palabras fueron de solidaridad para la causa, de amor al Partido y de fe en el porvenir. David Harko es un ejemplo para los juvenudes del Partido. (Cuadro Cuarto)<sup>92</sup>

There is the idea that in youth there is hope. But the question which remains is what will be youth's choice when it is faced with a similar situation? The cause must not die. Death must not stop the living from continuing a noble cause. This concept is advanced by the God of the New Testament. The possibilities which the future holds are limitless. There must be life after death.

And he said to another, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." But Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury the dead, but do thou go and proclaim the kingdom of God. (Luke 9:59, 60.)

The living, those who are alive with ideas and ideals, must not let those who are insensitive to the need for change thwart them in carrying out their aims and attaining their goals.

Sastre repeatedly leaves the future in the hands of the coming generation. The future in La mordaza rests with the children. Antonia is old and can only view clearly the past and the present. She resigns herself to inactivity. Her age makes her no longer useful for anything except praying for the salvation of Isaias' soul.

No os apeneis si me encontráis callada y como triste en un rinconcito de la casa. . Tengo esperanza de sacarlo de allí. (Epilogo)<sup>93</sup>

<sup>92</sup>  
Ibid., p. 278.

<sup>93</sup>  
Ibid., p. 342.

Antonia, however, is perceptive enough to place the responsibility of living after death upon her children. She gives them the challenge of acting "como si la vida hubiera empezado hoy. . . y todo lo demás hubiera sido un triste sueño. Hay que seguir viviendo."<sup>94</sup> The destiny of the Krappo children will rest in the choices they make from this challenge.

The esperanza in La sangre de Dios is in the reality which Ben saw for the first time:

Yo me parece que me ha ocurrido me hubiera arrojado de pronto y de verdad en la vida, como si esta noche hubiera sido mi verdadero y real nacimiento, y todo esto, lo que me rodea, mereciera lo pena y fuera hermoso vivir, Sofía. . . Parece, de pronto, como si todo tuviera sentido. (Acto segundo, cuadro tercero)<sup>95</sup>

Ben talks about his true and real birth as if he has been resurrected to a new life. The God of the New Testament admonishes one of his followers to let the dead bury the dead. Ben is as spiritually dead as his brother is physically. He has been inactive; he has no purpose in his life. Andres makes reference to the living dead in his conversation with Javier in Escuadra hacia la muerte: "Nosotros ya estamos muertos. The soldiers as well as Ben have reached the stage of despair where nothing seems to matter any more. They have fallen asleep. Sleep is a term often used in referring to the dead. Ben's fear of the dark can be interpreted to mean that he fears falling asleep, or more accurately, Ben fears death. He cannot comprehend the mystery of death, but after having faced the possibility of

<sup>94</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>

Ibid., p. 525.

death, he can view life from a different perspective. His fears and trembling have ceased because he has reached a new maturity, a maturity wherein he can live with himself and life, not as a weak, sick individual, but as a man who has been victorious, as one who can face death. He has liberty, but with liberty comes the responsibility of directing his own life.

Man is continually faced with decisions in which the element of choice is present. This idea is propounded in the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre. For Sartre, man has no choice but to make choices, to exercise his freedom of choice which is the basis to his acts. This is the way that man defines himself and creates his own destiny. Sartre's idea of liberty implies a freedom which entails responsibility. The fact that he does not propose solutions to the many problems which plague his characters shows that Sartre believes in the future. He advocates that man must have faith that the absurd will pass, that man must be vigilant in his search for liberty, that he must keep trying to conquer the labyrinth of paradoxes which he must face in his search for liberty, as is evidenced by the effort made by Sartre's characters to change the status quo.

Every generation has found weaknesses in the social order which it inherited. Each one has felt that only it could make the proper amends. Twentieth century man feels that a solution to the many problems that plague him is within reach. Yet, the more involved he becomes in technological and scientific achievements

and the more advanced he becomes in the knowledge of the universe, the more problems he creates for himself. Man has found that he needs God or a God-image to restore the order that is lacking within himself. Alfonso Sastre has demonstrated that man needs God, as God is the Absolute Self for which man is striving, not to destroy, but to maintain.

## CONCLUSION

The following ideas appear to be stressed in Sastre's plays, and he deals with each one as it relates to man existence:

(1) Sought for liberty leads to a new found servitude.

The organizers of revolution and rebellion more often than not act irrationally. In their zest for liberty they fail to perceive the consequences of their rashness, as they can only see the attainment of immediate goals. Therefore, when they destroy the power which is responsible for their present condition, they find themselves in a more chaotic predicament than before. The anxieties and mental turmoil caused by the lack of a central guiding force are heightened, and the situations they are trying to improve are worsened. Thrown back upon himself, man finds that he is not equipped spiritually, socially, or economically to deal with the present world.

He finds that (2) having rejected God to become God himself, Man cannot restore order without Him or a God-image. Modern man's existence depends on economics. Social and political status are contingent on wealth. Capital has become the God of modern man. Capitalism has enveloped him to such an extent that he has divorced himself from his spiritual and transcendental roots. He has been thrown back on himself and has become his own God.

The growing collectivism of the modern world paradoxically tends to destroy man's sense of selfhood. Yet, man has become so

materialistic and scientific that he doesn't need the power of an invisible God. Science has projected man into the outer confines of his Earth to explore realms heretofore left to the mysteries of speculation. Man, through scientific experimentation, can prolong life by transplanting organs from the body of one human being into that of another. Man has become the creator and determiner of his own destiny. Sastre verifies this point in such characters as Marcos, Goban, and Isaias Krappo. He makes these characters all-powerful in their domination over others. In La sangre de Dios Parthon becomes Quixotic in his desire to effect change. By adopting another personality he confuses reality, but it is significant that his "¡Creo en Dios!" proclaims to a doubting world that God does exist and that faltering man needs Him or some God-image to restore order to the inner turmoil under which modern man labors.

The forces which are responsible for his dilemma lead man through a labyrinth of choices. Sastre's characters face choices in their search for liberty and find that (3) Man is tragically caught in his search for liberty. In tragedy man is faced with the choice of either self-annihilation or self-aggrandizement. If he chooses the latter, he will continue in his search for liberty, but if he chooses the former, he faces death.

Man's efforts to effect change through revolution seem absurd, useless, as the miners in Tierra roja discover, Tyrants as powerful as those they have tried to dethrone soon take over. And the desire to survive forces man to accept otherwise obnoxious

conditions. However, Sastre clearly shows that tragedy must not lethargize man in his search for liberty. Tragedy can be the catapult to a better future. Thus (4) man must continue in his search for liberty with the hope that one day his struggle will end in victory, if not for himself, then for those who will follow.



## APPENDIX

The following plays by Alfonso Sastre were analyzed in this thesis:

La escuadra hacia la muerte, written in 1951-52, and performed in 1953

El pan de todos, begun 1952, completed in 1953 and performed in Barcelona, 1957

Tierra roja, written in 1954

La mordaza, written and performed in 1954

Ana Kleiber, written and performed in 1955

La sangre de Dios, written and performed in 1955

La cornada, written in 1959 and performed in 1960

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