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ABSTRACT

THE TRAGIC THEATRE OF ALFONSO SASTRE

By

Harold Rick Hite

This work purports to demonstrate the fundamentally tragic nature of Alfonso Sastre's theatre and to show the relationship between his theatre and his theoretical writings.

A continually developing theory of tragedy is extracted from various works, particularly Drama and Society (1956) and Anatomy of Realism (1965). This theoretical concept is shown to originate with Aristotle and to grow eventually into a form of dialectic between Aristotelian and Brechtian elements. The subject of this theory of tragic theatre is man in his dialectical (existential v. social) being. Katharsis is shown to be the central effective experience of this theatre and an experience which goes beyond its Aristotelian conception.

The plays are interpreted as tragedies and the thesis argued that only as tragedies can they be seen to function (mimesis-katharsis) as effective works of theatre in the context of modern society. They exist as experimental pieces through which Sastre explores the tragic nature of man and the forms of expressing that nature. As experiments they provide the basis for later theoretical expressions.

The plays are studied in two major groups: existential tragedies and dialectical tragedies.

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By

Harold Rick Hite

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Theatre

1973

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1973

To

BOBBIE

For the long wait

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am deeply indebted to all those who brought me to love Spanish literature and the theatre. For their inspiration, guidance, and assistance at stages along the way I thank especially Robert H. Russell, Margaret and Fletcher Collins, Allan Lacy, and Frank C. Rutledge.

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INTRODUCTION

> The prestige of tragedy as an intellectual and critical conception stands today in almost inverse ratio to its prestige on the stage. The commentaries published on the subject during the past fifty years have easily outnumbered not merely new plays overtly entitled tragedies (if there have been any) but all new plays, however described, in which the tragic elements as defined by any theory could be said to predominate. The twentieth century respects tragedy but does not produce it.[1]

If one accepts this statement of Geoffrey Brereton as a valid description of the times, one must regard the Spanish playwright Alfonso Sastre as something of a rara avis in the modern theatre for he is engaged precisely in an effort to create plays in which the tragic elements as defined by a theory can be said to predominate. The present study shall concern itself with this predominance of tragic elements and the theory defining them in an attempt to properly interpret Sastre's work from 1946 to 1965.[2]

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[1]Geoffrey Brereton, Principles of Tragedy (Coral Gables: Univ. of Miami Press, 1968), p. 3. George Steiner is even more conclusive in his pronouncement of the death of tragedy. "From antiquity until the age of Shakespeare and Racine, such accomplishments seemed within the reach of talent. Since then the tragic voice in drama is blurred or still." The Death of Tragedy (1961; rpt. New York: Hill and Wang, 1966), p. 10.

[2]None of the works to date have dealt with Sastre's plays as tragedies. The existential and social themes have been pointed out by a number of critics with the latter receiving the greatest attention. Many of the single articles dealing with the plays are little more

A look at the first of Sastre's plays, Uranium 235, produced in 1946, makes apparent his interest from the beginning in that which his fellow countryman, Miguel de Unamuno, had called "the tragic sense of life."[3] The work is dominated by a concern for man, as an individual and as a society, faced with uncertainty and (the uncertainty of) death. The plays that follow, however they differ formally, and whatever the social position they take, never neglect that condition of man which their author refers to as "the great metaphysical tragedy of human existence."[4] They are all part of a continuing experiment which in a practical way attempts to explore the nature and effectiveness of tragedy.

Cargo of Dreams immediately followed Uranium 235 and, like it, was one of Sastre's contributions to the Arte Nuevo (New Art) group of young writers attempting to

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than daily theatre reviews and fail to link the particular work with the entire corpus. Farris Anderson's Alfonso Sastre (New York: Twayne, 1971) is the best work on the writer to date. Anderson approaches Sastre's work from what he calls the "overall dialectical unity of [it].", p. 5, and does not treat the works as tragedies.

[3]Del sentimiento trágico de la vida by Miguel de Unamuno appeared in 1913 and is probably the most influential philosophic work by a Spaniard in the twentieth century. Translated in 1921 by J. E. Crawford Flitch with the assistance of the author, it is readily available today in a Dover paperback edition, Tragic Sense of Life.

[4]Alfonso Sastre, Drama y sociedad (Drama and Society [D. S.]) (Madrid: Taurus, 1956), p. 138. Translations throughout are my own.

revitalize the Spanish theatre of the day.[5] Both works are eclectic in their efforts to bring outside influences to a stage still dominated by the style of Jacinto Benavente.[6] And both represent for Sastre something of a false start in their deliberately nonrealistic form although not in their tragic content.

By 1950 the major direction of his theatre was established with the writing of Pathetic Prologue, a work which is realistic in style and which concerns itself with man both existentially (philosophically) and socially, discovering the dramatic power in the dialectic between these aspects of his being.[7] In the same year, with José María de Quinto, Sastre helped to found a new theatre group, Teatro de Agitación (Theatre of Social Agitation [T. A. S.])[8] which would function to bring theatre of

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[5]Arte Nuevo was an experimental theatre group of university students. The charter members were José Gordon, Alfonso Paso, Medardo Fraile, Carlos José Costas, José Franco, José María Palacio, and Alfonso Sastre. Sastre states that what united the group was "the nausea brought on by the middle class theatre of the time." "Entrevista con Alfonso Sastre" by Ricardo Doménech in Alfonso Sastre (A. S.) (Madrid: Taurus, 1964), p. 56.

[6]Jacinto Benavente (1866-1954). A middle class playwright of unequaled popularity in twentieth century Spain, won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1922.

[7]Sastre said of this work, "I must say that with Pathetic Prologue I finally considered myself baptized as a dramatic author." Obras Completas (Complete Works [O. C.]) (Madrid: Aguilar, 1967), p. 59.

[8]The T. A. S. is described in some detail by Sastre and José María de Quinto in A. S. The Manifesto of the group is also printed in this book.

social awareness to the Spanish stage. Although it never moved beyond theoretical pronouncements, the T. A. S. was an early indication of Sastre's determination to create a serious theatre to deal with the real problems of man, both social and existential. The manifesto rejected any simplistic "thesis theatre" concept of social theatre.

In spite of the failure of the T. A. S. Sastre's own dramatic output continued in uninterrupted fashion for the next six years with works exploring man's tragic situation. The Garbage Can (1951), the weakest of his plays, was followed within six months by The Condemned Squad, one of the strongest. A clear, dramatic relationship between the individual and his society which tended to elude him in the first of these works was discovered in the other. It established a microcosm of society in a small group of interrelated individuals caught in a tragic situation and left to discover and suffer, in a Sartrean manner, their condemnation to freedom.

Following The Condemned Squad, which received three performances by a university group in Madrid before being closed by the government, Sastre wrote Community Bread (1953), The Gag (1954) and Red Earth (1954). The first two have received production, the former being considered an attack on communist forms of government and the latter being seen as a rural drama. Both works are in fact tragedies which attempt to deal with the dialectic between individual, human needs and communal, social

responsibilities under conditions of stress. Red Earth, which is more topical in its treatment of the social aspect, has not been produced.

With Anna Kleiber and The Blood of God in 1955 Sastre momentarily reduced his focus to the existential predicament of the individual touching only incidentally on man's social condition. These works, with The Raven (1956), while separated from the larger number of plays involving man's social being, relate to the total corpus of Sastre's theatre as tragedies. They are in fact a part of a highly productive period of varied experiment with the tragic theatre which includes two other plays, Sad Are the Eyes of William Tell (1955) and A Death in the Neighborhood (1955) and Sastre's first book of theory, Drama and Society (1956).

In A Death in the Neighborhood he brought together the impulse of contemporary social revolt and the primitive ritual movement of the group in a brutal climax that would have pleased Artaud. The implications of this work which ends with a tacit approval of social purification through mob violence and execution were sufficient to prevent its being approved for production by the authorities.

Sastre's "William Tell" is a sophisticated and complex experiment in relating the theatrical and the real, the mythical and the ordinary, the tragic and the comic. It represents something of an intuitive move

towards epic theatre for the playwright who at the time was largely unaware of Brecht's accomplishments. The work, described by one critic as "one of the most beautiful dramas written in Spain in recent times,"[9] was also refused production rights.

During 1957-58 Sastre wrote four film scripts,[10] translated Euripides' Medea and completed a short novel, El paralelo 38 (The 38th Parallel).[11] By the end of 1958 he had begun a new work, Nocturnal Assault which he finished early the following year.

1959 was a period of great production with the epic experiment of Nocturnal Assault being followed by a tightly knit Aristotelian tragedy, In the Net and an additional experiment, Death Thrust, incorporating both concepts. In the two later works Sastre achieved new levels in developing situations and characters from which the dialectical tensions between man's existential nature

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[9]Domingo Pérez Minik, "Se trata de Alfonso Sastre, dramaturgo melancólico de la revolución," in A. S., p. 26.

[10]Sastre has written seven filmscripts altogether. "Amanecer en puerta oscura" ("Dawn Through a Dark Door"), 1956, "Tres hombres" ("Three Men"), 1957, "Carmen," 1958, "La noche y el alba" ("The Night and the Dawn"), 1957, "Un hecho violento" ("A Violent Affair"), 1957, "A las cinco de la tarde" ("At Five in the Afternoon"), 1960, and "Nunca pasa nada" ("Nothing Ever Happens"), 1961.

[11]In addition to El paralelo 38 Sastre has written a book of short stories, Las noches lúgubres (Lugubrious Nights), written between 1961 and 1963, and Flores rojas para Miguel Servet, a short biography, written in 1964, of the protagonist of an unpublished play of his entitled La sangre y la ceniza (Blood and Ashes).

and his social condition could organically and dramatically break forth.

This period was followed by another two years in which translations (Ibsen's The Lady from the Sea and Strindberg's Creditors), film scripts, poetry and critical writing dominated his schedule. In 1960 he also joined José María de Quinto again in another attempt to found a new theatre group, this one called the Grupo de Teatro Realista (Realistic Theatre Group [G. T. R.]). Their purpose was to investigate realism both theoretically and practically, and they achieved one season of success staging three works[12] and publishing a number of significant documents.[13]

The Tenebrae was begun in 1960, abandoned for a year and a half, and completed in 1962. It is Sastre's most pessimistic statement regarding contemporary middle class society. In its concentrated depiction of the trapped remnants of a depraved society and of the agonizing tensions and violent actions among its members, it merits comparison with Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf, written about the same time.

In 1963 there was again a return to concentrated efforts in theoretical writing with the greater part of

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[12]To Clothe the Naked by Luigi Pirandello, El tintero (The Inkwell) by Carlos Muñiz, and In the Net by Sastre.

[13]Documents of the G. T. R. are to be found in A. S., pp. 115-123.

Anatomy of Realism being written. This work was completed and published in 1965 and serves to conclude and define the period of experimentation with tragedy leading to it.[14]

With Anatomy of Realism and the earlier Drama and Society Sastre attempted to put into theoretical and critical language the same concepts of tragedy which his plays were expressions of in a practical way. The first of these works is basically an effort to rough out a modern "poetics" capable of functioning for a specific philosophical and social conception of man. In it he describes man as a creature who is by nature tragic in that he exists in a situation characterized by the perpetual absence of happiness and the eventual presence of death. This existential condition is translated by dramatic mimesis into the metaphysical substance of tragedy. For Sastre this is an inseparable part of all tragedy whatever other focus or purpose may exist, and it

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[14]Since 1965 Sastre has written four works for theatre which remain unpublished in Spain. They are La sangre y la ceniza (Blood and Ashes), La taberna fantástica (The Fantastic Tavern), El banquete (The Banquet), and Crónicas Romanas (Roman Chronicles). Because they remain unpublished and generally inaccessible and because they represent an entirely new phase in Sastre's development, they fall outside the scope of this study which finds its most appropriate limitation with the publishing of Anatomy of Realism in 1965. In 1970 Sastre also published a new theoretical work which attempts to deal with his development following Anatomy of Realism. This work, entitled La revolución y la crítica de la cultura (Revolution and Cultural Criticism) with the unpublished plays are material for a study in themselves.

is that part which in the final analysis relates the earliest and the latest expressions in the history of the tragic theatre.

Less enduring than the metaphysical substance, but usually more urgent, as Sastre sees it, is the social function of tragedy. In mimetic terms tragic theatre is seen as an appropriate genre to document and investigate the social condition of man, which is, at present, tragic. This condition, however, is seen to differ from the existential condition in the fact that it can be ameliorated finally (the existential cannot be). It is in fact to the purpose of such an amelioration, without neglect for man's existential problem, that tragedy is shown to be a genre uniquely endowed. The major process that provides tragedy with this potential effectiveness is katharsis.

The experience of katharsis, as Sastre reinterprets it, goes beyond Aristotle's conception to become a real social purification. But this idea of an expanded katharsis still rests on a structure of tragedy which is fundamentally Aristotelian. The significant point is that Sastre's theatre, by his own definition, can function as effective social theatre and as meaningful existential theatre only <u>because</u> it is tragic theatre.

The Aristotelian nature of his theatre is obvious in the plays and it is explicitly stated in <u>Drama and Society</u>. There is particular support for the predominance

of plot, this being the appropriate manner of treating what is seen as a basically situational reality. In the plays the acts of reversal, recognition and suffering are effectively used in realizing this concept.

By the time of Anatomy of Realism Sastre's Aristotelian tragic theatre has run head on into Brecht's epic theatre. After a period of dialectical experimentation with the formal principles of these two "theatres" using plays, a further development in theoretical thinking is outlined in this second book. A concept of dialectic dominates the work: man's being is seen as a dialectical process between existential and social aspects of that being and a theatre of dialectic is called for to reflect and effect man's being. On a formal level this dialectic occurs between Aristotelian and Brechtian principles. In its view of man it can be seen to grow out of the conflict between avant-garde nihilism and epic social optimism. Sastre places himself between Beckett and Brecht calling for a "critical theatre" relevant to the pre-revolutionary middle class society of the present, a theatre which in its most expressive and effective form is and must be a tragic theatre.

CHAPTER I

THEORY: DRAMA AND SOCIETY

In 1953 Alfonso Sastre set down a definition of tragedy, which, compared to his later considerations of the subject, exhibits remarkable conciseness.

> For me . . . tragedy is simply the dramatic (theatrical) result of the documentary transference of human existence to plots . . . that include painful events which provoke in those who suffer--or at least in the spectator--basic questions about the meaning of those events. Ultimately the questions concern human existence and the possibility of reducing, by means of human efforts, the effects of the painful events. The spectator participates in the anguish of the action, and through his grievous emotion--which consists of horror (phobos) and pity (eleos)--he may be moved to revise his view of the world and the assumptions of his life. He may be moved to make meaningful social decisions, ranging from individual assistance to revolution. When this happens, the tragedy has achieved its supreme end: purification (katharsis). Understood thus, purification consists of two stages: immediate or personal purification, and social purification.[1]

Farris Anderson has correctly pointed out the elements in this definition which remain part of Sastre's later developing theory of tragedy, these being his existential conception, the social function of tragedy, and the incorporation of certain Aristotelian concepts and terminology. In Drama and Society these are dealt

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[1]Alfonso Sastre, "Tragedia," Correo literario, 70 (April 15, 1953), 10, translated by Farris Anderson, Alfonso Sastre, p. 33.

with as metaphysical substance, artistic form, and social function. Viewed historically these aspects of tragedy exist in varying degrees of significance and potential for meaning: social function operating with maximum significance in the period of and the society of a play's creation, and steadily losing significance thereafter to the possible point of meaninglessness; metaphysical substance maintaining itself as permanently significant and meaningful for men of all periods; artistic form having a quality of plasticity within certain permanent parameters.

> There is something permanent and something corruptible in a tragedy. That permanent aspect is that which causes us to understand an ancient tragedy and to use, over a period of time, the term "tragedy" to designate distinct and distant dramatic works. That corruptible aspect is that which, after a period of time, makes Oedipus Rex seem so distant from us.[2]

Sastre sees in Oedipus Rex, Othello, and The Hairy Ape a similarity which he calls their metaphysical substance. "The metaphysical substance of tragedy is human existence in its authentic modality (Heidegger). . . human existence confronted with Unamuno's tragic sense of life."[3] For Sastre, in Drama and Society, the first and last requirement for drama to be tragedy is that it deal in some way with the question of human existence. It is that aspect which, in fact, makes ultimately possible the

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[2]Sastre, D. S., p. 20.

[3]Sastre, D. S., p. 20.

existence of tragedy in this or any period of history. "Human existence, even if the social tragedies become eliminated, is a great metaphysical tragedy."[4] The fact that human existence is ultimately a tragic situation is made clear by Sastre in his detailed description of it as he sees it in "those rare moments when the farce of daily life melts away."

a) a closed situation
b) in which are found existing
c) beings condemned to die
d) who desire--in reality this is an a priori exigency, not deliberated upon, biological, constitutive, previous to all desire--a (kind of) happiness
e) which, at least as a state of plenitude, is denied them,
f) and, at times they question themselves concerning their destiny (worldly or otherworldly)
g) and concerning the unknown sin or guilt for which they are punished.
h) It is a struggle
i) in which human life is always defeated
j) in moments which provoke horror (before the magnitude of the catastrophe) and pity (before the nihilism of being human) in the spectator of this defeat, in which he sees, anticipated, his own defeat in life, to which he is brought by the mere fact of existing.[5]

For Sastre the fact that this tragic situation is common to all men makes the tragic theatre, which imitates this situation, a viable and relevant form of drama; in the final analysis, the most relevant form. But the closed, nihilistic nature of this situation will make it alone, for Sastre, unacceptable as the whole

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[4]Sastre, D. S., p. 138.

[5]Sastre, D. S., p. 24.

subject of tragedy, and while the influence of Unamuno's 'tragic sense of life' will always remain strong in Sastre's theatre, it will not become its single subject or his obsession.

The closed situation of "beings denied happiness" reflects Sartre's concept of human reality as "by nature an unhappy consciousness with no possibility of surpassing its unhappy state"[6] although Sastre does not mention the French existentialist. And while possibly a minor point, it should be noted that Sastre only indirectly deals with the degree of consciousness of the tragic individual, suggesting an almost fleeting awareness of his state ("in those rare moments when the farce of daily life melts away") and indicating only possible eschatological concern ("at times they question themselves concerning their destiny"). In this degree they are less than Unamuno's or Sartre's existential men and perhaps more of Arthur Miller's common man. In this case the tragic flaw in Sastre's man ("the unknown sin") would be the very constitutive desire for happiness which drives him. But Miller sees a "possibility of victory"[7] and Sastre sees inevitable defeat in this closed

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[6]Lucien Goldman, "The Theatre of Sartre," TDR, T49 (Fall, 1970), 103. This is quoted from Sartre's Being and Nothingness.

[7]Arthur Miller, "Tragedy and the Common Man," in Tragedy Vision and Form, ed. Robert Corrigan (Scranton: Chandler, 1965), p. 151.

situation. The question of comparison, however, while valuable, cannot be fully dealt with on the limited basis of Sastre's description of only a single aspect of his concept of tragedy. And certainly some features of Miller's description, particularly the more positive and optimistic, can only be seen to have their counterparts in Sastre's views of the social function of tragedy. And in the later development of his theories Sastre goes beyond Miller's sketchy ideas.

In a closer analysis of this description of human existence a number of points become evident and are important as factors around which a correct interpretation of the tragic sense of Sastre's plays can be developed. It is necessary to accept the force of the nihilistic truth of this description dealing with the metaphysical substance of tragedy. Human existence is a "closed situation"; closed physically by death and psychically (spiritually) by the denial of ultimate happiness in life. With this view of human existence it is not surprising that Sastre reacted with such understanding to Beckett's Waiting for Godot and in his review of that play anticipated End Game with almost prophetic precision.[8] And his description here can be seen as an abstract of the later work. But while Sastre sees this

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[8]Sastre, Anatomía del realismo (Anatomy of Realism [A. R.]) (Barcelona: Editorial Seix Barral, 1965), pp. 32-40.

nihilistic metaphysical truth as being an inevitable fact of life, and thus inevitable factor in tragedy, (which makes tragedy an always meaningful theatrical form), he insists that the force of its truth be utilized, not alone, towards a devastating pessimism, but in relationship with an equal and optimistic social truth of man as a creature capable of prevailing.[9] This concept of the metaphysical substance in opposing relationship with social function is the first awkward formulation of what will eventually develop into Sastre's dialectical concept of tragedy.

It is also important to recognize the denial of any Judaeo-Christian interpretation of man in Sastre's "closed situation." By denying any sense of justice through 'known guilt' Sastre reestablishes the very possibility of tragedy in terms of its prototype in Greek Theatre.[10] Add to this the fact that the concept makes tragedy first of all situational and emphasizes man's inherent ("constitutive") desire and his resultant struggle and one

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[9]With the possibility of social conditions changing, tragedy need not be a form which deals with totally closed situations (although the metaphysical tragedy remains closed). Thus Sastre distinguished degrees of tragedy according to the "possibility of an opening in the situation on which it is based and also according to the magnitud of suffering of the characters implicated in the situation." D. S., p. 37.

[10]George Steiner's thesis in The Death of Tragedy is that the form is not universal but Greek and that the Judaic (and Christian) view of man makes it impossible. Sastre intuitively seems to find his way toward this view in Drama and Society. The problem comes later when the marxist influence becomes greater: tragedy does not fit into any marxist view of man either.

has a concept of tragedy with emphasis strictly Aristotelian, based on Aristotles' notion of praxis: "a psychic energy working outwards."[11] The inclusion of the experience of horror and pity reinforce this Aristotelian nature of the concept.

Sastre continues to develop his concept of the metaphysical substance of tragedy with a more detailed description of what he considers the two fundamental forms of the tragic situation found in the outstanding examples of the genre. These he considers within the classic Aristotelian mode.

> There are two fundamental and concrete situations in which complex men are always morally normal (insofar as there are "good men" and "bad men," tragedy as such, ceases to exist) and seemingly not very guilty (much to blame) of the grievous situation in which they find themselves; in any case, at best, they make a mistake or bring about an act which results, consequentially in an error. In the worst of cases they act excessively out of a biological or social circumstance.
>
> In situation A:
> These morally normal men
> a) who love or esteem one another, or, at least, do not hate one another (mother and son, brothers [and sisters], friends . . .),
> b) harm one another (even to the point of blood or death)
> c) without wanting to (fate).
>
> In situation B:
> These morally normal men
> a) are tortured (made to suffer)
> b) by a superior entity
> c) under whose painful dominion they find themselves without the possibility of escape.[12]

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[11]Francis Fergusson, "Introduction," in Aristotle's Poetics (New York: Hill and Wang, 1961), p. 8.

[12]Sastre, D. S., pp. 27-28.

In both situations Sastre sees the tragic figures as victims, dominated by internal (A) or external (B) forces. Their guilt, as earlier described, is difficult to ascertain, or, at best, slight. He has, however, elaborated the description with the introduction of two Aristotelian concepts: the morally normal man and the mistake or error.[13] Of the one he states, "A 'saint' cannot be a tragic hero. Neither can a 'monster.'"[14] Of the other he goes slightly beyond his model in suggesting the unwillful (blind) error or the excess resulting from biological or social circumstance (determinism?). In any case the intentional act, or any possibility of blame or guilt, is excluded. This maintains the concept of a totally closed situation.

The two situations, as described, and their combination, are an attempt to delineate the most fundamental manner of treatment (plot-situation) of the subject of human existence to be found in the genre of tragedy. As such they can be interpreted as describing either a metaphysical situation or a social situation. Sastre does not appear to be concerned with this apparent shift of territory at this point in his supposed discussion of the metaphysical substance of tragedy.

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[13]Aristotle, Poetics, p. 76.

[14]Sastre, D. S., p. 29.

Considered as descriptive of the metaphysical substance of tragedy, situation A concerns the problem of the inexplicable nature of man, himself, and the acts that result from his inner-self, acts described as contrary to his will. Fate is made to blame historically. Situation B, in these terms, is man faced with the unhappiness of life and then with death. This is strictly in line with Sastre's earlier depiction of human existence. These interpretations are seen to be always inherent in any tragedy, and for Sastre constitute the ultimate tragedy.

In broader terms and for modern theatre these situations can be interpreted differently. Situation A constitutes a psychological as well as an existential-philosophical question, and fate is by no means the only possible means of explanation. Situation B, as Sastre points out, is clearly open to social interpretation. The superior entity becomes "a factory, an institution, capitalism . . ."[15] And while this cannot constitute the ultimate tragedy, it will later be described as constituting "urgent" tragedy.[16]

Sastre devotes a chapter of Drama and Society to the concept of fear (horror) and pity (compassion, pain; he finds any single term for either apparently insufficient). In his discussion of these elements he wishes to emphasize

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[15]Sastre, D. S., p. 29.

[16]". . . the urgency of a purification," Sastre, D. S., p. 156.

the Aristotelian origin of the experience while at the same time to carry his own interpretation beyond Aristotle. This is in line with his general handling of the elements of tragedy in Drama and Society, which he will describe later as "scarcely anything more than a critical recall of the basics (bases) of Aristotles' Poetics, bringing them up to date."[17] In the case of fear and pity Sastre ignores the volumes of interpretative material which have built up around Aristotle and, using the terms, attempts simply to describe what he considers to be the experience "which occurs when we witness a tragedy."[18] A true tragedy for Sastre is a "lucid representation of human existence."[19] In being this it is an artistic accomplishment of that earlier described revelation in those "rare moments when the farce of daily life melts away,"[20] or a "lucid moment" in real life. In both cases and at both moments the same experience occurs, and this anguished experience is one of fear and pity.

> We experience in the theatre the anguish that we experience in those authentic moments [see p. 12, note 3, Heidegger] of our existence, when the veil of the daily farce is torn away and the true reality of our human existence makes itself obvious; when we are faced with

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[17]Sastre, A. R., p. 7.

[18]Sastre, D. S., p. 31.

[19]Sastre, D. S., p. 33.

[20]Sastre, D. S., p. 24.

> our true possibilities;[21] when our existence and its meaning become a metaphysical problem; when suddenly we find ourselves alienated in our being and that which we now call "nothing," for lack of any better way to say it, throws us into anguish.[22]
>
> We experience in the theatre (when we attend the performance of a tragedy), the fear and pity which we feel in our lucid moments when confronted with the grief, misery, disgrace of others in real life.[23]

Fear and pity are also seen as a unique experience made possible by the very lucidity of the moment. They become substitutes for apparently lesser passions of anger, indignation, hate, the muddied passions of life and melodrama which are distinguished from fear and pity by their misplacement of guilt. True tragedy (and lucid moments of reality) refuses to accept a simplistic view of good and bad men; it rejects the lesser passions' easy placement of guilt on the stereotyped strawmen, the monsters of melodrama. Fear and pity occur with the

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[21]This passage which relates the authentic moments of existence with the true possibilities seems very close to a passage in Georg Lukács' The Meaning of Contemporary Realism (London: Merlin, 1962 English translation), p. 23: "The literature of realism, aiming at a truthful reflection of reality, must demonstrate both the concrete and abstract potentialities of human beings in extreme situations of this kind. A character's concrete potentiality once revealed, his abstract potentialities will appear essentially inauthentic." The similarity is probably coincidental, especially considering Sastre's use of Heidegger, who is anathema for Lukács, but points up the direction in which Sastre is moving. In Anatomy of Realism Sastre indicates a good knowledge of Lukács.

[22]Sastre, D. S., p. 32.

[23]Sastre, D. S., p. 32.

"displacement of the center of guilt from the 'monster.'"[24] And with this complex experience one reaches what might be termed both the kathartic center and the outer circle of Sastre's tragedy as described in Drama and Society.[25] In an Aristotelian sense it is in drama, and in a modern sense, not Aristotelian, it is also in society. It is what distinguishes tragedy from other theatrical forms.

> Tragedy has a life--in the spectator--beyond its expectancy; the fear and pity stay in his heart because his deepest motivations are outside of the theatre. Melodrama ends--and for good--when the curtain falls; fear and pity are dispelled with the punishment of the antagonist, who is guilty of all disgrace. While in tragedy, who is to blame? Whom should be punished? How? What can be done so that Willy Loman--in reality--might stop suffering and making his sons suffer? The curtain falls. The tragedy continues.[26]

Sastre, therefore, implicitly rejects any concept of katharsis as a purely aesthetic or artificial substitute for a real life experience.[27] Even in the theatre it is not a vicarious experience, and while it may be seen as the climax of awareness and suffering for the individual spectator in terms of the metaphysical substance of tragedy, it cannot be accepted, as in Aristotle, as whole

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[24]Sastre, D. S., p. 33.

[25]He has earlier called this a "double purification." See the first quote in this chapter.

[26]Sastre, D. S., p. 34.

[27]"In good tragedies the horrible is real . . . (and produces real horror; not a 'horror' which is some form of aesthetic emotion); and the pitiful is real . . . (and awakens real pity, not an aesthetic emotion); pity which finds its object after the curtain comes down, in the social reality." D. S., p. 95.

and wholesome because of the fact of the social function of tragedy. Not only is katharsis the same experience for the spectator, confronted by the real tragedy of human existence or by the imitation of that tragedy, but it must also lead to a second katharsis of a social nature, outside the theatre, not in the context of the closed metaphysical situation but in that of an open social situation. In his critical reworking of the Aristotelian foundations of tragedy for the modern theatre, Sastre dislodges the keystone. "Perhaps the most important modern discovery is the social sense of the tragic 'purification.' The old discussion of whether in 'katharsis' it was necessary or not to find the 'moral justification of tragedy' as simply an 'artistic' moderation of 'real' passions has no meaning for our time."[28]

This by no means is to suggest that Sastre rejects the whole formal structure of tragedy according to Aristotle. In fact his reinterpretation of katharsis as the central concept of his tragic theory, holding together the elements of metaphysical substance and social function, must be seen to relate organically[29] with the artistic form of tragedy

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[28]Sastre, D. S., p. 83. Sastre also states at another point that "the fear and pity offered by modern tragedy sets up an ethical, social and political purification." D. S., p. 83.

[29]Sastre speaks in his prologue of the organic manner of his study's development, organic in a theatrical sense, opposed to systematic. D. S., p. 7.

as well. And for Sastre this formal aspect is definitely Aristotelian.

As stated above artistic form is viewed historically as having both the qualities of permanence and plasticity. This paradoxical condition is described by Sastre in terms of the changing degrees of importance attributed historically to the same basic Aristotelian elements or tragedy: plot, character, thought, diction, spectacle, and music. Accepting these parts as the constitutive formal elements of tragedy, Sastre finds cause for the failure of modern theatre to achieve tragic proportions in the misunderstanding and misuse of these elements. Tragedy should be seen as drama, i.e., "action" and plot is the principal formal element.

> The most important thing, from a critical point of view, that one can say about myth (which I shall always call plot and story when I want to refer to myth as the invention of the dramatist from documentary data; that is, as the result of an artistic effort whereby reality acquires dramatic structure) is that--as Aristotle wrote--"myth is the first principle and, as it were, the soul of tragedy." In reality myth is the first principle and soul of drama in general. Myth is the first principle and fountain of ideology and of language. In it and through their situations characters should be revealed. Myth demands its scenarios. Every attempt to reduce the importance of myth has brought forth dramatically monstrous products.[30]

This formative principle, for Sastre, is manifest as situation (with desire and struggle as described above) and

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[30]Sastre, D. S., p. 45.

he discusses Aristotle's organic parts of plot in terms of situation.

> In the beginning is the plot with its temporal unfolding of situations of which Aristotle studies three: reversal, recognition and pathos or pathetic occurrence, and out of this comes everything. In the plot characters reveal themselves and out of the plot ideas arise. At least that is how it should happen.[31]

He goes so far as to suggest that plot or situation tends to reveal character and ideas previously not anticipated by the playwright.

> Aristotle says that the natural causes of actions are character and ideas but that only by means of action can the characters acquire "character." And I would add--are the ideas and characters revealed; even for the playwright, who usually has, I think, a vague and obscure enough approximate idea of the thought and even, at times, of the character of the personages who intervene in the drama (be it tragic or comic). The result being then, that even though the natural causes of the actions are the characters and the ideas, they are not made clear until there is a revealing situation, and that this situation, besides being revealing, is creative.[32]

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[31]Sastre, D. S., p. 123.

[32]The wording for Aristotle is translated from Sastre's rendering. Butcher's translation of this passage reads, "Tragedy is the imitation of an action; and an action implies personal agents, who necessarily possess certain distinctive qualities both of character and thought; for it is by these that we qualify actions themselves, and these--thought and character--are the two natural causes from which actions spring, and on actions again all success or failure depends." Aristotle (Butcher) VI., p. 62. Sastre's idea of character revelation through action (revelation even for the playwright) differs from most interpretations of this "chicken and egg" passage according to Geoffrey Brereton's listing of interpreters. "What cannot be got around is the fact that all the interpreters of this particular passage attribute to Aristotle the opinion that Thought and Character are the cause of success or failure, good fortune or bad--whether directly or at

He supports Aristotle's unity of action and accepts the efficacy of polysituational plots. He rejects, however, any idea of unity of time or place, seeing in the dramatic mode the potential for freedom from the limitations of realistic movement in time and place. "The dramatist can realize space-time recompositions of reality in order to make it more intelligible, and this recomposition forms part of the most authentic possibilities of drama."[33]

Sastre relates Aristotle's concept of character with a modern, general concept of psychology.[34] He criticizes modern psychological drama which he sees as principally based on character rather than on plot, thereby overturning the proper Aristotelian formal structure. He also sees in this drama a narrowness of approach which inevitably sacrifices drama for psychology. O'Neill's Mourning Becomes Electra is singled out as a work which fails for this reason,: "drama sacrificed for an exhibition of one man's theory of the Oedipus complex."[35] Character in tragedy must develop out of situation, i.e. dramatically, and not situation out of character.

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one remove through the actions which they 'determine.'" Principles of Tragedy (Coral Gables: Un. of Miami Press, 1968), p. 44.

[33]Sastre, D. S., p. 44.

[34]"This element, the second in importance according to Aristotle, constitutes what we would now call 'psychology.'" Sastre, D. S., p. 45.

[35]Sastre, D. S., p. 46.

> A situation is not the mathematical result of the sum of some previously determined and defined charac[illegible] A situation is a new reality, a reality psychologically distinct and unforeseen, a surprise. This reality is that which dominates and to which the writer ought to be faithful . . . The dramatist, from the situation, accepts every surprise and has to be disposed to break the psychological data which serve him to begin the unfolding of the plot; it is the plot which rules by means of its situation.[36]

For Sastre ultimately, "in the theatre there should be no psychology but that which is produced in the explosion of situations."[37]

As stated earlier, the formal element of thought must be no less a product of situation than is that of character. In modern terms Sastre identifies this Aristotelian concept with ideology, ideas, and opinions. To develop tragedy out of thought is to create thesis drama which is as unacceptable as psychological drama.

> [The dramatist] is not here to expose his ideology. He is here to provide a channel for the voice of everyone, to whatever cry the situation produces. Here begins and ends his compromise. Only in this sense is the theatre propaganda. The theatre, either it is everyone's propaganda or it is nothing.[38]

Sastre's firm rejection of psychological drama and thesis drama rests, however, not only on an adherence to the specific Aristotelian formal principles for tragedy but also on an acceptance of a general theory of social realism in literature. In the sketchy treatment given to this

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[36]Sastre, D. S., p. 47.

[37]Sastre, D. S., p. 46.

[38]Sastre, D. S., p. 48.

subject in Drama and Society (it becomes the major subject of Sastre's second theoretical work, Anatomy of Realism), certain principles can be seen evolving, principles dealing with both the formal (mimetic) and social (functional-effective) aspects of the literary arts (genus), tragedy ultimately representing for Sastre the most viable species for modern society. Inherent in the "realism" of social realism is the requirement to witness the whole of the human condition. It "makes of the writer or the artist a witness--exceptional, certainly--of reality who selects, probes, and elaborates according to his artistic impulse. 'Realism' has its demands and it excludes forms of an evasive nature."[39] One such form, for Sastre, would be that which chose to ignore either the existential or the social condition of man. Psychological drama evades the latter problem in its emphasis on the former. Sastre sees this as the drama of the "'clinical case' involved with the perturbation or exaltation of the human being as an individual."[40] This must be superseded by "a more profound consideration of the human person (being) integrally submerged in the social order or social chaos . . ."[41] Thesis drama (political theatre), by reversing the emphasis, also fails.

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[39]Sastre, D. S., p. 72.

[40]Sastre, D. S., p. 71.

[41]Sastre, D. S., p. 71.

> . . . the artistic failing of political theatre proceeds from the deformation of reality which the political stance produces in the playwright's vision. Defined by (political) sympathy toward his protagonist and antipathy toward his antagonist, the author will not allow the antagonist to speak, or makes him express himself in an awkward, cruel or inhuman way. With which the play gradually loses strength, the plot ending up forced and the characters weakened. This is the general danger in thesis theatre. The playwright, faithful to his thesis, blocks any outlet for the antithesis, and naturally ends up far removed from any dramatic synthesis.
>
> Political theatre is artistically valid--and only by being so artistically can it be so socially--when the political consequence is a final result brought about, unforced, by the plot.[42]

Short of this political theatre cannot be considered tragedy.

> . . . melodrama is the logical outcome of political theatre . . . moved by preconceived ideas and intentions alleged at all costs; at the cost, precisely, of the human condition of the agonists.[43]

Out of the loose collection of essays in the second part of Drama and Society, two concepts begin to emerge which, in terms of realism, support the formal, Aristotelian structure of tragedy set forth in the first part. In an attempt to characterize the "existentialist" theatre of Jean Paul Sartre, Sastre says.

> Perhaps an exploration, an investigation of the darkest zones of human reality, of human existence, would be its most characteristic constant.
>
> . . . it is precisely in the darkest zones where existence is shown most purely, where anguish is suddenly revealed.[44]

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[42]Sastre, D. S., p. 119.

[43]Sastre, D. S., p. 119.

[44]Sastre, D. S., p. 107.

This investigative quality of Sartre's "probed realism" (realismo profundizado) serves to describe one function, or aspect, of Sastre's tragic theatre in its development toward definition. Another is found in Sastre's defense of the documentary nature of Arthur Miller's theatre.

> The best theatre of our time has an important documentary side.
>
> . . . a "document" is nothing more than the photograph of an event, i.e., of an existential fragment. The document, in itself, has no attribute of proof. That depends on how it is used. A polemist will make it into a "probatory instrument." A sociologist will turn it into a scientific document. A dramatist will get out of it the makings of drama. . . . On the basis of the document the dramatist realizes a series of discoveries, he finds the most intimate levels, he probes. The document gives him the exact existential supposition.[45]

Developing out of this is a statement on what Sastre considers to be the two forms of conceiving drama.

> One starts with the existential document, that is, the real comportment of man in determined place and time. This form penetrates into man, through his existence, by varying degrees of probing which are able to reach the essential discovery, the universal human, ontological emotion. The other form starts with a vague essence (the human essence), poetically glimpsed in the general comportment of man.[46]

Overlooking whatever weakness of argument might exist in this description, it stands, along with the statement on the investigative nature of theatre, as a central concept, based on a growing theory of "social realism," related to Sastre's descriptions of the metaphysical substance, social

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[45]Sastre, D. S., p. 134.

[46]Sastre, D. S., p. 134.

function, and artistic form of tragedy. It sees human existence in reality as the proper beginning and subject of drama which implicitly leads to tragedy since human existence is tragic in Sastre's view. It implies in its use of the concept of documentary, (and this is made explicit in Sastre's works), the social sense of this existence. And it begins to suggest a redefinition of the Aristotelian concept of mimesis.

This redefinition, while admittedly in the formative stage, is a major concept in Sastre's total theory of tragedy in Drama and Society. Following Miller, Sastre suggests documentation as the "Aristotelian definition of mimesis translated into a new conception."[47] Theoretically it can be seen to counterbalance the concept of katharsis in importance, the one being the starting point of tragedy and the other, the ending and purpose. In dealing with katharsis Sastre rejected the Aristotelian concept of a final, closed, and aesthetic experience. Katharsis is seen in both a consummatory and instrumental way: "the sense of tragic katharsis must be found . . . in the effect tragedy has on reality: in an immediate way on the spectator and mediately on society."[48] In redefining mimesis through documentation a similar disruption of Aristotle's organic and aesthetic wholeness occurs. In spite of Sastre's

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[47]Sastre, D. S., p. 82.

[48]Sastre, D. S., p. 95.

insistence in following Aristotle's precedence of plot, and the apparent similarity in the imitation of action and the documentation of situation, and although Aristotle grants the poet the use of historical subjects,[49] the theory of documentation carries with it elements which ultimately contradict Aristotle's axiom of organic unity which sets poetry, for him, above history.[50] Sastre's argument for the supreme importance and urgency of the social function of tragedy, and his recognition of the temporal impermanence of this aspect, is an acceptance of the topical, historical nature of tragedy at the risk of possible future irrelevance of the work.[51] Even in

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[49]"And even if he chances to take an historical subject he is none the less a poet; for there is no reason why some events that have actually happened should not conform to the law of the probable and possible, and in virtue of that quality in them he is their poet or maker." Aristotle (Butcher), p. 69.

[50]"The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular." Aristotle, p. 68. Farris Anderson (Alfonso Sastre, p. 40) uses Aristotle's passage on the use of historical subjects as support to keep Sastre's theory more purely Aristotelian than it is. The essential point is the question of probability and the ultimate aesthetic quality of the poetic result. Sastre breaks through this aesthetic conception in both his theory of mimesis (as pieced together here) and his theory of katharsis. It is only later that he begins to recognize just how important the historical can be in the development of a marxist historical consciousness. In Drama and Society however, this historical (for Aristotle) quality, this topical or social aspect of tragedy is argued as the "urgent."

[51]In 1958, just two years after Drama and Society Sastre states, "The social is a category superior to the artistic. I would prefer to live in a world justly organized and in which there were no works of art, than

Aristotle's concession of historical subjects for poets, he insists that what makes them poets of those subjects is a strict conformance to "the law of the probable and possible."[52] He argues against the use of the particular.[53] And he clearly depicts tragedy as aesthetic in the perfection of its completeness and wholeness. "Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is complete, and whole, and of a certain magnitude. . . . A whole is that which has a beginning, middle, and an end."[54]

A theory of documentation suggests just the opposite for tragedy. In the fact of its photographic precision[55] it asserts the value of the particular and the possibility of the improbable. By connotation the term, itself, suggests a continual breaking through the aesthetic structure by the existing social reality "outside." Finally the sense of completeness, of beginning, middle, and end is ultimately contradicted by the impossibility of solution inherent in the philosophy of social realism supporting documentation: that the problems of reality (of society) are to be solved not aesthetically but socially. This is recognized in the redefinition of katharsis.

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in an unjust world flourishing with excellent artistic works." A. R., p. 18.

[52]Aristotle, p. 69.

[53]Aristotle, p. 68.

[54]Aristotle, p. 65.

[55]Sastre, D. S., p. 134.

The concept of investigation works for Sastre in a twofold way. Socially it very often becomes a criminal investigation, attempting to uncover true cause of social ills. Metaphysically, it searches for the cause of man's suffering in his human existence. In both cases the question becomes one of where to place guilt. In the experience of tragedy the sense of guilt is realized in the spectators as individuals and as members of a society. This, theoretically, can lead to social action or even revolution. Sastre's theatre with its concept of beginning specifically with man in society through documentation and returning to man in society in a purification (out of reality and back to reality), is, in the etomological sense of the word, truly revolutionary. Ideally it should function this way socially as well.

While Sastre obviously felt it unnecessary to do so, or outside of his purpose, it seems appropriate to attempt some final schema of the concept of tragedy as it appears to exist in Drama and Society and to place this outline with Sastre's own earlier definition along the growing line of his theoretical writing to be later set against his dramatic works.

Tragedy is a revolutionary (beginning and ending with the real human situation) dramatic process which begins with the documentary transference of the painful and tragic struggle of real human situations (existentially: closed; socially: open [?]) into plots (and the total theatrical

expression deriving from plot). It is an investigation into the meaning of human existence carried to the point of anguish (fear and pity), moving the spectators toward a corresponding kathartic experience through action in society.

CHAPTER II

THEORY: ANATOMY OF REALISM

In the preface to Anatomy of Realism (1965) Sastre sees Drama and Society as having been somewhat anachronistic at the time of its writing because of his ignorance of Brecht and Brecht's already existing dialectic with Aristotelian principles.[1] He further admits his own earlier blindness to the larger dialectical process itself, and with clearer vision declares that a "present day 'Poetics' for the theatre will take the form of a negation of the Brechtian negation of Aristotelian drama, and not that of a reaffirmation of this drama in the face of Brecht's criticism."[2] The purpose of Anatomy of Realism, however, is not to create this "poetics" but rather "to present the theme of literary realism."[3] The

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[1]"Turning to the theatre and to the 'poetics' of Aristotle, I didn't know then [at the time of writing Drama and Society] that someone (Brecht) had done--was doing--something more with the 'Poetics' than 'bringing it up to date': That is, destroying it, 'fertilely' negating it dialectically. I was destined, therefore, to write an anachronistic book, filled with profound virtues (moral) and profound mistakes (ideological), the latter a result of my then almost total blindness for the profound structure of real events: for the Dialectic." A. R., p. 7.

[2]Sastre, A. R., p. 8.

[3]Sastre, A. R., p. 8.

result, nevertheless, is a large number of highly complicated essays, written over a period of years, which deal with both subjects and their inevitable interrelatedness. And running through this dialectical context is the thread of a still developing theory of tragedy, at times prominent, at other times, implied. And this theory, in spite of Sastre's statements concerning the anachronisms of his earlier Aristotelian theory, is, in large part, a reworking, aesthetically, historically, socially, and in terms of a new perspective of dialectic, of many of the basic elements of his earlier theory.

Sastre's clearest statement of what he calls "profound realism" describes the "literary mode [as that] which assumes the tragic nature of the individual human existence and the perspective of historical development, without disintegrating, because of the first, into pessimism, or being carried merrily off, without critical sense, to some optimistic outlook."[4] Tragedy, by its nature, situates itself precisely at this apex. "Tragedy situates itself in a superior dialectical unity, which we might call hope, above any exclusive optimism or pessimism or its opposites. The spectator becomes conscious of his real situation as 'an existing being,' a being-towards-death, and of his social, historical situation in which he participates--or should--as an agent: of his work or

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[4]Sastre, A. R., p. 128.

'praxis' and of his anguish [agony]; of the openness and the closedness of his situation; of the interactions between that which his activity has of praxis--at times anguished--and that which it has of anguish--at times sublimated in work."[5] It is in this sense, and only in this sense, for Sastre, that tragedy can be understood as a legitimate literary mode for our time.[6]

Mention of the "tragic nature of the individual human existence," of the "being-towards-death," of "closedness," makes apparent the absence of any change in Sastre's view of the existential situation of man, and this condition still seems to exist in relation to tragedy. And while the concept of man's social and historical role was not so completely articulated in Drama and Society as it is here, it was present implicitly. But no longer can the one be thought of as a separate "metaphysical substance" and the other as a "social function." Both must be looked at now in terms of the creative tension brought about by their dialectical relationship. And the existence of tragedy as a viable literary mode, superior to other modes, will be argued by Sastre on the basis of this tension or relationship. It will be argued, as in this instance, on the basis of a larger concept of realism, on a formal basis (negation of the Brechtian negation of Aristotle),

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[5]Sastre, A. R., p. 129.

[6]Sastre, A. R., p. 129.

and historically and socially. And it will be seen to exist as one part of a larger dialectical view which attempts to deal with the process of artistic creation, with the interaction of art and artist and society, and with the process of social change made possible through this interaction.

Sastre's expressions approaching a meaning of realism (stated this way not to be devious, but because they do precisely that in a continual dialectic of their own, never reaching a definitive point) are in part derived from the thinking of Georg Lukács. "True great realism . . . depicts man and society as complete entities, instead of showing merely one or the other of their aspects. Measured by this criterion, artistic trends determined by either exclusive introspection or exclusive extraversion equally impoverish and distort reality."[7] "The central aesthetic problem of realism is the adequate presentation of the complete human personality."[8] "Man is zoon politikon, a social animal. The Aristotelian dictum is applicable to all great realistic literature. Achilles and Werther, Oedipus and Tom Jones, Antigone and Anna Karenina: their individual existence--their Sein an sich, in the Hegelian terminology; their 'ontological being,' as a more

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[7]Georg Lukács, Studies in European Realism (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964), p. 6.

[8]Lukács, Studies, p. 7.

fashionable terminology has it--cannot be distinguished from their social and historical environment. Their human significance, their specific individuality cannot be separated from the context in which they were created."[9]

In all of these examples the similarities with Sastre's expressions are striking, but closer examination reveals a greater insistence on Sastre's part than on the part of Lukács to describe a more perfect dialectic of opposites. Lukács speaks of the "human significance," the "specific individuality" in a "context;" he describes the "ontological being" in a social and historical "environment," but he does not describe the situation in reverse terms. Sastre attempts to create a perfect dialectical relationship to the point of speaking of "praxis--at times anguished, and anguish--at times sublimated in work." The point of real difference becomes evident when Lukács, in The Meaning of Contemporary Realism, treats the problem of angst in modern literature. At first this treatment appears to coincide precisely with Sastre's consideration of the pessimistic and nihilistic vision arising out of anguish in what he calls avant-garde literature; Lukács uses the term modernism, linking this historically with naturalism; a position that Sastre will also take. He states that: "Angst, as a dominant existential condition, leads to an impoverishment,

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[9]Lukács, The Meaning of Contemporary Realism (London: Merlin Pr., 1962), p. 19.

reduction and distortion of the image of man and of described reality. It excludes everything lying beyond its own radius, and particularly everything that invests man and his environment with social significance."[10] It is particularly in the area of narrative detail that Lukács makes his best case for a dialectical approach.

> The problem of narrative detail, of naturalism, has thus to be seen in a wider context. Since human nature is not finally separable from social reality, each narrative detail will be significant to the extent that it expresses the dialectic between man-as-individual and man-as-social-being. It is these tensions and contradictions both within the individual, and underlying the individual's relation with his fellow human beings--all of which tensions increase in intensity with the evolution of capitalism--that must form the subject-matter of contemporary realism. The realistic writer must seek the nodal points of these conflicts, determine where they are at their most intense and most typical, and give suitable expression to them.[11]

Angst, by destroying the possibility of critical detachment, precludes any expression of the dialectic described. "The more angst predominates . . . [the greater] the loss of any concern for ethical complexity, for the problems of society."[12] Lukács concludes that there must be either an acceptance of angst or a rejection. The sense implied in his earlier descriptions finally becomes clear: the existential concern must give way finally to the social consideration.

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[10]Lukács, The Meaning, p. 73.

[11]Lukács, The Meaning, p. 75.

[12]Lukács, The Meaning, p. 83.

Sastre proceeds to a different conclusion. "The rejection of nihilism cannot erase the consciousness of objective nothingness, verifiable at the level of individual existence; of the being-towards-death."[13] He calls for a true dialectical relationship between this case of individual existence and that of social, historical activity. "Why not establish as fundamental the dialectical relationship between that which human activity possesses of praxis and that which it has of anguish."[14] (Lukács' angst; the Spanish term is agonía. This has the sense of English "anguish" and the death-feel of "agony.") Sastre accepts, with Lukács, the inevitability of a distorted view of reality in literature which derives solely from a sense of angst, but he suggests an equally distorted view in artistic creations which ignore this condition. In fact the very process of artistic creation, or realistic recreation of man's situation is seen in terms of this dialectic.

> It remains to be said that the first phase is, for the artist, primordially death-related (creative agony), and the second primordially practical, which is not an attempt to separate but to blend in an interaction these two modes of human existence in the course of this specifically poetic activity . . . the function of the "creative" phase does not consist in filtering the agony of reality--the artistic operation would then consist of interposing a kathartic filter between the spectator and the work--which would make it evasive (escapist) or useful: literature of utilitarian optimism; nor in filtering that which

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[13]Sastre, A. R., p. 126.

[14]Sastre, A. R., p. 127.

> human life has of praxis, progress, development, proposing an element only concerned with man's which would mean reducing reality to some nihilistic formula: that characteristic of avant-garde literature . . . Art opens up the dialectical pairs which in everyday reality seem confusedly held together or separated. It shows the real underlying antagonisms in what seems like a formless magma. It discovers the underlying accord in these so-called antagonisms. It discovers the latent agony in the acts--heroic or not--which everyday reality looks upon as praxis and what there is of praxis in the agony of the individual or collective hero, as well as the general sense of how individual agony is integrated into social-historical praxis, and takes on meaning in the consideration of history as a total dialectic. This is, I believe, the truth that "opens up" or "happens" (Heidegger) in the work of art . . . [15]

In addition, any literary expression which rejects this dialectic cannot be truly tragic. "For the avant-garde [here Sastre is speaking of Beckett, Kafka, Dürrenmatt, Frisch, Ghelderode] tragedy has no meaning because 'there is no hope' (I understand by hope the dialectical transcending of pessimism and optimism); for Brecht tragedy has no meaning because it encounters and presents a fundamental and institutionalizing optimism."[16]

Sastre continues to develop this argument for tragedy around historical and formal dialectical relationships which correspond to the central dialectic of human existence and realism's expression of it. Modern theatre is discussed in terms of a triple root, three, and only three, trends: epic, dramatic, and avant-garde. All three are described as negations of naturalism: "drama,

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[15]Sastre, A. R., p. 204.

[16]Sastre, A. R., p. 64.

from within and slowly, seeking to release itself as from a shell; the avant-garde--also from within--spasmodically; the epic, from outside."[17] Dramatic theatre (Sartre and Miller) is seen existing between the two more liberated forms of avant-garde (Beckett) and epic (Brecht). This position can be related to the transcendent one described above and will be defended historically, especially against Brecht's theatre.

> If the epic theatre (Brecht) acts on transpersonal material--man, in this theatre, is a historical subject, an object of a progressive transformation, social relation, transcendency of himself in "others" of today and the future--, the theatre of the avant-garde (Beckett) is blind to history: it is a theatre of concrete existence: of grief, of the absurd, of incommunication, of the immanence of death. ("Action" for the epic theatre is exclusively "praxis;" for the avant-garde, exclusively "angst.")
>
> Coexisting with these we find the trend which, apparently, remains somewhat behind, in this tripartite effort to liquidate naturalism: the drama (Sartre, Miller) which rejects equally the temptations of bureaucratic optimism and the solicitations of nihilism, the immersion in anguish; without giving up--difficult equilibrium--the proposition of a double sense of consciousness before the spectator: that of his condition as a concrete, existing entity (besieged by anguish, grief and death), and that of his reality as a historical subject, participant in the development of the human toward more just forms of coexistence. This theatre rejects the didactic expedients which would free it from ambiguity, but takes no satisfaction in being submerged in the equivocal.[18]

Based on earlier descriptions, drama is obviously the theatrical trend into which tragedy fits. It is for Sastre now to show that historically this genre or genus

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[17]Sastre, A. R., p. 224.

[18]Sastre, A. R., p. 223.

of the dramatic (of which tragedy is a species) is more viable than those of the avant-garde or the epic.

The real question of viability, however, is between the epic and the dramatic theatre. The avant-garde, while recognized for the worth of its formal innovations, must ultimately be rejected for its nihilistic view and its complete lack of historical vision. It can be best described as a final penetrating glimpse (and is accredited with the ability to be penetrating, compared with naturalism's surface view of reality) into (and out of) the condition of middle-class man in his "twilight crisis."[19] The epic theatre, on the other hand, by being antitragic, stands ahead of its time historically, and fails to relate to a society of men caught in tragic predicaments. In its optimism it carries with it the danger of creating a complacency in its spectators.[20] It is the theatre of a post-revolutionary society. And while it also tends to liberate the theatre in a formal sense,

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[19]Sastre, A. R., p. 223. In another essay he describes the avant-garde as "the last gasp of yesterday's liberated, individual, middle-class man, who has either reached such independence that he is alone (in the upper-middle-class, intellectual milieu) or fallen into the abyss of capitalist alienation." A. R., p. 189.

[20]"Historical optimism can hold the spectator back from practical action: if suffering is presented as in the past (narrative), one assumes that it <u>will</u> pass. If the spectator who is presented suffering as irremediable does not act because it is useless to try to change things, the spectator who is presented history as a happy progress may decide not to act in view of the fact that history will do it for him." A. R., p. 221.

in this liberation there is a tendency toward disintegration into "music-hall" theatre. This is a present-day distortion of what should be, and will be eventually, a festival (didactic) theatre, a rectifying theatre, a theatre with the goal of perfecting a new society already underway. But this society and time have not yet arrived.[21]

Sastre argues that "the best theatre for today is a critical theatre, just as the best theatre for the future will be a Theatre of Construction in the sense of a communitarian humanism."[22] And if Brecht's epic theatre is admitted to be the proper theatre for some future society, an Aristotelian (or neo-Aristotelian, anti-Brechtian) dramatic theatre is the appropriate theatre for a pre-revolutionary, middle-class society. This theatre carries in it "a great subversive power, as the revolutionary theatre of our time makes clear--with the exception of Brecht--mounted on dramatic postulates, in forms of a realistic nature, and with modern (dramatic) acting techniques (Stanislavsky) of dramatic texts."[23]

It is not, however, the distinctive attributes of the dramatic theatre functioning alone which make this form more viable for a present-day society, but rather these

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[21]Sastre, A. R., p. 49.

[22]Sastre, A. R., p. 68.

[23]Sastre, A. R., p. 49.

attributes in a dialectical relationship with others usually thought to be exclusively characteristic of Brechtian theatre but shown by Sastre to exist as well in Aristotelian theatre. The major concept of distancing, or the alienation effect, exists at different levels of dramatic theatre. The spectator always accepts some sense of distance between himself and the action of the stage. His relationship to that action is not that of his relationship to a real action. The action of the stage is accepted ironically. The characters are not, in the final analysis, confused with the actors by the spectator nor do the actors confuse themselves with the characters portrayed. On this point Sastre refers to Diderot's "paradox" and sees it as already containing the basic idea of Brecht's actor-alienation theory. On the stage the use of unrealistic or "stylized" sets also helps to create a "V effect" in spite of highly realistic, Stanislavskian acting. Wilder's empty stage and imaginary props (Our Town), and Miller's (Melziner's) abstract house (Death of a Salesman) produce a distancing effect. The playwright is also seen to be capable of operating at a distance from his play while writing for the dramatic theatre. But in each case this alienation effect operates in dialectical conflict with what might be called an "identification effect"[24] commonly attributed to dramatic, Aristotelian

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[24]My term. Sastre implies this dialectic throughout his discussion of "Brechtian" effects in dramatic theatre,

theatre and discredited by Brecht. The importance of this relationship becomes most evident in the central kathartic experience of the dramatic theatre.

The distancing effects described (which in no way should be interpreted as evasive, but rather as the "condition sine qua non of profound penetration into the native milieu and of social action here and now")[25] are related to the Aristotelian concept of recognition expanded to include the experience of the spectator.[26] This results in achieving a point of view which allows one to "step back from himself (estrange himself) and, at the same time, recognize himself."[27] The Aristotelian moment of recognition in the character(s) becomes the critical point of the dialectic between alienation and recognition in the spectator.

> . . . if the "anagnorisis" of Oedipus, as a tragic subject, through himself and through the characters who surround him, is a tragic situation, it is also one that we step out of ourselves and recognize ourselves in those characters, subjects and objects of the catastrophe. And this double impact--alienation and recognition--is the purifying and kathartic moving

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but he only really states it clearly when describing the "recognition-alienation."

[25]Sastre has been accused of writing exotic and evasive plays in that his works often take place outside of Spain. While this has the effect he describes here, and has been common practice of the theatre since Shakespeare, Lope de Vega and before, one obvious reason for it in his case is to stay clear of the censors, not that it has helped much.

[26]Sastre, A. R., p. 53.

[27]Sastre, A. R., p. 53.

> force of human actions, on leaving the theatre and later . . . when the performance has become a vague memory, and other things, not even associated with the play, are acted out in our existence . . . the spectator is presented, represented as "another"--another who is often guilty--and this causes the purge to penetrate easily, almost with pleasure on our part. When the revelation (anagnorisis) occurs, it is too late: the drama has thrown us into the crisis . . . [28]

Without the "recognition" aspect of this dialectic, which is brought about by the dramatic nature of the art (actor vs. narrator), the theatre risks leaving the present-day spectator with nothing more than "historical superficiality and anecdote."[29] Sastre insists, as he did in Drama and Society, in a katharsis which leads to social (or at least personal) acts or agitation. But the experience is now seen through a relationship of Brechtian and Aristotelian concepts rather than through the simple reinterpretation of the latter. And this active, kathartic nature of theatre is again linked to its mimetic nature, as it was in Drama and Society, in a statement which is the most concise thus far made on the subject. "The metaphor of theatre--and of literature and art in general--as a 'mirror' or 'reflection' is 'now' an empty image. Today, instead of 'mirror,' we must say, 'interaction.' Art is action--out of reality and on reality."[30]

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[28]Sastre, A. R., p. 53.

[29]Sastre, A. R., p. 54.

[30]Sastre, A. R., p. 68.

This mimetic aspect again involves the concept of investigation, and this, like other aspects, is now considered in terms of a dialectic. Sastre sees the investigation of reality by literature to function through imagination. But imagination can exist on different levels: the "practical-reproductive" (naturalism), the "oneirologic" (avant-garde, expressionism, surrealism), the "pure" (fantasy literature), and the "dialectic" (realism). In the dramatic arts this "profound unfolding of the imagination" in a dialectical way crystallizes in myth (Aristotle; for Brecht: story; in either case it is still the heart of the theatrical form). "How does the writer act or intervene in reality? How does he communicate? . . . by means of the myths resulting from his efforts. The writer is, in the last analysis, a storyteller. The myth is a 'conducting cable' between the 'world' (of the writer) and his reader or spectator; but it is also a 'resistor' (to use terminology borrowed from physics): it brings together and separates the terms of communication; and this contradiction becomes a kind of 'incandescence': an 'illumination' of reality in the awakening of self consciousness and political awareness."[31]

At this juncture Sastre continues his socio-historical defense of his pre-revolutionary, neo-Aristoelian, realistic drama in terms of his own relationship with the

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[31]Sastre, A. R., p. 256.

middle-class reality out of which his art grows and on which it attempts to act. In an apparent reply to criticism aimed at the absence of "socialist" solution in his theatre, he attacks such literature of "official optimism" as the greatest enemy of the "realism of urgency."[32] He then supports his own case by using Engels' argument in support of Balzac's realism against Zola's.[33] In so doing and in specifically referring to

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[32]Sastre, A. R., p. 28. Sastre attacks both official optimism and planning and metaphysics in the urgency of the moment. "Blood, hunger, injustice: this is radical reality in the moment of happening . . . reality whose demands--it screams at us--are most urgent. In these moments metaphysics is impossible . . . (as are) dogmatically simplistic materialistic theses (spiritualism cannot satisfy our material wants and materialism causes us to stop thinking). Do you see how I ask for freedom and reject anarchy." Sastre foresees (with scepticism) a coming constructive period. "I ask for collective action, but I feel a horror of the uniformity of style, technique or literary content." A. R., p. 28.

[33]Sastre quotes from Engels' letter to Minna Kautsky of November 26, 1885 defending Balzac's realism. "'But I believe that the point of view [Sastre: tendencia from German tendenz; George Steiner: "Edmund Wilson renders this crucial term by 'tendency' but 'thesis' and 'programmatic bias' are closer." Language and Silence (N. Y.: Atheneum, 1967), p. 306.] should arise out of the situation and the actions themselves, without it being explicitly formulated, and that the poet is not obligated to give the reader a pat future historical solution to the social conflicts he describes. . . . I believe that a novel of a socialistic point of view accomplishes its goal perfectly when, by a faithful depiction of real relationships, it destroys the conventional illusions surrounding the nature of those relationships, when it disrupts the optimism of the middle-class world, when it makes one doubt the perenniality of the existing order, even if the author does not directly point to the solution; even if, as the case may be, he does not ostensibly take sides.'" A. R., p. 29. This is strong historical support for Sastre's realistic style and the absence of solutions in his works. Lukács, in Studies in European Realism uses

the present (at least for Spain) as still "the critical epoch: our public belongs to the middle-class,"[34] he clearly places himself with the writers of "critical realism" (to use Lukács' term). The role of the middle-class writer is carefully delineated. "The writer of middle-class origins . . . has the advantage of treating the middle-class theme in the way of a negation born in the breast of middle-class reality, that is, with the assumption of that reality in all its complexity, acquired not through study but through the experience of living it; but he runs grave risks in trying to deal with the proletariat theme for whose content he feels some attachment but without class roots which causes his best intuitions to turn shallow and his work, begun on a profound note, to degenerate into pure mannerism."[35] By thus accepting himself and his circumstance realistically Sastre recognizes that his best work can come from this situation, and this work can be revolutionary. "The exigencies of a literature for writers of middle-class origin (and for whatever reason characterized as cultured--self-taught or university products--), is not to

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Engels' statement in support of his critical study of "non-socialist" prose writers.

[34]Sastre, A. R., p. 30.

[35]Sastre, A. R., p. 87.

renounce their cultural burden and the possibilities that are derived from it, the which augment their revolutionary capacity."[36]

This leaves the writer again at the point of the creative dialectic described earlier. Sastre relates this dialectic to the middle-class society in a process of ethical development termed "revolutionary humanism." This process is seen as appropriate for the present society and grows out of the now irrelevant polemic between "art for art" and middle-class didactic moralism. "The concern of a new humanism--and of the art which corresponds to that humanism--is for the integration of those elements dispersed by middle-class frustration; integration in a human equilibrium that saves nihilism--i.e., the proper consciousness of limited (closed) situations--from burocratic danger, and protects the development of objective totality from the threatening danger of a deforming, subjective nihilization. In this sense, the revolutionary artist will set his compromise-towards-freedom against the middle-class self declaration of freedom for nothing; the self declared freedom in the manner of 'Sein-Zum-Tode.'"[37]

While tragedy is not mentioned in this and other descriptions which deal with the general theory of the

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[36]Sastre, A. R., p. 89.

[37]Sastre, A. R., p. 193.

artist and society it must be understood to be implicitly included. Every level of the discussion ultimately relates to the central dialectic that Sastre sees inherent in man's existence, and this same dialectic is precisely that which tragedy reflects and proposes. "Tragedy is a 'rare bird' in western culture. This is not strange: since it proposes a difficult tension between the two poles of a double seizure of consciousness: of our situation as existing beings and of our historic situation; between the immersion in the very anguish of a being-towards-death and the collective activity in the sense of progress; between ethical purity and social efficacy; between private anguish and public action, as far from a disintegrated existential nihilism as from an imperturbable political activism."[38] In one sense Anatomy of Realism is a dialectical rediscovery of the tragic reality of life which justifies the existence of tragedy in the theatre.

In a historical period (Sastre's Spain) which calls for a literature of critical realism (Lukács out of Engels) which must come as an expression (with revolutionary potential) of the life experience of the middle-class writer, for the theatre a dramatic (anti-Brechtian, anti-avant-garde, neo-Aristotelian) form is most appropriate. Tragedy, as a species of the genre, drama, has the unique

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[38]Sastre, A. R., p. 66.

capability of revealing (investigating through dialectical imagination) the dialectical tension between the agony and praxis of real human existence.[39] And in the unique experience of katharsis brought about by tragedy, there lies the potential for the art form to interact with

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[39]Sastre's view of tragedy through the dialectical tension between agony and praxis relates to Lukács discussion of potentiality in The Meaning of Contemporary Realism. "Philosophy distinguishes between abstract and concrete (in Hegel, 'real') potentiality. These two categories, their interrelation and opposition, are rooted in life itself. Potentiality--seen abstractly or subjectively--is richer than actual life. Innumerable possibilities for man's development are imaginable, only a small percentage of which will be realized. Modern subjectivism, taking these imagined possibilities for actual complexity of life, oscillates between melancholy and fascination. When the world declines to realize these possibilities, this melancholy becomes tinged with contempt. . . .

"In life potentiality can, of course, become reality. Situations arise in which a man is confronted with a choice; and in the act of choice a man's character may reveal itself in a light that surprises even himself: In literature--and particularly in dramatic literature--the denouement often consists in the realization of just such a potentiality, which circumstances have kept from coming to the fore. These potentialities are, then, 'real' or concrete potentialities. The fate of the character depends upon the potentiality in question, even if it should condemn him to a tragic end. . . .

"The concrete potentiality cannot be isolated from the myriad abstract potentialities. Only actual decision reveals the distinction.

"The literature of realism, aiming at a truthful reflection of reality, must demonstrate both the concrete and abstract potentialities of human beings in extreme situations of this kind. A character's concrete potentialities once revealed, his abstract potentialities will appear essentially inauthentic.

"Abstract potentiality belongs wholly to the realm of subjectivity; whereas concrete potentiality is concerned with the dialectic between the individual's subjectivity and objective reality. . . . Only in the interaction of character and environment can the concrete potentiality of a particular individual be singled out from the 'bad infinity' of purely abstract potentialities." pp. 21-24.

reality (man and society) in order to bring about change. While the dramatic mode rejects ultimately both the avant-garde and the epic forms of theatre, it possesses the existential anguish of the one and the theatrical alienation effects of the other. Inherent in the theory of katharsis and of realism is the impossibility of any resolution within the work, either of an Aristotelian, aesthetic nature or of a burocratic, didactic nature. There is a kind of hope, vaguely expressed that tragedy can lead to, but this is by no means certain. "This tension is sometimes resolved in the active and transcending hope that great tragedies produce for the spectator; but at other times the spectator falls wounded, torn, and bloody with the hero."[40]

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[40]Sastre, A. R., p. 67.

CHAPTER III

THEATRE: EXISTENTIAL TRAGEDY

Sastre's plays can be separated and categorized in a number of ways depending on one's approach to them. Farris Anderson has suggested, and used, a reasonable classification according to the image of man presented.[1] This image in one group of plays is generally that of man in the existential sense and depicted in the tragic situation described as metaphysical substance in Drama and Society. In these plays the social context and social forces are not a major issue, and specific social action is not designated. In the other group the opposite is true: man is definitely seen as a social being, and his relationship to society is thematically central to the work. Anderson calls the first group, "dramas of frustration" and the second, "dramas of possibility." In terms of Sastre's own theoretical discussions concerning tragedy and realism one can describe the first group as existential tragedies or dramas of a closed situation and the second as dialectical tragedies or dramas of dialectical tension.[2] No single term is entirely

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[1]Anderson, p. 70.

[2]Sastre says of his theatre in Anatomy of Realism: "If on the one hand I have asked for a theatre 'sustained by the postulates of realism'--'Correo literario,' August of 1952--and I have defended . . . the work of the

satisfactory as the discussions of individual plays will show, but this separation will serve for the study of the tragic aspects of the works.

In the first group are Uranium 235 (1946), Cargo of Dreams (1946), Anna Kleiber (1955), The Blood of God (1955), and The Raven (1956). In the second group are Pathetic Prologue (1950), The Garbage Can (1951), The Condemned Squad (1952), Community Bread (1953), The Gag (1954), Red Earth (1954), A Death in the Neighborhood (1955), Sad Are the Eyes of William Tell (1955), Nocturnal Assault (1959), In the Net (1959), Death Thrust (1959), and The Tenebrae (1962).[3]

'witness-dramatists' (like Miller and Sartre), and the thesis of Upton Sinclair [These are six theses cited in Drama and Society from Upton Sinclair's Mammonart: against art for art's sake, against artistic snobism, against tradition, dilettantism; the most important theses are that all art deals with moral questions and that all art is propaganda], on the other hand I have continued to try to provide a theatre with these characteristics, from my first production of major consideration (The Condemned Squad, 1953) to that which was produced this year: Death Thrust [1960]: a line in which The Raven, The Blood of God, and Anna Kleiber represent derivacions of a partially suffocated theatre. A. R., p. 26.

[3]This list does not include Death Knell (Ha sonado la muerte), Sleepwalker's Comedy (Comedia sonámbula), or The Little Chalk Circle (El circulito de tiza). The first two are not included by Sastre in his volume of complete works because they were the products of joint efforts. The third is a children's play based on Brecht's work and does not strictly fall within Sastre's tragic theatre. His unpublished plays and his translations are not listed here either. The Spanish titles of the plays listed are: Uranio 235, Cargamento de sueños, Ana Kleiber, La sangre de Dios, El cuervo, Prólogo patético, El cubo de la basura, Escuadra hacia la muerte, El pan de todos, La mordaza, Tierra roja, Muerte en el barrio, Guillermo Tell tiene los ojos tristes, Asalto nocturno, En la red, La cornada, and Oficio de tinieblas.

Regarding formal aspects Anderson has attempted to show a division which is coincidentally similar to that already established in situational terms. He argues that Sastre's "dramas of frustration" are experimental in form while his "dramas of possibility" are examples of "penetrative realism" and observe basic Aristotelian principles. This division is somewhat superficial in the light of Sastre's own difficulty in defining a concept of "penetrative realism" and in linking such a concept to specific theatrical techniques. In the earliest plays he is more obviously derivative perhaps, but his continuing attempts to explore the boundaries of realism result in experimentation throughout the entire corpus of his work. This will become clear in the discussions of individual plays.

Accepting the general division of plays in the terms described above, and recognizing this division to be arbitrary and at best imperfect, the works of the first group will be discussed in this chapter in their chronological order.

The earliest of Sastre's plays scripted entirely by him is Uranium 235. It was written and staged in 1946 when he was twenty years old, and it grew out of an intense personal reaction to the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[4] It represents a symbolic and tragic, though not

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[4]"I wrote and staged this little work in 1946, at the age of twenty. A few months before, the atomic explosions

hopeless, view of twentieth century, scientific man. The first scene, entitled prologue, opens on a public lecture in progress (a kind of cinematographic fade-in) by a PROFESSOR later identified as a character from H. G. Wells' novel, The World Set Free. The theatre audience serves as the PROFESSOR'S public for the prologue scene. The lecture deals with the great potential for progress and the improvement of the human condition locked up in the Uranium atom, a potential whose method of release is still unknown. This fact brings the audience to realize that the lecture is out of the past, and its continuation grows increasingly ironic up to the closing line: "I see the power of man extending to the stars."[5] At this point a character (MAN) who has been unobtrusively standing downstage, perhaps leaning against the proscenium arch, perhaps even in the audience, holding two books, listening to the PROFESSOR, steps forward and identifies the speaker as a Wells' character, indicating with one of his books the character's origin. He then reads from the other book, "'So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi? And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the

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of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had been heard round the world. In my ears they sounded a greivous note." Sastre, Complete Works (Obras completas [O. C.]), p. 7.

[5]Sastre, O. C., p. 12.

Almighty hath dealth bitterly with me.'"[6] He identifies his source as the Old Testament book of Ruth.

The scene then changes to the terrace of a sanatorium with a view of distant mountains. Across the upstage is a row of chairs; in the center areas are various chairs on a veranda; downstage are two chairs and a table and lamp which the actors remain apart from during the scene. A number of people are seated and engaged in rather depressing and even morbid conversation. It becomes obvious that they are types representing humanity and are waiting to die. The speeches are heavily symbolic: "OLD MAN. (looking up from his newspaper) It's already too dark to see. How soon night comes on!"[7] "This sanatorium is immense, Mara . . . How big it is! A person feels overwhelmed, so small . . . Each of us is only a cell, a simple diseased cell in a gigantic body putrefying in these mountains."[8] "We each have inside us a tiny, still death."[9] This death overcomes one character after another through the scene, and the dying is symbolized by having each character move upstage and take a place in the row of chairs as a bell tolls. The characters are an OLD MAN, an OLD WOMAN, a WOMAN IN MOURNING, a CYNIC, a DREAMER, a

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[6]Sastre, O. C., p. 12.

[7]Sastre, O. C., p. 15.

[8]Sastre, O. C., p. 17.

[9]Sastre, O. C., p. 17.

BRITISH and a GERMAN SOLDIER, a YOUNG MAN (BENJAMÍN) and MARA (a young girl). At one point in the conversation the matter of the atomic bombings is mentioned as an item in the newspaper. There is little discussion of it: "the world has one less city . . . there were children . . . their eyes are shaped differently . . . there must have been homes, and children."[10] The war and its end are discussed. The soldiers talk of their favorite songs, "Lili Marleen" and "It's a Long Way to Tipperary." The YOUNG MAN and MARA are finally left alone as the last person dies, going upstage to join the long row of characters in chairs, and the bells toll twelve while the two move to the downstage part of the set, and a curtain closes in front of the dead.

The next scene moves quickly through the lives of the two characters, and the birth and growing up of their son, IVÁN. All of this takes only six pages and includes a dream sequence in which MARA recalls the characters from the sanatorium. For his twentieth birthday BENJAMÍN brings IVÁN a book entitled Uranium 235. IVÁN appears on the stage for the first time in the last page; he is exhausted and in a state of anguish. He falls into a chair in a state of near collapse. "I have pains in my chest; I'm cold. Dying."[11] MARA is weeping. Suddenly

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[10]Sastre, O. C., p. 18.

[11]Sastre, O. C., p. 29.

MAN reappears with a book under his arm and begins to speak to IVÁN. "I have seen God. He is not dead. He loves us more than ever."[12] He reads from the first chapter of Genesis. IVÁN revives and takes up the reading and the play ends with his words, " 'And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.' (While he reads he sits up and smiles for the first time. In the center of the scene, holding the book, he looks upward. The curtain comes down on MARA'S inquietude.)"[13]

Perhaps because it is the earliest play of a writer whom most critics discovered late, Uranium 235 has received only superficial consideration. Typical is Cyrus DeCoster's one-line summary: "In Uranium 235 Sastre presents a pessimistic picture of modern society unable to control the advances of science."[14] When the work is treated in more detail the tendency is to compare it unfavorably with later works and to see it as a fumbling groping for expression. "His rebellion, his criticism has still not found specific form."[15] But in fact Sastre's

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[12]Sastre, O. C., p. 29.

[13]Sastre, O. C., p. 30.

[14]Cyrus C. DeCoster, "Alfonso Sastre," Tulane Drama Review, vol. 5, no. 2 (Dec. 1960), 123.

[15]A. C. Van Der Naald, "El teatro social de Alfonso Sastre," Diss. Un. of Ill. 1967, p. 45.

expression has very definite form in Uranium 235. True, it is not the form of his later plays, although certain very clear similarities exist and can be seen, if one takes the time to look at the work carefully. But it is not reasonable to condemn this early effort through comparison with later successes. The play exists both for itself and in relation to later plays.

Uranium 235 is an attempt to wrestle with the problem of the life and death forces in the universe and in society. (The inadequacy of any grouping becomes apparent with this first play when one considers the fact that the play was inspired by a social act, and that symbolically society is being dealt with at every moment.) The question of death (and life) is central, but what Sastre will later call the "ultimate metaphysical tragedy"[16] (i.e., the death of the individual) is placed in a unique twentieth century context: the new capability for mass death or even total universal death of Man by Man through atomic energy. The "tiny death" that MARA describes as being in each person is implicitly related to the macrocosmic death potentially existing in the "gigantic body" of human society that BENJAMÍN describes as already sick and dying. The GERMAN SOLDIER speaks of carrying a piece of shrapnel in his chest which could kill him at any moment. The patients at the sanatorium react with terror

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[16]In Drama and Society.

at this possibility. Their reaction is ironic in light of their own slow dying condition, but it is appropriate as a symbol of society's reaction to the new possibility of its own "death at any moment." The "age of atomic energy" has begun. The explosions at Hiroshima and Nagasaki have broken the timeline of man's history. The people at the sanatorium, with the exception of MARA and BENJAMÍN, are the last generation to die unique and individual deaths, deaths that come slowly from inside. MARA and BENJAMÍN begin a new age and the future will rest on IVÁN, their son.

The prologue serves not only to introduce the new age of man, but it does so in an ironic way, showing the new age to be the product of a blind, nineteenth century, middle-class optimism. Sastre is already setting his sights on the middle-class, capitalistic society which is to be his target in future plays. The prologue also introduces a secondary theme by making the professor a character from an H. G. Wells' novel and then placing the false optimism of that novel against the harsh realistic vision of the Bible. This might be called the theme of "the word." "The word" is something which has the power to guide or to mislead man, to bring him to hope or to despair. In the play the pseudo-scientific word of Wells and the scientific word of the book, Uranium 235 (the gift for IVAN's twentieth birthday) are placed in conflict (contradiction) with "The Word" of the Bible. This

allegory is appropriate to the play which is itself cast in the form of the traditional Spanish allegorical auto sacramental. But this structure and other elements of the work suggest modern influences as well, specifically that of Thornton Wilder.

Sastre intentionally develops stereotypical characters in the manner of Wilder. He uses these in the sanatorium scene to represent society and he uses MARA, BENJAMÍN, and IVÁN to form the typical Wilder "family of man" unit complete with the symbolic names (and as Wilder, insisting at times on pointing out the obvious (Henry/Cain in The Skin of Our Teeth): "My name is Mara. What does that mean? . . . Bitter.").[17] In the Prologue scene the fourth wall is broken and MAN speaks to the audience about a character. The sanatorium scene contains the feeling and technique of Wilder: death is indicated by a character crossing upstage and sitting in one of a row of chairs (Our Town) to the tolling of bells. The SOLDIERS have Wilder's nostalgic moments in which they sing bits of popular war songs. The skillful scene depicting the passage of time in the married life of MARA and BENJAMÍN is reminiscent of The Long Christmas Dinner:

> [speaking of their baby IVÁN]
> MARA. What was he doing when you came in?
> BEN. He was sleeping. (long pause.)
> MARA. Humanity's hope is in him.
> BEN. Humanity is Mara, like you.
> MARA. Bitter.

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[17] Sastre, O. C., p. 17.

BEN. But it used to be happy.
MARA. Call me not Naomi, call me Mara; for the Almighty hath dealt bitterly with me.
BEN. Humanity is Mara.
MARA. But it wants to laugh.
BEN. And it will.
MARA. Because of our son.
BEN. Do you know what he was doing when I came in?
MARA. Yes, he was sleeping. (A long silence. The bells of a distant clock tower strike two. BENJAMÍN sets down facing MARA. Another silence.)
BEN. I didn't get much sleep last night. I couldn't; the baby was so restless.
MARA. He cried all night.
BEN. What was wrong with him?
MARA. He's sick. He's not feeling well. (A silence.)
BEN. Are you going to take him to the park?
MARA. Yes, tomorrow. It's not spring for nothing. (They smile. Pause.) It's nice in the mountains. This climate is magnificent. Do you remember?
BEN. Yes, I remember another mountain. (Another silence.)
MARA. (Somewhat sad.) It was nice in the mountains. It was nice there.
BEN. There?
MARA. No. The ones we just left . . . where the baby played so much. (Pause.) It's cold Benjamín . . . autumn chill.
BEN. I don't like winter.
MARA. Nor I. Who could?
BEN. It's so cold! And I'm worried about Iván. What's his temperature?
MARA. A hundred and four. (Hiding her face in her hands.) And no doctor. Where is he? (A silence.)
BEN. Are you taking him to the park?
MARA. (Laughing happily.) Yes, tomorrow. It's not spring for nothing. (Long pause.)
BEN. (Afraid and cold.) Fall is here . . . that chill. (Shivers.)
MARA. My God how it's raining! But the leaves are dry, Benjamín.
BEN. It's awfully cold this afternoon. Make Iván wear a heavy coat when you take him to school.
MARA. (Going upstage and looking off in the distance.) Look, it's spring! (Looks again and murmurs sadly.) Raining again and dry leaves, Benjamín. (Long pause.)
BEN. It's cold enough to chill you to the bone . . . (Shivering, huddled in the chair.) Mara . . . I don't know what has happened. (She looks at him in anguish.) I don't know where the years have gone . . . Mara.
MARA. (Sighing.) Fall again, Ben.

BEN. (Deep in thought.) We look at each other and see we're not young anymore.
MARA. (Shaking her head and sighing.) No, not anymore.
BEN. (Coughing.) We're almost old . . . and we don't even know what's happened.
MARA. And it doesn't even matter anymore. (Long pause.)
BEN. It's Iván's birthday. Twenty years ago, do you remember, just at dawn.
MARA. Twenty years!
BEN. (Taking a book from the desk.) I bought him this . . . It's what he ask me for.
MARA. What is it?
BEN. Uranium 235. (Silence. Lights dim.) It's called . . . Uranium 235.[18]

The simplicity of Sastre's set for this work, for the most part chairs, further suggests Wilder's influence. Sastre in a later writing makes specific reference to this simplicity and to its effectiveness in Our Town.[19] And the use of "the word" to achieve a theatrical moment of great inspiration for both characters and audience is another of Wilder's devices. The final scene of The Skin of Our Teeth cites the same passage from Genesis that IVÁN reads in Uranium 235.

The evidence of this probable influence, as the last example suggests, is not all in theatrical devices. There is a thematic similarity between Wilder's plays and this early work of Sastre. And it is difficult to see why critics insist on reading a pessimistic conclusion into the play or worse, complain that the writer has botched the ending by not making it pessimistic when the

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[18]Sastre, O. C., pp. 26-28.

[19]Sastre, A. R., p. 55.

similarities suggesting the influence of Thornton Wilder on Sastre would make one anticipate the optimistic conclusion of the work. Admittedly Sastre is never exuberantly optimistic as Wilder sometimes is, and he most definitely lacks the sense of humor that often serves to rescue Wilder from his more sentimental moments. But the ending of Uranium 235 can at least be seen as one of cautious optimism even if that optimism rests on a curious base when compared to the later works.

But the ending contains more than optimism. Anderson comments on it: " . . . as so frequently happens, Sastre's attempt at optimism appears to be forced and in conflict with his immediate inclinations. [This is the curious kind of retrospective statement used by critics who insist on treating early works in terms of later ones, and not enough in their own terms, as if the writer's production followed some Darwinistic evolutionary process, and even to the point of suggesting the absurdity that the writer wrote his earlier works with the later ones already in mind; at the writing of Uranium 235, nothing in Sastre's career as a writer had happened frequently.] The play's ending is arbitrary: a pessimistic ending would have been perfectly consistent with the rest of the work. [Abitrary the ending may be, but this is the playwright's privilege. Sastre is not into his Aristotelian phase yet, but even when he gets there, he never concerns himself much with the probability problem. If the entrance of MAN

with the Bible at the end is a Deus ex Machina, so be it: there is plenty of precedent for that.] Furthermore, Iván discovers the Bible only moments after he has found another book with entirely different implications for the future: Uranium 235. Thus, the spectator, and probably Sastre, is not convinced that faith in God will be sufficient to keep man from destroying the world and himself."[20] Letting pass the mistake in stating that IVÁN found the other book (he never sees it although he apparently requested that his father buy it), it is unusual that Anderson, whose work on Sastre is primarily concerned with the existence of a dialectic in the plays, fails to see an early example of the dialectical tension (at the heart of tragedy) present here. The ending of the play with IVÁN'S strange physical and psychological condition is an appropriate climax well prepared for throughout the work.

The play, as earlier stated, deals with the tragic struggle of the life and death forces in man and in society (the universe). Without being aware of formal concepts of dialectical relationships (as he later is) Sastre has structured this early work around many conflicting elements which can be seen in such a relationship. (This dialectic is definitely not that which Sastre later proscribes for tragedy, but the

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[20]Anderson, p. 75.

structure as structure exists here.) In the Prologue a contradiction is established between the pseudo-scientific word of H. G. Wells (statement of nineteenth century middle-class optimism) and the Word of the Old Testament (depiction of the bitterness of Naomi [MARA], i.e., Humanity). This contradiction (words) becomes a historical reality and is depicted through theatrical allegory in scenes and characters leading to a climax in the inner conflict of IVÁN, the original contradiction being restated, pseudo-scientific having become scientific, through the two books presented at the end. MARA, who represents humanity, is a negative symbol through her name which had been Naomi (pleasant) and now is MARA (bitter). BENJAMÍN is a positive force. His name BENJAMÍN (son of my right hand) has a Biblical history of change too, but change from the negative to the positive. First called Benoni (son of my sorrow) by Rachel, who died at his birth, this Biblical character's name was changed to Benjamin by his father Jacob. The son of the union (dialectic of positive and negative forces) of BENJAMÍN and MARA is IVÁN. IVÁN (John) is "the gift of God," and his name, here in the Russian version indicating perhaps the hope for a new brotherhood of men, is related to the New Testament while his parents' names are of the Old Testament. And like the New Testament IVÁN is seen to be the new hope of man. The moment of greatest awareness of the tragic condition of man is that moment of IVÁN'S

symbolic incorporation of that awareness and struggle, his one moment on the stage, man _in extremis_, saved by the _Deus ex machina_ which in this case is _The Word_. Sastre brings the tragedy to the level of the single individual, but by intentionally investing that individual with a symbolic existence, he achieves a relationship between the tragedy of a man and the tragedy of mankind. An acceptance of a religious direction and a recognition of God as the force that dominates the universe and a rejection of the "power of man that extends to the stars" become the answers to the dilemma of the play. And if there is anything that dampens the optimistic last moment it is not the book, _Uranium 235_, but MARA'S inquietude mentioned in the stage directions at the curtain.

While the religious conclusion of this first play can be seen in retrospect to represent something of a false direction in the development of Sastre's tragic theatre, the fact must be recognized that his interest in that direction was not exhausted by this work alone. And in his next work Sastre again relates man's tragedy to religion, and he suggests that the production of _Uranium 235_ may have inspired him to write it. "After the premiere of _Uranium 235_, almost the next day, I wrote _Cargo of Dreams_ (1946)."[21] The symbolic style suggests a relationship, and Sastre's reaction to the reception of

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[21]Sastre, O. C., p. 33.

Uranium 235 ("laughter and foot stamping")[22] is echoed, but the general mood of the play is far more negative than that of Uranium 235.

The setting is "any crossroads whatsoever of the old European continent."[23] This, however, meant to be a more surrealistic than realistic crossroads which represent not only geography but also the inner crossroads of the individual mind. It is as well the crossroads of the temporal and the eternal: the point of death for one man. The signpost reads "Ewigkeit" (eternity); unrealistic sphynxes are seen scattered in the distance symbolizing the persisting question of "what is man"; a huge chess-board sits waiting for the endgame of another life; a spiritual medium's table is onstage to be used in a final tragicomic joke. In this setting is discovered "the body of a man (MAN) stretched on the ground, face toward the stars."[24] Two INDIFFERENT MEN pass by, see him, kick him to determine if he is alive, and move on when he stirs. MAN sits up staring out at the audience. He begins to cry.

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[22]Sastre, O. C., p. 7.

[23]Sastre, O. C., p. 36.

[24]Sastre, O. C., p. 37. Ricardo Doménech has called Cargo of Dreams a pre-Beckett work. ("Tres obras de un autor revolucionario," in Alfonso Sastre, [A. S.] ed. José Monleón [Madrid: Taurus, 1964], p. 40). It has many of the elements that will appear five years later in Waiting for Godot. One of these is the frequency of the prone position in which man, the upright animal, finds himself. The irony is exaggerated here by having man face the stars with eyes closed.

From upstage JESCHOUA appears, umbrella on arm, and approaches unnoticed by MAN. He places a cigarette in MAN's mouth and lights it for him still without receiving recognition. MAN addresses the audience. "Well, let's see. Why have you come here? (Sarcastically) I'd like to know. (In a bored tone.) It strikes me as curious that you don't even know yourselves."[25] He then addresses JESCHOUA. The two disagree on the matter of their being observed, MAN contending that they are being watched and laughed at while JESCHOUA insists that they are alone. He implies that MAN's feverish state is causing him to hallucinate. MAN describes how he came to be where he is.

> MAN. I walk a lot. I've never done anything else. I like it.
> JESCHOUA. And . . . tonight?
> MAN. Let me remember. I was walking and suddenly I saw two roads. (Pointing.) Those. (Reflecting.) Then I caught myself crying. I was remembering, you know?
> JESCHOUA. And then?
> MAN. I felt . . . I don't know how to say it. A sensation . . . And I couldn't go another step. 'I'm tired' was the only thought that wanted to come to mind . . . and I stretched out here."[26]

He expresses the desire to go to sleep which seems to disturb JESCHOUA who suggests that he might never wake up again. This terrifies MAN, and his reaction causes JESCHOUA to move from the subject of death and to ask MAN about life. MAN's reply is that thoughts of himself and the world bring on disgust and loathing (nausea).

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[25]Sastre, O. C., p. 37.

[26]Sastre, O. C., p. 39.

"JESCHOUA. I understand. I can almost see your life: disillusions . . . and failure."[27] MAN describes his life: "There is something that gets between me and truth. An obstacle, both desired and absurd. A stupid crutch. Dreams. And, what's more, I may even be a dream myself, a passion without object, an error in space. Things take no notice of me. I don't even exist for them. They don't exist either. No one sees them. Sphynxes . . . Oh yes! Sphynxes terrifyingly peaceful in death. And that's what I am: something behind a mask, something behind a biological mistake. Here I am, look at me. I wear myself like a suit, an old, worn, favorite suit. My body. You see it. (Touching his brow) And something odd, that annoys me, here inside."[28] He goes on to describe a life of continual searching, for dreams. "I drag a cargo of dreams with me. That's what Humanity does. It's like a caravan dragging a terrible cargo of dreams across the centuries."[29] JESCHOUA, observing MAN's rapidly declining condition, begins to press him with extreme urgency for a recounting of his life. As MAN recalls his parents, they appear and in the simplest terms describe their empty lives. He continues, on the insistence of JESCHOUA, by telling and dramatically reliving the central experience

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[27]Sastre, O. C., p. 41.

[28]Sastre, O. C., p. 41.

[29]Sastre, O. C., p. 42.

and relationship of his life; he saves a prostitute (FRAU) from throwing herself off a bridge, lives with her for a time and falls in love with her; she leaves him, but he follows and finds her (on another bridge); he forces from her a confession of her life, a life of apparently predestined self-degradation which brings him to kill her in a fit of rage. "'In life we all kill the thing we love.'"[30] After this confession JESCHOUA encourages MAN to sleep. MAN asks: "Jeschoua, Am I alone?" and, "JESCHOUA (Rises. A silence. JESCHOUA's words now sounding deep and transcendental in an absolute silence.) Verily I say unto thee, This night you have not been alone."[31] With the first light of day JESCHOUA looks at MANFRED for the last time and departs in silence. MAN begins to suffer his final agony, hallucinating wildly, calling out for JESCHOUA, recalling his parents, crying out for the belongings of his childhood bedroom, including the bleeding Christ that hung at the head of his bed. The parents go off, carrying with them the umbrella which JESCHOUA left behind. MAN cries out for JESCHOUA, and looking desperately for him comes upon the chess board. He plays out his final moments against the emptiness

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[30]Sastre, O. C., p. 50.

[31]Sastre, O. C., p. 51. The passage in Luke (23:43) reads "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise." This passage is discussed by Vladimir and Estragon in Waiting For Godot.

across the board in fear and trembling losing with a final submissive acceptance.

> All right. You've won. (He rises, and begins to walk off slowly but firmly. He takes off his jacket and throws it on the ground. He walks up to the SPIRITUALIST's table and raps on it three times. The SPIRITUALISTS look around surprised. Then MAN exits, whistling, his hands in his pants' pockets, out the same way that JESCHOUA went. The two INDIFFERENT MEN enter. One carries a pick, the other a shovel. The one points the jacket out to the other and they exchange an indefinable look. Then, between the two they take the jacket and exit by the opposite way. The SPIRITUALISTS have remained frozen in their attitude of astonishment. Curtain.[32]

Cargo of Dreams has been called "the best of Sastre's early plays,"[33] "without a doubt the most complete and developed (of the early works) . . . of incredible depth."[34] Ricardo Doménech "would praise the dramaticity of its dialogue and situations, but would attack and perhaps violently its content."[35] He accuses the author of creating intentionally equivocal symbolism and of misplacing the problem of man's existence by ignoring historical context and meaning.[36] A. C. Van Der Naald sees the work as Sastre's most religious play but anti-Christian in its conclusions. She interprets MAN as a man, humanity, and Europe in crisis, and within the

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[32]Sastre, O. C., p. 53.

[33]Anderson, p. 75.

[34]Eugenio Garzo, "El teatro de Alfonso Sastre," CHA, No. 59 (1954), 213.

[35]Doménech, A. S., p. 39.

[36]Doménech, A. S., p. 40.

metaphysical pretensions of the work finds the love episode more "shocking and out of place than effective."[37]

If Van Der Naald is correct in interpreting the symbolism of MAN to represent modern Europe in crisis, and Sastre's stage directions would suggest this possibility, Doménech's criticism of the lack of historical perspective is somewhat weakened. Certainly, however, Sastre is not dealing directly with man in terms of social and historical context as he will in later works, and his own retrospective criticism of this play might well be similar to that of Doménech. The work seems to fit very definitely within the confines of Sastre's later descriptions of the avant-garde theatre. It relates man and history far less than did Uranium 235. In fact it serves almost as a perfect theatricalization of Sastre's later description (Drama and Society) of the tragedy of human (individual) existence.[38] MAN is at the point of approaching full awareness and realization of the closed nature of his situation. (In the temporal sense the work is like Everyman, i.e., involving a short span of time at the very end of Man's life.) His desire for happiness ("I tried to be happy and couldn't.")[39] inevitably leads him to defeat: he is destroyed by killing FRAU and

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[37]Van Der Naald, pp. 50-54.

[38]See Chapter I.

[39]Sastre, O. C., p. 44.

ultimately by Death itself, both moments causing fear and pity. The question of guilt remains unanswered. When JESCHOUA asks MAN if he repents, MAN's reply is, "for what?"[40] MAN's situation also fits precisely one of the two archetypical situations described by Sastre in Drama and Society: "Morally normal men who love . . . one another, harm one another (to the point of blood or death), without wanting to (fate)."[41] The irony of this situation is heightened in MAN's case by the fact that he "saved" FRAU from death twice, only to kill her himself. (In Anna Kleiber, which uses the MAN-FRAU story, the murder does not take place.)

The intensity of this tragedy is achieved by Sastre's having situated it at the terminus of MAN's life.[42] From this point all of MAN's life is truly a dream; the tragedy of his life is this retrospect of lost potentialities. Uranium 235 ended with a beginning, with some apparent potential in man (IVÁN) for the future. Cargo of Dreams begins with the ending of MAN's life. From this ultimate vantage point man's life is seen as a "cargo of dreams,"

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[40]Sastre, O. C., p. 51.

[41]See Chapter I.

[42]Sastre will use the cinematographic "flash-back" technique again in Anna Kleiber and variations of it and other free-time experiments in A Death in the Neighborhood, The Raven, and Nocturnal Assault. With this technique goes the tendency or necessity to use narrative. This cannot be attributed to Brechtian influence; Sastre admits later (Anatomy of Realism) that even as late as 1956 He was unfamiliar with Brecht.

and humanity as an endless caravan of dreams. The symbolism of the play reveals that the irony of MAN's existence rests on his efforts to escape this condition by further dreaming. "I felt . . . I couldn't go another step. I'm tired . . . Then I tried to sleep."[43] MAN's mechanism for survival pulls him from the pain of consciousness to gaze at the stars. "'Il dolce far niente . . . '"[44] JESCHOUA, however, as conscience, religious anxiety or Christ, functions to force MAN to engage in the tragedy of retrospective consciousness in the moments of final agony. But the modern "everyman" looks back, not forward, seeking cause, not redemption. "JESCHOUA. You think the cause of our existence must be something tremendous, don't you? MAN. Yes, there must exist some reason . . . some enormous reason."[45] At the edge of eternity MAN's efforts are not those of EVERYMAN but those of OEDIPUS, and this fact is central to Sastre's tragedy.

But JESCHOUA functions as more than a spur to consciousness, and if he fails to redeem mankind, as Van Der Naald points out, this does not constitute a totally anti-Christian conclusion as she insists. If religion in the modern world can no longer redeem, it can still

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[43]Sastre, O. C., p. 39.

[44]Sastre, O. C., p. 42.

[45]Sastre, O. C., p. 43.

comfort. MAN's greatest fear is the fear of solitude, and JESCHOUA, if he cannot be with MAN in death, remains with MAN through his night of suffering. Religious confession and tragic katharsis overlap in Cargo of Dreams. Pity replaces forgiveness in the absence of guilt and fear is met with human comfort. Christianity is viewed, therefore, as incapable of overcoming human tragedy (contrary to the suggestion in Uranium 235) but still capable of relating to it.

Two moments of the play stand out as examples of Sastre's ability to utilize the unique nature of the theatre to realize a truth. The first of these is MAN's awareness of the audience, and the dispute between JESCHOUA and him concerning it.

> MAN. Well, let's see. Why have you come here? (Sarcastically.) I'd like to know. (In a bored tone.) It strikes me as curious that you don't even know yourselves. (He takes a drag on his cigarette and turns toward JESCHOUA, who has opened his umbrella and is protecting MAN from an imaginary rainfall. He looks at him, and tempering his voice somewhat, adds:) And you, what do you want?
> JESCHOUA. (With no visible reaction.) Hello, friend. (Casually sitting down beside him.) Were you talking to someone?
> MAN. (Looking toward the audience nervously.) There are a lot of people out there watching me.
> JESCHOUA. (Thoughtful, observing him.) How can you say that? We're alone. You see? (Pointing around.) Completely alone.
> MAN. (Distrustful.) Really? (Looking again, trying to convince himself.) Alone?
> JESCHOUA. Yes, you and I, alone, under the night sky.
> MAN. (In a hoarse voice.) Nevertheless . . .
> JESCHOUA. What are you thinking?
> MAN. (Trying to put his finger on it.) It's as if all of humanity were watching me tonight.
> JESCHOUA. Ridiculous.
> MAN. (Convinced.) No. I know they're watching me.

(A pause.) And some of them are laughing. I can hear them laughing . . . Listen.
JESCHOUA. I don't hear anything.
MAN. (Laughing.) They think I'm a fool. (Listening.) Do you hear that?
JESCHOUA. (Looking at him worriedly.) No.
MAN. You're deaf. Listen . . . ha, ha, ha! . . . people laughing.
JESCHOUA. (Closing his umbrella.) Look, it's very simple. You have a fever.[46]

This dispute over the existence of the spectators is on one level, of course, simply an experiment with the fourth wall convention of the theatre, and as such was seen before in Sastre. But in this case it also serves to realize artistically a paradox of the tragic human condition: man's agony is suffered alone but before all humanity. Sastre's brings "everyman" to experience a momentary awareness of this state, to see himself playing the fool. The truth reflected in this moment is one that Sastre will later describe as tragicomic and will reject as incomplete. The tragicomic katharsis (found in Beckett) is one of fear and laughter. JESCHOUA rejects

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[46]Sastre, O. C., pp. 37-38. Beckett writes similar situations. In Waiting For Godot; "ESTRAGON moves to center, halts with his back to auditorium.
ESTRAGON: Charming spot. (He turns, advances to front, halts facing auditorium.) Inspiring prospects. (He turns to VLADIMIR.) Let's go." (New York: Grove Press, 1954), p. 10.; and in End Game: "CLOV: Things are livening up. (He gets up on ladder, raises the telescope, let's it fall.) I did it on Purpose. (He gets down, picks up the telescope, turns it on auditorium.) I see . . . a multitude . . . in transports . . . of joy. (Pause.) That's what I call a magnifier. (He lowers the telescope, turns towards Hamm.) Well? Don't we laugh?" (New York: Grove Press, 1958), p. 29.

the situation in the stage development of it here, but the predicament is intentionally left unresolved.

The tragicomic note, however, is picked up again at the end of the play. After Death wins the match, MAN walks to the table where a séance is being held and raps on it three times. The SPIRITUALISTS react with great surprise, and MAN with his hands in his pockets goes whistling off.

Van Der Naald called this ending, "expressive of an antichristian death."[47] She attributes Sastre with having described it as "a scandalous and shocking trick for the time, worthy of avant-garde theatre."[48] Other critics have failed to mention it. Obviously Sastre could have achieved, and did in fact, the sense of MAN's death without creating this strange séance scene. It should therefore be seen as part of the experiment with the tragicomic described above. As with the earlier scene Sastre has taken full advantage of the theatrical uniqueness of the moment. In this scene, reminiscent of Evreinov (Veselaia smert' [A Merry Death]), and of the Chaplin ending,[49] Sastre seems to be deliberately playing

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[47]Van Der Naald, p. 51.

[48]Van Der Naald, p. 51.

[49]In an essay on "Vanguard and Reality" in Anatomy of Realism Sastre discusses Beckett and Tragicomedy and mentions Chaplin. He describes the situation of the 'clown' (fool: in Cargo of Dreams the word MAN uses is "buffon") and the 'straight man' as a "simplified presentation of a complex relationship: that of man and his

a theatrical joke and commenting on his own seriousness. As such it is a rare moment. But it is also a reminder that the proper subject of man's concern is man's existence, and the tragedy of it. The séance is attacked, theatrically and humorously, as a frivolous business. And if eschatology is not specifically dealt with in terms of Christian concepts, then JESCHOUA's major function has been all the more clearly seen to be related to this life. "This night you have not been alone."[50] has replaced "Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise."[51]

Cargo of Dreams was written in 1946 and first performed in 1948. Sastre did not complete another play until 1950. This was Pathetic Prologue. With it, in a sense, his playwriting career begins again. He says: "with Pathetic Prologue I finally considered myself 'baptized as a dramatic author.'" This work, which will be dealt with in the next chapter, is, in fact, Sastre's first "drama" according to the Aristotelian principles developed in his later theoretical works. But while the first two works can be seen to be outside of the mainstream of his development in some of their experimental aspects (particularly the use of narrative story line in

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neighbor." (A. R., p. 34) This relationship is already being explored in "Cargo." Of Tragicomedy he says, "the pure tragicomic situation: that strange situation before which, horrified, we laugh." (A. R., p. 35.).

[50]Sastre, O. C., p. 51.

[51]Luke 23:43.

place of dramatic plot development, essential and symbolic character creation in place of existential and situational character development, and the theatrical breaking of the fourth wall),[52] they must also be seen to possess central dramatic moments which project Sastre's tragic view of human existence. IVÁN's concentrated moment of anguish and hope, while suggesting a solution which would later be unacceptable to Sastre, can be seen as a dramatic prototype for many later situations. And MAN's scenes with FRAU, and his final agony are the first dramatic realizations of Sastre's tragic view. The story of MAN and FRAU is in fact later developed into a full length drama: Anna Kleiber.

Anna Kleiber was written in 1955. Sastre had written six plays after Cargo of Dreams, all with themes related to social situations. Of these The Condemned Squad was closed by the authorities after three performances, The Gag was performed and subsequently became Sastre's most produced work by Spanish professional companies.[53] (It was considered, for some reason, a rural drama, and even an attack on the French Resistance Movement. Sastre was

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[52]Sastre continues to experiment with narrative techniques, particularly in Anna Kleiber; the temporal is experimented with in The Blood of God, Nocturnal Assault, and especially The Raven; the flashback is used in Death in the Neighborhood; the recurrence of images and actions, the déjà vu experience occurs in one form or another in Cargo of Dreams (bridge scenes), Anna Kleiber, Red Earth, The Blood of God, and The Raven.

[53]Sastre, O. C., p. 284.

not able to explain these interpretations which apparently were partially responsible for the official permission granted for performance.) The other four works (Pathetic Prologue, The Garbage Can, Community Bread, and Red Earth) had not been performed by 1955, because of official censorship or lack of interest on the part of the theatres. In the 1957 edition of Anna Kleiber Sastre wrote: "I take advantage of the publication of Anna Kleiber to bring news of myself to my friends. I want you to know that I keep the faith, I work, I hope, I live. They will find in Anna Kleiber a drama that does not correspond to the mainstream (linea medular) of my work. From the formal point of view, it represents a utilization of the experiments realized . . . during 1946, 1947, and 1948. Anyone who knows my short works . . . will also recognize . . . situations . . . outlined in Cargo of Dreams."[54] He made it clear in an earlier edition (1955), however, that he did not consider the work a betrayal of his main interest.[55]

The play opens in the vestibule of the Hotel de los Extranjeros (foreigners) in Barcelona. Three simultaneous dialogues are in progress: the WRITER (Sastre) and some NEWSPAPERMEN discussing the former's playwriting career; a SEÑOR and his mistress arguing over the problem of her

[54]Sastre, O. C., p. 415.

[55]See below following synopsis.

pregnancy; and the hotel DESK CLERK's conversations with incoming guests and the BELLHOP. ANNA KLEIBER enters to check into the hotel, and is given room sixty-six. She appears extremely fatigued. She asks to be awakened at nine the next morning so that she can make an important engagement. When she exits the WRITER steps from the dramatic situation and begins to narrate informing the audience that ANNA did not make the engagement and that she died that night in her room. He and the CLERK begin to discuss the occurrence and move back into a dramatic reenactment of it. This moves back into a narrative discussion which describes the appearance of ALFREDO MERTON at the burial. The WRITER moves into a dramatization of that scene and begins an interview with ALFREDO which serves to hold together the rest of the play moving back and forth between dramatic and narrative moments in flashbacks of the story leading up to ANNA's appearance at the hotel. (The CLERK and BELLHOP make minor set changes between scenes so that the story line is unbroken by blackouts.)

ALFREDO begins the story with his first meeting ANNA one night as she stood on a bridge contemplating suicide. He moves into the scene and begins the dramatic recreation with ANNA who is already seen standing there as described. She tells him that she is an actress, and that on the previous night she deliberately allowed herself to receive the advances of the director of the company, an older man,

physically repugnant to her. She tells ALFREDO that she "feels an attraction for the base and the dirty,"[56] and that that night she was "ready to touch bottom . . . the bottom of death,"[57] but a moment later she says that "the only thing I desire in the world . . . is to make a man happy . . . to belong to a man . . . forever."[58] The first act ends with a kiss as they dance (having moved from the bridge scene into a small club) to "Mam'selle."

The music, the kiss and the dance bridge the first and second act, and with the exception of the disappearance of some shadowy couples who had been dancing in the background of Act I, the situation with its conversation continues as if unbroken. As Act II continues, ALFREDO tells of ANNA's leaving him after eight marvelous days. She is heard reading her farewell letter to him in which she states her reason for going to be her love for him and her fear, because of it, of a later undesirable separation. "My love, goodbye. I have come to love you so much that I cannot stay with you any longer. Before I go for some other pitiful and dirty reason, before something happens that hurts you too much, before that hell begins, which, because of me, our life will become, I have decided to go."[59] He follows and finds her with a small touring

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[56] Sastre, O. C., p. 438.

[57] Sastre, O. C., p. 439.

[58] Sastre, O. C., p. 439.

[59] Sastre, O. C., p. 442.

company in Germany. Their reunion is warm and she even promises to marry him the next day. Their plans, however, are disrupted when later the same night her former director, Charles Cohen, shows up. Cohen's conversation is filled with insinuations of turpitude in ANNA's earlier life. ALFREDO in a fit of rage kills Cohen and is assisted in escaping from the authorities by a young zealot of the new and growing Nazi Party. Cohen had already been sentenced by the Party. ANNA and ALFREDO promise to meet each other in Breslau after he has been assisted by the Party in Berlin. At the moment of their parting ANNA pleads with ALFREDO to spend the night with her. Her inclination toward self-degradation appears again.

> ANNA. I thought that tonight . . . Where I live no one thinks it strange when a woman like me brings a man to her room. We could spend the night there. Nothing will happen to you. They won't find the body that soon.
> ALFREDO. Anna, how can you talk like this? I've killed someone. Tonight . . . I've killed a man. And you laugh and joke as if nothing has happened.
> ANNA. What is so strange? Don't you know me yet? I'm hard and cold. Did you forget? Alfredo . . . don't go like this . . . Kiss me. I remember those nights . . . that week. I've never been so happy. What are you doing? Why won't you kiss me . . . I'm waiting for you . . . Don't be afraid of me . . . You, the proper young man, don't be afraid of me . . . Don't make me that important . . . Do the same as when you go to a brothel . . . as if I were the most insignificant prostitute . . . as if I already were what I will be some day: a whore.[60]

ALFREDO leaves while she speaks and picks up the narrative, telling of his experience in Berlin, his failure to meet

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[60] Sastre, O. C., pp. 451-452.

her and his attempts to forget her. The play turns into a narrative duologue covering rapidly the passage of time to the point of their next accidental meeting and period of real happiness and finally their separation brought about by the war.

The third act begins with a group of GERMAN SOLDIERS at the front singing "Lili Marleen." ALFREDO is one of them. As he joins with the singing, the scene shifts to ANNA's apartment where she is entertaining a young man. He resembles the younger ALFREDO of the first meeting in his being drawn to ANNA. She talks of ALFREDO. The narrative follows telling of ALFREDO's being wounded and returning from the front. The two are reunited, but the relationship is strained. It finally ends with a dramatic scene in which ALFREDO's insults bring ANNA to torture him by telling him of an affair she has had. He strikes her with a poker and leaving her for dead, turns himself in to the police. On the news of her recovery he is released to go back to the front. After the war he writes to ANNA from Barcelona and arranges the meeting which she never makes. The play ends with the reenactment of ANNA's entrance in the hotel and a closing narrative speech by the WRITER: "And that's how it happened . . . As for me, I'll make a play out of this love story; it occurred to me to end it just as it began, with Anna's arrival at the hotel - . . . She'll get on the elevator and not be seen again - . . . And you'll [ALFREDO] begin to cry, as you do

now, with overwhelming grief . . . And I will say to you, as now, that it is very possible that you will meet again, and forever! . . . if it's true that the body shall rise again . . . And you will feel some slight comfort at my words . . . and then . . . the curtain will fall."[61]

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[61]Sastre, O. C., p. 475. Sastre revised the ending of Anna Kleiber a number of times. In one earlier version the important line, "and forever! . . . if it's true that the body shall rise again . . . " ("y para siempre! . . . si es verdad que los cuerpos han de resucitar un día . . . ") has the phrase "as you and I believe" ("come usted y yo creemos") in it. This was struck in the edition of complete works as were other lines that show up in Leonard Pronko's translation in The New Theatre of Europe (New York: Delta, 1962) pp. 146-192. In this version the afterlife is not mentioned, and the speech becomes almost didactic in its attempt to point out the lesson learned by the play's experience. " . . . she'll get into the elevator and disappear . . . Then you'll break into tears, just as you did . . . and I'll tell you, just as I'm doing now, that life isn't over just because Anna Kleiber has disappeared. Leave the night behind you, my friend! Look around you! The night has been long, full of bad dreams and anxiety. Many were lost in it, like you. . . . No don't speak. . . . You have nothing to say to me yet. . . . I'm looking at you. . . . I know the placid look of hangmen's faces. Yours, no . . . it has the convulsive look of a victim who is asking fearfully, 'What have I done?' How can we put you on the bench of the accused! Someday you'll put yourself there, and then . . . perhaps then, you'll decide to live a new life in which Anna Kleiber will only be a human memory. Then you'll never be a coward again. (Transition.) That's what I'll say . . . and you . . . you'll feel a little better when you hear what I've said (ALFREDO raises his head and looks at him with moist eyes.) and then . . . (a silence; a slight gesture as though there were nothing left to say.) . . . then the curtain will fall . . . " p. 192. In this ending Sastre illuminates something of what he may have been trying to present in the tragedy, particularly concerning ALFREDO; the idea of being a victim, and the question of guilt. In this sense it becomes much more the tragedy of ALFREDO than that of ANNA or of the inability of love to overcome the tragic condition.

Sastre has said, in a note to the first edition, that he wrote this love drama while waiting for conditions to improve regarding his "broader and social conceptions," but that, in this play, he tried "to remain faithful to the general sense of [his] work."[62] This "general sense" can only be interpreted as the tragic sense, and Anna Kleiber must be seen as one more attempt to probe the tragic human condition. If the play fails, therefore, as most critics state or imply, its failure ought to be understood in terms of Sastre's own concepts of tragedy, and not simply on the basis of certain outside criteria.

The tragedy of Anna Kleiber is an attempt to develop the themes, situations, and techniques sketched in Cargo of Dreams. Sastre again begins with the end of his story, but the realistic nature of the later play precludes any retrospective reliving on the part of the character who dies. The focus, therefore, has had to be shifted, and in the process some aberration has perhaps occurred. In "Cargo" the problem was that of the suffering of a single, symbolic individual: the agony of facing death, of reviewing life, and of ultimately being alone in the process. In Anna Kleiber the problem is the suffering of two people; the agony of death is not considered; the suffering in the reliving and the question of solitude (the love problem) become central.

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[62] Sastre, O. C., p. 415.

There is, however, a confusion of subjective and objective perspective: the WRITER and ALFREDO both function to provide the narrative (subjective) and both appear dramatically as characters (objective); ANNA is usually presented dramatically (objective) but is provided with some monologues (subjective) apparently by the WRITER for they appear to be outside of the narrative control of ALFREDO. The result of this complex theatricalization is a distancing or alienation of the audience (and of the characters as narrators from the characters as dramatic personages) with regard to the central concern: the human, existential (psychological) condition. (At the writing of Anna Kleiber Sastre was unfamiliar with Brecht's theory and theatre.) The intense psychological realism of the characters requires development out of dramatic situations rather than preparation during narrative transitions. Even during the dramatic scenes too much of the characterization depends on the character's own telling about himself or herself. ANNA is constantly telling someone (ALFREDO, a MAN, her producer, the audience) that she is a drunkard, an alcoholic, a whore, that she wants to lower herself, dirty herself, sink to all depths; but in the dramatic moments one does not see the struggle of this tortured soul. ALFREDO is better developed dramatically and can be seen to be motivated often by the fear that tends to dominate his existence: "From the time I was small . . . fear has been

the center of my life."[63] The fatal scene of the play which determines ALFREDO's future is one in which he acts out of fear of the truth, killing COHEN. Out of fear of the consequences he allows himself to be blackmailed into the Nazi Party. Out of fear of ANNA and of his own incompetence in meeting her love he leaves her when she most wants him. Nevertheless, this partial success in the development of ALFREDO, allowing situations to reveal character,[64] does not seem to be sufficient to overcome the weakening effect of the dominating narrative. The struggle of the two characters to achieve some kind of happiness through love never convincingly reaches that level of "those authentic moments of existence"[65] that Sastre feels tragedy should reach. And the major fault lies with the failure of the chief characters to develop, a result of the confusion of perspective and the complexity of theatrical techniques.

Again, as in Cargo of Dreams, Sastre is using the situation of persons who are fated to hurt one another. The rather unsubtle dramatization of "in life we kill the thing we love," in the earlier play becomes, in Anna Kleiber, the more complex process of destroying the desired love relationship itself. With ANNA it is the

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[63] Sastre, O. C., p. 441.

[64] Sastre, D. S., p. 123. Cf. Chp. I, n. 32.

[65] Cf. Sastre, D. S., p. 32; discussed in Chp. I.

"demon inside" which drives her toward self-destruction and against the love of and for ALFREDO. In his case it is his fear. But without the psychological or social or dramatic context no sense of reality develops. Sastre can be accused of that procedure, which he will describe and reject in Drama and Society, of "start[ing] with a vague essence (the human essence), poetically [psychologically] glimpsed in the general comportment of man . . . [rather than starting with] the existential document, the real comportment of man in determined place and time."[66] What was possible and successful in Cargo of Dreams, because of its intentional symbolism and surrealistic approach, fails in Anna Kleiber because of its demand for realism.

The work, nevertheless, is an important statement regarding the tragic, existential condition of man. It recognizes the solitude of man: "WRITER. Each of us has to bear his own grief. In that we can help each other very little. I can't suffer for you. All I can do is listen to you."[67] The WRITER becomes the helpless listener for ALFREDO that JESCHOUA was for MAN. Against this condition of solitude Sastre places love in an existential experiment which tends to reinforce his tragic view of man. The failure of the experiment in terms of drama does not negate the conclusion arrived at: that

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[66]Sastre, D. S., p. 134.

[67]Sastre, O. C., p. 433.

love fails to bring man more than an instant of happiness, and that the final irony of love is found again in solitude. "ALFREDO. [at the graveside] . . . Here you are at peace. I don't have to worry about you anymore. I have you. No one can kiss you now, Anna Kleiber, but me . . . no one put his arms around your waist or feel the touch of your legs. Goodbye Anna! We'll meet again!"[68] The WRITER echoes this final hope at the end of the play. But placed beside the tragedy of life presented, it only serves to point up the pathetic in man, and the hope itself becomes ironic.

Sastre's growing preference for Aristotelian principles is largely set aside for Anna Kleiber. The plot, or, for Sastre, situational development, is replaced by the narrative line which works to tie together a series of episodic scenes. For ALFREDO the central dramatic scene is that in which he kills COHEN and discovers his fear of knowing the truth about ANNA. This scene also functions as a turning point: it determines socially and psychologically ALFREDO's future actions, in one way binding him to the sweep of European history leading into the Second World War, and in another causing him to struggle to avoid a future relationship with ANNA. ALFREDO reaches a second (in the sequence of the play, his first) recognition scene which exists more on the level of

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[68]Sastre, O. C., p. 430.

his subjective-narrative role. This is at the graveside. The speech in this scene also serves to take the place of what should have been a dramatic scene of recognition for ANNA. But ANNA is a character who, within the context of the drama, never discovers anything. Throughout the play she exists as a character who fully knows herself and her fate. She talks about herself as if she were her own psychiatrist. The fact that she is helpless against her fate is in itself not enough to overcome the problem created by her cognizance of these facts. There is no possibility of an Aristotelian recognition (except ANNA's recognition of what ALFREDO is in the COHEN scene). ANNA's transcendence can only come with death, and ALFREDO, in his graveside speech, must tell of it. Only in death has ANNA overcome the "demon inside" and come to rest; only in death can she be faithful to the one man she has always loved. Again the final note is one of irony.

If Sastre's testing of love against the tragic condition in Anna Kleiber ends with irony, his experiment with faith in The Blood of God has similar results but is dramatically more successful. The play was begun a week after the completion of Anna Kleiber, and it was dedicated to Sören Kierkegaard whose Fear and Trembling inspired its writing. The experimental aspect of the work is limited to its having a double ending.

With the exception of one scene the action of The Blood of God takes place in the vestibule of professor

JACOBO PARTHON's home, an old chalet on the outskirts of a northern European city. At the opening LUIS OPULS, a former student of the professor, passing through the city, has arrived to make a courtesy call on PARTHON. The somber nature of the room, the howling wind outside, and the strange reception by the maid work to produce a generally ominous atmosphere which is only reinforced by the staring silence of the professor's wife, LAURA, who appears momentarily, and the unusual conversation of his son, BEN, who entertains OPULS before his father arrives. BEN talks of PARTHON's forced retirement from the university where he taught theology and of the illness and death of the older son, his brother, some years earlier. This latter incident has left the parents somewhat estranged owing to the professor's unusual attitude toward it. BEN explains that his father was not disturbed at the discovery of his son's illness or during his suffering and death. This brings OPULS to declare something he claims to have always suspected: that the professor, underneath his typical middle-class exterior, is a man of the most profound faith in God. Whether he sincerely believes this or is simply attempting to justify the father's actions to himself and to the young man is uncertain at the moment, but the insight leads to a discussion of faith and to mention of the Abraham and Isaac story (after an incidental mention of Job, and rejection of him as prototype). OPULS' traditional interpretation of the story as a lesson

in faith is contradicted by BEN's reaction to it which is one of terror, he being able to understand the story only from Isaac's point of view. The discussion is interrupted by the professor's entrance. BEN is sent off to have the maid prepare OPULS a room for the night, and the two old friends begin to talk. LAURA, the wife, passes silently through the room again, initiating conversation about her condition and about the death of their son which apparently caused it. The discussion leads OPULS to comment on his inability to understand the kind of God who would permit children to suffer. This brings PARTHON to state his understanding of God. "I think that with every drop of blood that is spilled in the world, the blood of God is spilled . . . And that God writhed and screamed out with my son in his bed, and that from the eyes of God broke forth the tears of my wife and the tears of all the women in the world . . . God is the first who suffers in the suffering of men . . . Christ is eternally on the cross."[69] He then speaks of his release from the university and of the causes for it. He explains that he began to develop an antipathy toward the teaching of theology, that it appeared to him to be a cold and heartless understanding of God. He tells of his growing mystical understanding of God and finally explains to OPULS that he actually hears the voice of God. OPULS

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[69]Sastre, O. C., p. 492.

insists on some rational explanation for the professor's experiences and admits of his own inability to accept a mystical interpretation. PARTHON grows more and more distracted until finally he begins to talk to God. OPULS leaves the room in search of BEN as the professor slowly continues talking through his ecstatic experience through which it appears that God is calling on him to provide a modern example of faith in the manner of Abraham by killing his son. He goes off and the stage is empty for a moment. OPULS and BEN arrive discussing the professor's condition. PARTHON returns acting as if nothing has happened and begins some small talk with OPULS and prepares coffee for everyone. OPULS, eventually reassured that the professor is recovered, decides to go to his room and leaves PARTHON and BEN. As the two of them talk, BEN's love and concern for his father become apparent. Also apparent is the fact that BEN's life has been filled with unusual fears and that his father is seen by him to be the only safe haven from those fears. BEN's faith in his father is very close to his father's faith in God. Finally PARTHON begins to prepare BEN for the impending sacrificial scene. He relates his mystical experience and its command for him to re-enact the Abraham story. BEN responds by expressing his paradoxical loss of all sense of fear, and, with apparent reconciliation to his fate, prepares himself to accept death at his father's hand. "I don't ask for any explanation. I need no certainty in

order to die. I don't have to believe in anything to die. If I were told now that there is nothing after this life, I would let myself die just the same. It would be all right . . . being nothing . . . all that matters to me is that you do what you believe you must do, and that you be happy."[70] The scene ends with PARTHON stabbing BEN to death with a knife.

The first scene of the second act is simply the arguments to the audience of the PROSECUTOR and the DEFENSE ATTORNEY in PARTHON's trial, played in front of the curtain. The prosecution calls for conviction on ethical grounds. "This man's crime deserves the harshest punishment, the most exemplary punishment, so that the ethics, which make it possible for us to live together, may remain intact."[71] His argument recognizes the mythical pattern in PARTHON's act, but ironically no comparison is made with Abraham, but rather with the Greek myths of Medea and Orestes-Electra. The case for the defense rests on temporary insanity. PARTHON, it is learned in the next scene, is acquitted and sent to a hospital.

His return home begins the second scene which is, for the most part, a long and bitter dialogue between PARTHON and LAURA, his wife. Ironically his act has brought her to communicate with him again but only in a manner of

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[70]Sastre, O. C., p. 509.

[71]Sastre, O. C., p. 512.

sarcasm and condemnation, attempting to destroy PARTHON's concept of God and faith. "Don't you realize by now that God doesn't exist? And man's existence is nothing but a loathsome mistake."[72] Against his declarations of faith she throws up his family history of insanity; for his expressions of love for her she has only disdainful laughter and the suggestion that he must want to hang himself to end his disgusting existence. PARTHON, who has expressed his loneliness in his apparent abandonment by God, can only repeat "I believe in God" over and over as LAURA goes into hysterical laughter, and the scene ends.

The third scene of the second act is one of Sastre experimenting. He picks up the action just before the murder in act one. BEN speaks his same last speech to his father. The knife is raised, but, before it is brought down, the screams of a woman and a dog's growling are heard from the garden. PARTHON runs off toward the sounds and returns a moment later covered with blood. A young girl, SOFÍA, follows him on. In the ensuing discussion it appears that SOFÍA had, for no apparent reason, decided to come to the Parthon residence and that while crossing the yard she was attacked by the usually peaceful dog, Grok. She screamed for help and PARTHON came out and killed the dog. PARTHON insists that she was inspired to come by God and to play the role of the angel providing the sacrificial

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[72]Sastre, O. C., p. 520.

animal for the test of faith. As he kisses BEN and prepares to retire, LAURA appears at the top of the stairs and a short scene of reconciliation between her and her family occurs. BEN and SOFÍA remain. BEN attempts to express his sense of rebirth in the evening's experience and his renewed sense of the value of life. The scene ends with him telling SOFÍA of his love for her.

The Blood of God is an investigation into the question of faith and the meaning of God and the relationship of these to the tragic condition. Sastre discovered in Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling the potential for a dramatic expression which would mythically incorporate some of his basic views of human existence. It is not an attempt to dramatize the complicated theological expression of Kierkegaard and should not be criticized as an unsuccessful effort to do so.[73] In that work, however, Sastre did discover a dialectic of existence capable of tragic interpretation for modern man. Kierkegaard states,

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[73]Most of Van Der Naald's discussion of the play deals with it in relation to Kierkegaard's work and treats it as a failure to dramatize the theological sense of Fear and Trembling. pp. 150-157. J. Villa Pastur (on whom Van Der Naald draws) makes the same mistake of interpreting Sastre's dedication as a declaration that the work was a treatment. "Anyone familiar with the Danish Theologian's work will easily recognize that Sastre's proposal couldn't have been more ambitious. . . . The drama is built on weak supports, and naturally, since those supports are not capable of bearing the enormous conceptual weight of Kierkegaard's book, at the least critical wind, the dramatic edifice, like a fragile castle of playing cards, tumbles down." "Teatro," from Archivum, VI, No. 3 (Sept-Dec., 1956), 394, 5.

"when the ethical is teleologically suspended, how does the individual exist in whom it is suspended? He exists as the particular in opposition to the universal . . . How then did Abraham exist? He believed . . . the individual puts himself in an absolute relation to the absolute."[74] Sastre in reworking the myth focuses on this relationship of opposition. He insists on studying the act of faith in terms of a human-social context and not just in terms of the man-God relationship. Throughout the play oppositions (dialectics) are set up and left unresolved. PARTHON's faith is set against BEN's fear (and later resignation) and OPULS' scepticism and rationalist explanation. PARTHON's God is in opposition to the God of OPULS and to LAURA's. The prosection and defense provide opposing relativistic explanations of PARTHON's act which, in its relation to the absolute, is in opposition to both of them. Finally one denouement is set against another carrying the problem beyond the stage.

PARTHON's faith is first described by OPULS in response to BEN's relating his father's unconcern for his other son's sickness and death. "He feels [grief] only through faith, and not a muscle in his face moves . . . He has accepted in advance every suffering and he is serene . . . He smiles . . . he lives suffering deeply but

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[74]Sören Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling - The Sickness Unto Death, trans. by Walter Lowrie, (New York: Doubleday, 1954), p. 72.

does not show its outward signs . . . like Job, who on hearing of the death of his children . . . showed no sign of grief . . . never vacilated in his heart, never for a moment thought: 'Perhaps God does not exist.'"[75] Job, however, as BEN points out, is not the best example of faith in biblical literature. OPULS, realizing his error, moves to the example of Abraham. But the mention of Job has been made, and it exists not merely as some awkward mistake of a character, but as a device designed to release the images of another myth so that they may continue to be sensed from time to time as the myth of Abraham is recreated. The destruction of PARTHON's children, LAURA's and OPULS' concept of God, the desolation of the first ending, and LAURA's "curse God and die" brutality reflect the Job myth. The sacrifice of BEN and the second ending of the work come out of the Abraham story.

PARTHON, like the Abraham of Kierkegaard, "puts himself in an absolute relation to the absolute." In so doing he exists in opposition to everyone around him. Sastre works toward his mythical climax by means of the dramatic dialectics made possible by PARTHON's position of faith. OPULS, in addition to providing cause for necessary exposition, brings with him a concept of God in

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[75]Sastre, O. C., p. 489.

opposition to that of PARTHON.[76] "It seems as if God were something different, something absolutely alien, something strange and unknown . . . unmoved, unshakable, unchanging, isn't that what they say? Something that does not change, that does not shudder; something quiet, serene, invisible, aloof from the torrent of human suffering, this torrent of blood and slime dragging down the dead bodies of children and filled with the cries of alcoholics . . . Unmoved, distant, unknown . . . Isn't that God?"[77] PARTHON's concept of the suffering God is presented to contradict OPULS' view. That it can only be comprehended through PARTHON's faith is clear in the logical contradiction presented in his own act of faith, which by his concept would only be an example of God bringing further suffering on himself. This is apparently what Kierkegaard means by "believing by virtue of the absurd."[78]

The opposition of OPULS' rationalistic views is followed by the human oppositional relationship provided in BEN's Isaac-perspective. Standing on the other side of the act of faith, the experience is seen in terms of fear, but fear confused by love and obedience. The relationship is not clearly worked out in the play, but BEN in one sense is to his father what his father is to God. This

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[76]Parthon's "blood of God" concept is quoted in the synopsis.

[77]Sastre, O. C., p. 492.

[78]Kierkegaard, p. 47.

typology was general in the medieval reworking of the Abraham myth. In an awkward speech immediately preceding the "act of faith" BEN transcends his fear, and recognizing the purpose of his life (a life described as not really lived but experienced "from afar") reaches a state of resignation. The moment is unconvincing but apparently thought necessary in order not to shift the tragic focus from PARTHON to BEN.

In the second act the play continues in a dialectical fashion in its interpretation of the climax after the fact. The trial scene depicts the inability of relativistic ethics and psychology to come to grips with man's tragic condition as exemplified by PARTHON. Neither the prosecution nor the defense is capable of comprehending the problem that the re-enactment of the myth presents. This is precisely part of the lesson of Sastre's work and good reason for the impossibility of any clear resolution in the context of modern society. The ultimate, tragic, existential condition cannot be resolved by social means.

Following the trial scene, the encounter of PARTHON and LAURA provides the final opposition. Again the Job myth overrides the myth of Abraham. LAURA can only understand PARTHON's act in universal terms, from outside faith. She represents the reaction of society to such an act and her personal relationship to her husband can only be one of hatred. PARTHON has reached not the position of Abraham but that of Job, one of utter desolation and

solitude. His continued belief in God for anyone but himself appears absurd and pathetic. The suggestion is strong by this point in the work that faith leads to the same desolate solitude that despair leads to. Certainly faith has separated PARTHON from all human understanding and relationship. In any context other than its own it must be seen as tragic. Led by faith PARTHON has been brought to fit the tragic description that Sastre provides in Drama and Society. The question of guilt on the social level is in the arguments of the PROSECUTOR and DEFENSE but on the religious-existential level falls back on the opposing views of God provided by PARTHON, OPULS, and LAURA.

But the play does not end with PARTHON's pathetically repeated "I believe in God." It throws the audience back to the climax, back to that kathartic moment when PARTHON plunges the knife into BEN. The second ending is that of the Abraham myth, and the dog Grok is substituted at the last minute as the sacrificial victim. PARTHON's faith is vindicated, LAURA becomes reconciled, and BEN begins to live for the first time. As with Anna Kleiber, one can question the effectiveness of a positive ending which follows such tragic desolation, and the tendency is again to interpret the final scene as ironic. Anderson suggests that the first ending indicates the possible outcome in a world where God no longer exists, where faith becomes "self delusion, hallucination, or insanity. Its

rewards are loneliness and death." The second ending he sees as being that of a world where the God of love continues to exist, the God of Abraham, where "faith and life give meaning to each other."[79] There are other possible interpretations, and, of course, the fact that both endings exist must itself be interpreted.

The suggestion made earlier of the existence of the Job myth places a different meaning on the first ending from that of Anderson. The God of Job existed as clearly as the God of Abraham. It was noted by OPULS that Job never questioned this existence. But Job's faith was tested in a different way, and the image of God presented was that of an almost terrifyingly whimsical power willing to play with his creatures in a cosmic wager. OPULS' silently withdrawn God is benevolent by comparison. The reference to Jcb, and the PROSECUTOR's reminder of the Greek tragic figures serves to suggest a Greek tragic universe. In this context PARTHON becomes a tragic figure in obeying the gods as Agammenon did in his sacrificing of Iphigenia. In this sense PARTHON is in the precise tragic situation, described by Sastre, of "morally normal men [OPULS calls him a man who "moves normally through life by (the strength of) something as simple and rare as faith"][80] [who] are tortured by a superior entity under whose

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[79]Anderson, p. 83.

[80]Sastre, O. C., p. 489.

painful dominion they find themselves without the possibility of escape."[81]

The irony of the second ending is that it does not necessarily undo the possibility of the first to occur. That is, PARTHON's faith is not the essential factor. The God of Job tried faith through desolating the faithful while the God of Abraham rewarded it by a last minute intervention. But the fact that Sastre uses both throws the question ultimately to the spectator.

Forcing the problem beyond the boundaries of the theatre for a solution is a precept that Sastre's more socially oriented tragedy follows. Theoretically it develops out of the concept of katharsis (see Chapter I) and in The Blood of God it hinges on that mythical-sacrificial, climactic moment. With the moment replayed in its alternate form, and the question of faith held against both, the spectator is required to leave the theatre in a perplexed state of mind. That critics can condemn this lack of resolution only indicates their misunderstanding of Sastre's concept of tragedy and its purpose, which is one of forcing problems toward real solutions in the real world. In the case of The Blood of God the final interpretation rests with the individual spectator.

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[81]Sastre, D. S., p. 28.

Sastre's view of tragedy in its development also incorporates the concepts of documentation and investigation (see Chapter I). These concepts were not yet in evidence in the earliest works, and with Anna Kleiber, certain experimental aspects, particularly the use of the narrative, tended to overcome what may have existed of them. In The Blood of God something of a middle position is achieved between these works and the more socially oriented works of this same general period (Red Earth and A Death in the Neighborhood). While he is not attempting to start with the "photographic document" of social reality, he is attempting a process of penetration into man's condition by beginning with a mythical document. The "accepted" truth of the Abraham myth is placed against that of the Job myth, and the combination, placed in a modern context, provides the basis for an investigation of the religious aspect of human existence. The use of myth also provides the tragedy with the capability of achieving irony and anticipation. The slaughter of BEN is effective through anticipation growing out of two mythical lines: the hope that develops with the myth of Abraham and the desolation and death that are part of Job. The layering of one myth over the other with the double ending is an attempt to extend the experience of katharsis beyond the Aristotelian boundary and into the real life of the individual in a continuation of the investigation.

Sastre's last work in this group of existential tragedies is perhaps as baffling as The Blood of God in its attempt to manifest the relativity of time, but it is not the open work that The Blood of God is. The Raven does not insist in the extra-theatrical resolution of its problem. In fact it is one of Sastre's tightest, most Aristotelian dramas in terms of plot development, and it can be seen as an experimental study of the relativity of "beginning, middle, and end."

The Raven was written in 1956. At the time Sastre's situation as an author was little short of desperate. His major social theatre, including his two most recent works, A Death in the Neighborhood (1955) and Sad Are the Eyes of William Tell (1955), were still not permitted production. In addition he was indicted and convicted of "clandestine publication" and "illegal assembly" for his participation in the student "disturbances" of February, 1956. His prison sentence was suspended, but his savings were frozen by the courts to cover his bond, leaving him without income. He and his new wife were living in a hotel room.

"I wrote The Raven under these circumstances. It is, if you wish, an attempt at abstract theatre, without concern for characterological, moral, or socio-political content. 'The Raven is, in this sense--I wrote in a review--a witness-piece, a deluding form of protest, like a scream in the night.'"[82] This paradoxical statement has

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[82]Sastre, O. C., p. 661.

caused some confusion (Van Der Naald)[83] as has the play itself (Tecglen).[84] But it appears that what Sastre is saying is that the conditions which force a playwright to create works so much in opposition to what he would prefer, make a protest of these works themselves. In addition, while this work is out of the mainstream of Sastre's major tragic theatre, it still contains tragic implications which are in line with the concepts of that theatre.

The Raven opens on a darkened living room of a house on the outskirts of a city. Through the window snow can be seen falling. Someone is heard trying to get in, failing, then knocking at the door. In the absence of any response the person comes round to a window and

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[83]Van Der Naald, p. 162. "A witness of what?; protest against what?; cry directed at whom? Is it possible that this work attempts to be something more than 'a formal game.' Perhaps it is a protest against the irrevocability of time and of life. The loved one is 'nevermore' able to return from death. But this protest, if there is one, remains hidden in a confusion of theatrical machinery." The protest described here is always a part of Sastre's theatre, and is certainly not hidden here. But Sastre is here making a protest as a writer who is not permitted to write what he wishes, although in this case he does better than most critics have noticed in making his tragic point.

[84]"I do not understand how time can be reversible, nor how some people can live at a rhythm different from others; nor do I 'feel' déjà vu or déjà vécu; nor do I have a futuristic imagination which will permit me to see how science will clear up these questions later on in a totally realistic way in the same way that the earth's roundness was a mystery centuries ago and now is a commonly accepted fact . . . This incapacity of mine prevents me from forming a judgement concerning The Raven." Eduardo Haro Tecglen, "Introducción a Alfonso Sastre," in Alfonso Sastre (Madrid: Taurus, 1964), p. 75.

successfully manages to open it and to enter the room. He lights a match and, finding his way slowly around the room begins to light a number of candles. As he sits down, the maid is heard calling off stage. She eventually appears, candle in hand and discovers the man to be JUAN, the master of the house. The conversation which follows provides the background exposition to set the situation for the rest of the play.

The time is New Year's Eve, 1955, one year precisely from the night in which JUAN's wife LAURA was brutally murdered by a maniac just outside in the snow-covered garden. The murder took place while JUAN and a number of friends were partying inside, oblivious to LAURA's cries for help because of their intoxicated state. Now, a year later, JUAN and the maid, LUISA, find it difficult not to bring the subject into their conversation. Both begin to admit a number of experiences of déjà vu relating to the night of the murder. In their recollection of the events of that night they become aware of the time which is the hour of the guest's arrival of a year ago. At that moment the doorbell rings and JUAN opens the door to discover PEDRO and INÉS, just as he had at that moment on the previous New Year's eve. A few moments later, the other guest, ALFONSO arrives. Little by little they begin to sense the evening taking on the precise aspects of the evening of the murder. ALFONSO even imagines seeing the maniac looking in the window at them. A sense of terror

and confusion begins to grow when a physical object becomes proof of some disruption of time. JUAN at one point brings out his cigarette lighter, and ALFONSO recognizes it both as the one which he and LAURA had given to JUAN on the day before the murder and as one which he saw INÉS use within the past two days. INÉS explains that she lost hers in a taxi, and ALFONSO remembers that he and LAURA found it in a taxi, but a year earlier. INÉS is terrified when she examines the lighter and discovers that it is definitely hers, having a small circle on it which she herself scratched. The illogical time situation presented brings them to discussing the small amulet which hangs on the lighter. JUAN points out that the amulet is believed by the Indians to have magical powers, and he is reminded of a story of Visnu in which the relativity of subjective times plays a part. As the tension increases, the characters begin to discover themselves moving toward the exact situation and attitudes of the moment when LAURA, herself, made her appearance from upstairs on that evening a year earlier. As they all turn to expect her, she is seen starting down the stairs, and the curtain falls on the first act.

The second act begins with the next moment of action. Throughout the act a complex situation exists in which all the characters except LAURA sense themselves reliving an event whose outcome they know and which they are able to view from outside and attempt to interpret but over which

they have no power. LAURA experiences everything for the first time and is progressively amused, confused and frightened as the other characters attempt to explain their experience to her. The guests attempt to change the conditions leading up to the murder by leaving, but they are forced to return to the house within a few minutes because a heavy snowfall has made it impossible for them to get their cars to the main road. They call a taxi to come for them in hopes that they may still be able to change the direction of events. But the recurrence of the murder is inevitable, and at the critical moment everyone but LAURA moves into the same precise attitude of frozen helplessness. The doorbell rings. LAURA opens the door, sees no one, and walks out into the garden. The others begin to move out of their tableau as LAURA's screams for help are heard. They rush out to find nothing. After some futile attempts to understand what has happened to them, PEDRO and INÉS decide to leave and walk to the nearest subway station rather than wait for their taxi. ALFONSO and JUAN talk for a while longer and recite portions of Poe's "The Raven" which seem to them to relate to the events of the evening. Finally ALFONSO leaves. LUISA comes in from the kitchen to inform JUAN that some taxis have arrived. She comments on the strange exchange she has had with the drivers concerning the date. They had been amused by the fact that her calendar was wrong and had explained to her that it was 1954, not 1955. When

she showed them the date on the daily paper they became quite frightened. JUAN notices that his cigarette lighter is missing, and he remembers having given it to LAURA during the evening. The act ends with LUISA wishing JUAN a happy New Year.

Sastre has gone to some length to explain the space-time complexity of The Raven. "It is conceivable that one and the same event may be lived through by a group of people according to different rhythms of time . . . the 'objectivity' of the event is placed in doubt . . . the concept of simultaneity is in a state of crisis . . . one group (JUAN, INÉS, ALFONSO, PEDRO, LUISA) would be reliving a past which for another group (LAURA, the murderer, the taxi drivers) is still the future."[85] If this conception has not been carried out with the precision of a physics experiment, it has in its imperfect way at least provided a unique dramatic situation of a tragic nature.[86] The perspectivism that Sastre experimented with in Anna Kleiber, combining narrative (subjective) and dramatic (objective) lines of various narrator-characters, and in The Blood of God, working through dialectical attitudes and arguments (PARTHON: the particular in opposition to the universal), is clearly

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[85]Sastre, O. C., pp. 662, 663.

[86]Van Der Naald nit-picks over some of the physical inconsistencies. See page 160 of that work. See note 91, this chapter.

time-related in The Raven. The least correct detail in this multiple time perspective, by physical laws, would be the recognition factor of the "faster" group and the commentary on the occurrence-recurrence, all of which changes the recurrence from the occurrence. But this same factor is of central importance in its dramatic function. Sastre has created in this "innocuous" piece a dramatic representation of the closed tragic situation and made some of the trapped individuals highly aware of their condition, aware to the point of terror. The flow of time is a dominating force carrying one towards an inevitable rendezvous with some murderous maniac with one staring eye. The breaking of time into relativistic rhythms ironically only provides man with a greater awareness of his own helplessness. And if, as Sastre admits, the work fails to develop its characters in terms of moral and socio-political problems, it must be understood as more than a simple experiment with time. The relativity of time is being used to discover tragedy.[87]

Just before the climax LAURA, who has been made aware by the others of her impending doom, attempts to describe what lies outside. "That poor garden which was so beautiful last spring . . . tonight . . . tonight is the meeting place of demons, the great hell . . . inhabited by

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[87]Cyrus DeCoster calls the work "a mystery play with metaphysical connotations." Unfortunately he doesn't go into a discussion of these connotations. DeCoster, p. 131.

a solitary man with only one eye. Who is he? A single eye watching us from the shadows . . . Some being who is there, constantly . . . to think of him terrifies us . . . we don't understand him. What does he want of us? Is he . . . God?"[88]

If The Raven is a work of abstract theatre, as Sastre describes it to be, then certainly one is free to interpret the symbolism that LAURA suggests. The mythical ambiguity of the nature of God in The Blood of God has become a symbolic certainty in The Raven. God is some homicidal maniac watching and waiting in the shadows; "someone . . . playing with us from the shadows."[89] Time drags the victim to the inevitable meeting with this "mad beast."[90] Escape is impossible and prescience of events only magnifies one's sense of terror and absolute helplessness.

In Aristotelian terms Sastre is working, as he did in The Blood of God, with the principles of reversal and recognition and with the combination of the inevitable and the unexpected. In the earlier play the confusion of myths and the double denouement were used to achieve a reversal and a reversal of the reversal and recognition (BEN) and lack of recognition (PARTHON); the inevitable

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[88]Sastre, O. C., p. 706.

[89]Sastre, O. C., p. 681.

[90]Sastre, O. C., p. 701.

and unexpected were, and were not, in terms of the myths employed (i.e., the climax was inevitable according to the Abraham myth to the point of the slaying and unexpected in the absence of a sacrificial substitute, but still inevitable in BEN's death by the terms of the Job myth). In The Raven the relativity of time affects these principles. For the major group of characters the event has already occurred bringing with it a reversal and recognition which for those characters make the recurrence of the event unexpected but finally inevitable. The recurrence of the event is interesting dramatically as a coincidence of non-reversal and recognition for this group. The suffering of the group (particularly JUAN, symbolically man) comes out of the irreversibility of the symbolic event and the recognition of this truth ("nevermore"). The slow agony of experiencing the inevitable as it becomes the case is made possible dramatically by this time-play.[91] The "happy New Year" at the end is very bitter irony indeed.

The Raven is the last of Sastre's existential (non-social) tragedies and of the five is the most pessimistic, nihilistic even in its representation of the slowly sharpening awareness of the tragic condition. Because of the confusion resulting from its experiment with relativity, and because of Sastre's own statement on its

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[91]Sastre is attempting to create a dramatic impossible probability out of a physical improbable possibility.

non-moral and non-socio-political nature, its devastating view of man and God has not been largely discussed by the critics.[92] The work is written in a closed form. There is no breaking through the dramatic structure to bring the problem off of the stage. With the other plays of this group, as negative as they may be, and without the social relatedness of the "mainstream" works, there is always some device which brings the situation of the stage directly to the level of the reality of the individual in the audience. In the first three works some form of narrative or recognition of audience by character existed to perform this function. In The Blood of God the double ending served to this end. The Raven in its closed form and inevitable conclusion contradicts Sastre's concept of the function of tragedy in society.

With the exception of the first play, which dealt symbolically with the idea of man's social relationship, the focus in these works is on the individual and his tragic condition. He is seen through his relationship with another individual or with God or he is seen as a victim of superior forces. Any sense of real potentiality is greatly reduced or destroyed by the fact that the time

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[92]Anderson is an exception. He sees the play as a questioning of man's existence and the nature of God. He says that Sastre does not answer these questions and sees the same sort of ambivalence toward the problem as expressed in The Blood of God. Anderson, pp. 80, 81. Perhaps Sastre does not answer the questions (who does?) but his symbolic suggestions are quite definite and the play leads to a clear conclusion.

to act has passed (Cargo of Dreams and Anna Kleiber are retrospective, retelling and re-enactment, The Raven is "real" re-enactment devoid of potentiality) or that the critical moment is beyond man's control (The Blood of God). In either case the situation appears to be that closed one described by Sastre in Drama and Society. Uranium 235 is an exception in its potentially hopeful ending. Man's greatest suffering grows out of his awareness of his helplessness. Human compassion for one's fellow man is significant (JESCHOUA for MAN, ANNA and ALFREDO for each other and the WRITER for ALFREDO, BEN for his father) but ultimately man is alone in his suffering.

CHAPTER IV

THEATRE: DIALECTICAL TRAGEDY

The second group of Sastre's plays are those which Anderson calls "dramas of possibility." This mainstream of the playwright's work is to be distinguished from the first group of plays generally in its concern for man as a social being without, however, neglecting his existential self. Within the group there are a great many experimental attempts to represent the complicated dialectical relationship between the anguished, existential individual and the active, historical and social person. These plays represent in practice a great many of the ideas expressed in theory in Anatomy of Realism. As a group they can comprehensively be referred to as dialectical tragedies. Formally they run the gamut of experimentation.

In considering these tragedies one separation is obvious and useful if not well balanced in terms of number. Four of the twelve plays deal directly with some phase of that tragic situation of political revolution. These are Pathetic Prologue (1950), Community Bread (1953), Red Earth (1954), and In the Net (1959). The remaining eight plays deal with the individual-social dialectic in an indirect way (allegory) or with less a sense of immediate political involvement and more

specifically with that tragedy of an existing unjust social order, an oppressive status quo. The distinctions are not always precise. This group includes The Garbage Can (1951), The Condemned Squad (1952), The Gag (1954), A Death in the Neighborhood (1955), Sad Are the Eyes of William Tell (1955), Nocturnal Assault (1959), Death Thrust (1959), and The Tenebrae (1962).

A.

Pathetic Prologue is the earliest of Sastre's dramas which attempts to deal with man in a situation of political revolution. The outline for the play was drawn up in 1949; the play itself was first written in 1950 and revised thereafter, reaching its final form by 1953. It has never been produced.[1]

The work consists of six scenes. In the first of these three young university-students-turned-terrorists are introduced as they await the fourth member and leader of their group. BELTRÁN, in whose room the scene takes place, is sitting and playing at a piano, OSCAR is trying to read, and ANTÓN, obviously restless, is moving about. It is raining outside. The phone rings. ANTÓN moves to answer it, but BELTRÁN stops him, reminding him of the secrecy of their meeting. An atmosphere of tension is built up. ANTÓN's nervousness and conversational direction reveal his advanced state of mental anguish over

[1]Sastre, O. C., p. 57.

the group's terrorist activities. The entire discussion begins to revolve around the changed nature of their lives. OSCAR attempts to express a sense of direction, but ANTÓN feels only alienation and unclear purpose. He is tormented by the impersonal kind of killing that their bombings is. PABLO arrives and overhears part of the discussion. His reaction is to declare ANTÓN a coward. His manner is cold and harsh, that of a completely pragmatic person. He brings the orders for the next day. The lot falls to OSCAR. A bombing of the war minister's car as it passes along a popular boulevard.

The second scene is something of a contrast although it is developed along the same growing line of tension. There is, however, the suggestion of the warmth of family life. OSCAR arrives home, kisses his MOTHER, loosens his tie, seemingly preparing to relax, turns on the radio, and asks about his brother and sister. They are still out. He appears somewhat restless, and when he tries to pour himself a drink, he spills it. The two of them talk of the student demonstrations and of the growing support for the students among the laborers. The MOTHER is not able to understand the social changes going on. She continues to remind OSCAR of the family happiness that used to exist. Things used to be better. LAURA, the daughter, finally arrives and is obviously shaken about something. Eventually she tells them of her boyfriend's witnessing a bombing of a double-decker bus that was turned over and of

a number of innocent people killed. OSCAR is visibly disturbed. The son, JULIO, is unusually late, and LAURA realizes that he would have had to come home by a route which would have taken him through the bomb area. The scene ends with the family in a state of great anxiety.

BELTRÁN attempts to warn OSCAR in the following scene of a tip-off which is bringing the police. OSCAR's concern for the fate of his brother causes him to ignore the warning. He is caught in the street in front of his apartment as he desperately searches a newspaper for the names of the bomb victims.

The fourth scene finds OSCAR in his prison cell. He has been beaten. In a long speech directed partly to the GUARD and partly to himself he talks of the beating, of his sickness, and of his desire to reach his family to find out about his brother. An INSPECTOR arrives with an "INTERROGATOR" who proceeds to beat OSCAR in an attempt to get the names of the party members from him. The INSPECTOR then shows him a hospital photograph of his dead brother. OSCAR is left moaning on the floor of his cell. But the "INTERROGATOR" returns in a moment to tell him that he is a party member and that there is a plan for his escape.

The next scene is again in BELTRÁN's room. He and PABLO are discussing the recent success of the movement. An article by OSCAR justifying terrorism is mentioned as having been rejected by the party paper because of its use

of the word. OSCAR bursts into the room. He is highly agitated. In a confused manner he talks of taking over the cell and of changing from indiscriminate bombing to gangster style shootings. PABLO reacts in his cold way but fails to conceal some nervousness. OSCAR talks of his brother and is told by PABLO that the death of his brother is of no importance. When OSCAR is informed of ANTÓN's suicide, he breaks; leaping up he grabs a knife from a table and thrusts it into PABLO's throat. He runs out leaving PABLO dead on the floor with BELTRÁN standing over him.

In the last scene OSCAR returns home. He enters the darkened room through a window. He sees a figure approach. It is his brother, JULIO. In the emotional reunion that follows JULIO explains to OSCAR that he was simply late in returning home on the fateful evening and that apparently the police had used a photograph of an accident victim as an interrogation tactic. He informs OSCAR of the success of the bombing in the death of the war minister and of the growing support of the people for the activists. OSCAR finds comfort and encouragement in JULIO as their talk continues. He finally understands his new purpose to be one of exemplary suffering for the revolution. The scene ends with OSCAR's optimistic vision of children again playing freely in the flowering parks as they used to play once before. The arrival of the police is imminent.

Nearly everyone has pointed out that the central question of this social tragedy is that moral one underlying acts of terrorism: "can one justify the killing of innocent people with a terrorism whose ultimate aim is a greater degree of social justice for all?"[2] Sastre's own statement about the tragedy of revolution which his plays of this group attempt to encompass puts this moral dilemma of terrorism in the proper context: "If revolution is a tragic fact, unjust social order is an unacceptable muffled tragedy. I try to place the spectator before the dilemma of electing between the two tragedies. It seems obvious that the muffled tragedy of an unjust social order can only be destroyed by the revolutionary tragedy. The hope is in the happy outcome of this tragedy, which is, or should be, acute and open, compared to the other, muffled, chronic and closed one."[3] The dilemma of the terrorist is one element of the tragedy of revolution, perhaps the most tragic element, but it is ultimately justified in the effort to overcome the unacceptable tragedy of an unjust social order. There is

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[2]Anderson, p. 107. Also Doménech, p. 45. "The conflict which the tragedy poses . . . is of a moral order: the moral conflict that underlies terrorism. The question is this: from an ethical point of view, can the spilling of innocent blood, which the terrorist act presupposes, be justified if this act leads to an objective--the creation of a just social order--which is ethically good?" And Van Der Naald, p. 106: The same words of Doménech without proper credit.

[3]Sastre, O. C., p. 226. Quoted from Primer Acto, Madrid, (Nov.-Dec. 1957), no. 5.

some hope in the outcome of the tragedy of revolution; there is none in the tragedy of an unjust social order.

It is important to note that this central moral issue, while it exists theoretically, is not precisely that which dramatically drives the play. ANTÓN, a minor, cardboard figure, is that character who acts out this specific problem and finds no resolution but suicide. His negative resolution must be placed beside OSCAR's rediscovery and affirmation of purpose at the play's conclusion. But OSCAR does not reach this discovery (recognition-reversal) through a dialectic of the abstract moral dilemma cited as the major question of the play (that of ANTÓN). To Sastre's credit as a dramatist OSCAR's dialectical struggle is on more realistic grounds. He has not been disturbed by the abstract moral issue as has ANTÓN. He has even written a paper in defense of terrorism. His crisis comes when the family, specifically JULIO, is weighed against the good of the cause. Only with the death of a real, flesh and blood person, a brother who "used to take my hand and help me cross the street," only with the death of this person who could comfort OSCAR, the frightened little boy, is there a crisis. And it is only and precisely this person, and what he represents, who can restore purpose and provide the correct answer to the larger dilemma in question.

The central dramatic movement of the play is structured around OSCAR's process of discovery. (PABLO

represents a partial concept of the revolution which tends to create the moral predicament for ANTÓN and later for OSCAR. ANTÓN, himself, can be seen to represent the opposite position of PABLO: extreme and equally inadequate. Both positions are eventually eliminated symbolically in the deaths of the two young men.) This process can be traced through a series of struggles (agons). He begins more or less at PABLO's position (he demonstrates human understanding of ANTÓN's anguish while disagreeing) by accepting without question his assignment and in having written his defense of terrorism. His first suffering comes with the family scene awaiting JULIO. This scene begins the dialectical movement by its relationship with the first scene.

The next agon is both physical and psychological. In the prison OSCAR suffers the loss of family and is unable to discover purpose in his revolutionary acts. The crisis is one of anguish brought on by the mistaken belief that the wrong death has occurred: a personal death where there should have been a political death. At this moment symbolically PABLO (the revolution as then understood by OSCAR) and JULIO (the human element, the family) are brought into conflict in OSCAR's thinking. The death of JULIO will inevitably lead to the death of PABLO.

The reunion of OSCAR and PABLO is the next moment of struggle. The degree of change in OSCAR is dramatically underlined by the discussion of his article in defense of

terrorism (his earlier self) which precedes his entrance. His stabbing PABLO represents his final rejection of this erroneous revolutionary position. It is the mention of ANTÓN's suicide which brings OSCAR to the critical point of killing PABLO. Represented here (if one may push the symbolism to a near breaking-point) is the dialectic (in death) of the two extreme positions out of which will come, through JULIO, the ultimate, acceptable position.

This position is achieved as a result of the final agon: the reunion of OSCAR and JULIO. In addition to being the next scene in the process of discovery through tragic struggle, this scene is also structurally in a balanced position with the preceding reunion scene. JULIO's symbolic resurrection immediately follows PABLO's death. JULIO now transcends his previous role and exists as the new concept of revolution. Replacing PABLO's inhumanly pragmatic position is JULIO's humanly compassionate one. JULIO recognizes the tragic situation of man. He recognizes the tragic failure of men to love one another which necessitates revolution. Out of this recognition of the human aspect OSCAR is able to discover meaning in suffering itself. His new hope is based on the exemplary suffering which he, himself, will provide. "Now I know that I can still do something important for the cause: suffer for it . . . I will be useful to the cause 'by suffering.'"[4]

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[4]Sastre, O. C., p. 105.

OSCAR is able to transcend the tragic dilemma posed by revolution by finding revolutionary purpose in his own human suffering. But it is not through party dicta alone that he has arrived at this discovery. PABLO's concept fails to recognize the individual, existential crisis. "You feel something missing and you're flailing about. But you're only one more individual case which doesn't mean a thing."[5] JULIO's human reaction to the human condition is necessary to give the political concepts meaning for OSCAR. The revolutionary tragedy is ultimately opened by purpose and hope.[6]

In the first scene of Pathetic Prologue BELTRÁN introduces the subject of family and the apparent conflict

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[5]Sastre, O. C., p. 95.

[6]Ricardo Doměnech rightly criticizes Sastre for his stiff characters in this work. He also suggests that it would have been more convincing had the situation been more historically concrete. "Perhaps situating the action in a concrete historical moment would have given the tragedy the realistic basis it lacks." p. 44. Why this critic feels that theatre has to be based on actual incidents and historical facts is uncertain. Sastre tends to run the gamut from historical realism to abstract symbolism. In this work he is somewhere in between. Leonard Pronko feels that the ending is, at best, only vaguely hopeful. " . . . the vague suggestion that the future may bring something brighter." "The 'Revolutionary Theatre' of Alfonso Sastre," The Tulane Drama Review, vol. 5, no. 2, (Dec. 1960), p. 118. Typically Van Der Naald ends her discussion with a subjective statement unsupported by textual data. "Unfortunately this note of hope which follows the pathetic prologue (OSCAR's final speeches) does not manage to convince one, nor does it erase the melodramatic flavor of the final scene." p. 110. This, unfortunately, is not atypical of most commentary on Sastre's works. The major exception is Farris Anderson.

between family loyalties and revolutionary principles. He says to OSCAR: "The family of a revolutionary is something that disappears very quickly . . . and you end up alone, you'll see."[7] The prediction is only partly true for OSCAR, for his ultimate concept of revolution grows out of the human understanding provided by family as represented through JULIO. This conflict, however, has been shown to be central in OSCAR's development as a tragic figure. And it is used again by Sastre as a tragic dialectic in the second of his dramas which investigate man in the context of revolution: Community Bread.

Community Bread was begun in 1952 and completed in 1953. It was produced in January of 1957 in Barcelona. In the preface to the play, published in the Complete Works, Sastre cites from a note of his own interpretation dating from the writing of the work. "The tragic dimension of this drama is already in Greek tragedy: Orestes kills Clytemnestra and is pursued by the Furies. Community Bread is, in this sense, an ancient tragedy. But its present articulation has only been possible since the great revolutionary experiences of the twentieth century."[8]

The action takes place in an imaginary country under the rule of a new revolutionary government. (In defending

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[7]Sastre, O. C., p. 66.

[8]Sastre, O. C., p. 226.

the relevance of his plays Sastre has said that, "in every case, Spain is the country of [my] imagination.")[9] A young leader of the Party, DAVID HARKO, is playing a major role in a tough reform which is underway to improve the new rule and tighten regulations. The prologue scene is a public meeting, with audience as public, at which DAVID announces the reforms. His speech makes it clear that he is an ardent revolutionary prepared to lead the country into a general purge if necessary to achieve the desired goals. "The time for bloodshed has not passed. Days of anguish and grief may still await us. But the Revolution will triumph, and some day we will be happy that we undertook this rigorous journey."[10]

The scene shifts to the seventh floor apartment dwelling of DAVID's family. His wife, MARTA, and his aunt, PAULA, are talking. Their conversation deals largely with DAVID, his present travelling for the reform, his extreme dedication to the Party, and his early life as a physically weak and solitary child. They also talk of DAVID's mother, JUANA, and of her anxiety over him based on the politically motivated death of the father in an earlier period of the revolution. The women express their dissatisfaction with the revolution which has failed to change their lot. "My sister and I never understood

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[9]Sastre, O. C., p. 227.

[10]Sastre, O. C., p. 232.

anything that happened. We were still at the stove, or in the laundry, or down on our knees on the floor, scrubbing . . . while everything happened. For us there haven't been any changes. It's always the same."[11] The mother, JUANA, arrives very exhausted. She tells them that she has taken a paseo. They sit down to eat. In the ensuing conversation between JUANA and PAULA it becomes apparent that JUANA is disturbed and hiding something from the other two. Finally she tells them of meeting a certain PEDRO YUDD, an old friend of the father in earlier days, but at present one of the most corrupt officials of the government, the kind about to be purged by DAVID and his group. She has accepted money from YUDD in anticipation of taking her family out of the country, something which she feels will soon be necessitated by the developing political situation. She expresses no faith in the revolutionary government and only longs for some security and happiness for her family in some "other country." DAVID finally arrives home, and a short scene follows with MARTA and him discussing their life together, a life in which the human relationship is constantly being broken by the intrusion of political matters. Even while MARTA attempts to talk of their earlier happiness, DAVID can only think of the possibility of a new purge.

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[11]Sastre, O. C., p. 237.

In the second scene two major confrontations occur. YUDD calls on DAVID at his home to prevent himself being turned over to the authorities because of his corrupt practices involving the distribution of wheat. DAVID informs YUDD that all the evidence has been collected to convict him of having made personal gain by depriving the people of the community bread. YUDD stuns DAVID with the information that his mother, JUANA, has been involved in the corruption. He assumes that DAVID will cover up for both of them because of his mother's implication. Instead DAVID calls the police on the phone to bring them to arrest YUDD. While they await the arrival of the police, YUDD presses DAVID to change his mind, initiating the expression of the moral dilemma which develops through the rest of the play. The police come and carry off YUDD. DAVID remains alone. After a lighting change indicating a passage of time, JUANA appears in the room. DAVID tells her of the YUDD incident, and she very calmly admits her participation. The scene ends with DAVID attempting to comprehend the truth of the dilemma. He desperately begins to hold on to memories of happier moments with his mother--even recalling his parents wedding photograph. His mother comforts him as they prepare to go off to the authorities.

MARTA and PAULA are awaiting DAVID's return in the third scene. PAULA is unable to understand DAVID's actions. "I was the first one to tell my sister she was

doing something wrong. You remember? But I would have done anything for her. And David, no? Why? Because he belongs to the Party? What kind of age are we living in? Children no longer feel devotion toward their mothers?"[12] DAVID arrives back somewhat intoxicated. He cannot stand to have PAULA look at him. He admits to MARTA that he declined an offer from the committee to forget the affair. In an almost grotesque seeking for comfort he turns on the radio and begins to dance with MARTA. She attempts to console him, but their final embrace and kiss appear only pathetic.

In the fourth scene DAVID, PAULA, and MARTA await the hour of the execution. DAVID is apparently asleep at his desk as the two women talk in desperate helplessness. The atmosphere is heavy with PAULA's anger and MARTA's despair.

> PAULA. In this whole city there is nothing but slime and filth. Everything is dirty and sad.
> MARTA. I look at David, I look at you and I realize that tonight we can do nothing for each other. . . .
> PAULA. After what he's done there's nothing left for him but to die, to die in the worst way . . . hanged from a tree, that's what left for him! The worst possible death.[13]

DAVID, who has not been asleep, begins to talk. The conversation turns into a dialogue between DAVID and PAULA which eventually transcends the realistic level of the scene becoming a climactic conflict between a new Orestes

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[12]Sastre, O. C., p. 260.

[13]Sastre, O. C., pp. 267, 268, 269.

and the Furies. A horrible silence follows the clash. It is the hour of the execution. DAVID leaves to go to his bedroom. He locks the door behind him. As MARTA begins to frantically beat at the door, a woman's scream is heard. DAVID has leaped from his seventh floor bedroom window to the patio below.

In the short epilogue the shadowy silhouette of a crowd can be seen forming around DAVID's broken body. MARTA and PAULA appear. MARTA throws herself sobbing on DAVID and holds him. FESSLER and a number of uniformed OFFICIALS appear. They apparently were on their way to inform DAVID of the execution. They inquire about the death. PAULA tells them that he committed suicide. FESSLER orders someone to telephone the story as an accidental death and declares DAVID a hero of the revolution and the great example for the youth of the Party. The scene closes with MARTA's soliloquy over DAVID's body.

The critical work dealing with Community Bread has not been very insightful, most of it consisting of facile plot summary or one line statement of theme.[14]

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[14]Three examples of this are Jacqueline Chantraine de Van Praag, "Alfonso Sastre: La esperanza del joven teatro español," La Torre, X, No. 40 (1962), pp. 115-116. Miss Chantraine de Van Praag even refers to David, the hero, as Daniel part of the time. Juan Emilio Aragonés, "Alfonso Sastre y el 'realismo profundizado,'" Punta Europa, No. 83 (1963), pp. 29-32. Sr. Aragonés does include the poem which is said to have inspired Sastre to write the play. F. García Pavón. El teatro social en España. (Madrid: Taurus 1962) pp. 176-178.

E. H. Tecglen insists that the play "is an anticommunist work . . . anyone familiar with it couldn't think otherwise."[15] Cyrus DeCoster sees in it similarities with Sartre's Dirty Hands. He states that, "Sastre is intent on portraying a crise de conscience, a set of circumstances which drive a tragic character of considerable magnitude to destruction."[16] This, of course, could be said about almost every work Sastre has written. Leonard Pronko feels that "David is fighting for ideas rather than for people."[17] A. C. Van Der Naald expresses the idea that in "Community Bread Sastre is dramatizing another negative aspect of Revolution: the idealistic fanaticism of the revolutionary David Harko."[18] In the only criticism of value Farris Anderson attempts to show that the inherent weakness of the play lies in the "disproportionate emphasis on the individual and [the] deficient exposition of the social context."[19]

Anderson's point is correct if "context" is understood in terms of its usual realistic presentation. The addition of scenes involving members of the revolutionary government in action or of scenes of the larger society

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[15]Tecglen, p. 73.

[16]DeCoster, p. 127.

[17]Pronko, "The Revolutionary Theatre of A. S.," p. 116.

[18]Van Der Naald, p. 113.

[19]Anderson, p. 87.

under this government might well have sufficed to fill out this contextual requirement. In this sense the balance developed between OSCAR's inner (family) and outer (societal) life in Pathetic Prologue provided clearer results. But if the idea of "context" in a more symbolic and, in this case, psychological sense is accepted, the social context of Community Bread is not so lacking in exposition as Anderson indicates. In terms of dramatic metaphor DAVID's family is a microcosmic representation of the society existing under the revolutionary government (DAVID, himself). Psychologically DAVID is a microcosm of the societal struggle between the old family-bond order and the new order of the community-bond. In following the Orestes myth Sastre is not only working with the central situation of matricide but also with the Aeschylean family=society, individual=ruling order symbolism. Through theatrical metaphor the action and context are classically contained. The four major scenes occur in the family living quarters. The outside world, or social context is represented in the more traditional, realistic fashion in the prologue and epilogue scenes. It is otherwise "felt" to surround the family scenes on a realistic level while it is represented by them symbolically in those scenes. In this manner Sastre finds the cleanest dramatic presentation of the tragic dilemma.

This dilemma is similar to the one posed in Pathetic Prologue. In that work OSCAR, after his terrorist act,

was brought to an awareness of the conflict between the human and the social. In an ironic twist his spared "victim" was able to bring him through the dialectical struggle to a new concept of revolution, one which tended towards a synthesis of the human and social conditions. In Community Bread the crisis again grows out of the human-social conflict. Again the family (blood) relationship is used. But the tragic action gains greater depth of meaning through the reflection of its mythical archetype. Sastre has discovered in the Orestes' myth the pattern of a dilemma which exists again for modern man.

In carrying out the purge of the revolutionary government, DAVID is in the role of the mythical hero (Orestes) whose task is the purification of the existing order. The establishment of a new order of justice demands this. In him the revolutionary principles (Apollo) come into conflict with the old law of the blood-bond. This law is broken in the attempt to purge the society of corruption. After DAVID breaks the old law he is pursued by the Furies (represented by PAULA; MARTA can be seen as a symbol of the Eumenides) to the point of recognizing in himself the same human weakness that he had condemned in his mother. In this moment a second purge occurs involving pity and fear.

> **PAULA.** You're mad! But that won't help! I'll drag you out of that refuge too! And someday you'll have to think about your mother and you won't be able to bear it.
> **DAVID.** (Screaming.) Someday! No! Now! I can't stand it now! So Shut up! Please don't say anymore!

> Why did I ever let you talk to me? You've hurt me. I'm not strong! Now I can see that! I've gone beyond my strength! Everyone has put too much confidence in me! They've all put their hope in me! But I won't do. I still belong to your world! I stand here, terrified! I can't stop shaking! I want to stop the whole thing, I want to tear down the scaffold! Comrades, I'm sorry; forgive me! Go forward . . . in spite of everything! Don't listen to me! Don't listen to me! . . . but I'll shout it as loud as I can (Almost howling:) Have pity on me! (A tremendous silence. The women look at him in horror.)[20]

DAVID's discovery that the weakness of man must be met with human compassion comes too late, and even as it is made, the other half of him, the revolutionary dogma, struggles against it. At the final moment, in a reversal of the myth, the hero destroys himself.

The epilogue represents the dialectic of the play by concluding with speeches from JACOBO FESSLER and MARTA. FESSLER has been developed previously through DAVID's remarks as the incorruptible Party leader. MARTA's story and her relationship with DAVID is a minor plot which relates ironically to the major situation. Before meeting DAVID she had been a "ruined woman," a drunken prostitute, an example of the worst corruption of the society. Through him she became a useful member of the society again. DAVID's success in this purification, which came through relating human values and social principles, stands in contrast to his failure in the major situation. In the end the "incorruptible" FESSLER attempts to advance society through fabrications which deny the truth of the

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[20]Sastre, O. C., p. 275.

human condition while MARTA expresses a helpless awareness of this condition by her compassion.

Sastre has managed, by various means, to bring the human-social conflict into sharper focus in Community Bread than in Pathetic Prologue. By bringing all the major elements of action and context to realization in the family relationship he achieves greater dramatic impact. He adds another dimension by the mythical relationship. Finally, in this work, Sastre finds in the problem of purification an effective and significant center point in the conflict, significant thematically as it relates in one direction mythically and in another psychologically and sociologically, and effective dramatically as it relates to the concept of katharsis. In one sense the play is an analysis of Sastre's concept of katharsis as an individual and social purification. The problem for DAVID is the purification of the society (political purge). But this presupposes a purification of the individual. For DAVID, however, this has not occurred. He acts purely on the basis of his revolutionary principles. His action ironically, on the other level, turns into corruption, a destruction of the blood-bond. "I have defiled the taboo; I have broken it into a thousand pieces."[21] When the individual purification takes place, the experience for DAVID is one of finally allowing himself to release the

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[21]Sastre, O. C., p. 275.

human feelings suppressed by the revolutionary dicta. He discovers himself through fear and pity, and in recognizing himself, recognizes, for the first time, the whole meaning of his earlier act of social purification.

JUANA, the Mother, functions dramatically and archetypically in the blood relationship and symbolically as the society, corrupt in its pathetic and fearful human existence. YUDD says "the corruption is in us,"[22] but DAVID fails to grasp the truth of the human condition in his statement. MARTA, also part of this society, has reached a higher level of understanding, less fearful and pathetic, ironically through a purification that DAVID has helped achieve before being dehumanized by the revolution (FESSLER). PAULA is the negative force of the old order, which works against the possibility of future good through the revolution. She represents the nihilistic side of man.

> PAULA. Everything will be the same, and the sacrifice will have been for nothing, and the people will still be hungry while a few stuff themselves on the community bread, and you'll demand that the rest make them pay in blood, and the blood and hunger will go on for years just like it is now.
> DAVID. It's possible that everything might happen as you say, aunt Paula. But I realize that the worst in man is speaking through your mouth, everything that I hate in man! And I can't answer you![23]

Mythically she is the embodiment of the Furies which pursue the hero after he breaks the blood-bond. The

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[22]Sastre, O. C., p. 253.

[23]Sastre, O. C., p. 274.

ending of the myth is changed, and the hero is driven to suicide. The optimism of Aeschylus which grew out of his own period cannot be shared by Sastre in the light of conditions in present day society. The conflict is a long way from its resolution. FESSLER's conclusion of social action which denies the human condition is as unacceptable as MARTA's final expression of helpless compassion.[24]

Sastre's next drama to deal with an aspect of revolution breaks free from the moral conflict, and its lack of resolution becomes purely a historical matter. Red Earth differs from the two earlier works in depicting an individual (and a segment of society: the miners) who acts against society without suffering any major crisis of conscience. The revolutionary action is limited (a strike) and defeated, but ultimately recognized in a historical perspective. History becomes a significant factor for the first time in Sastre's theatre of revolution.

The play was written in October and November of 1954. The second scene of the epilogue was revised in 1956. It has not been produced. Sastre discouraged any attempt to relate the action of the play to a specific historical incident or geographical place. It is historically

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[24]Sastre would see Brecht's optimism, as expressed in the revolutionary justice of Azdak, as unrealistic and irrelevant to the real problems of a pre-revolutionary society. For this reason he focuses on the conflict which is destined to precede the establishment of any new Areopagus.

important in reflecting all real incidents of its kind anywhere, at anytime. "Thus, Red Earth, which is not a geographical description, nor a historical account, nor even a story set into an exact historical context, is a drama that trys to give an account of reality."[25]

Red Earth like Community Bread, also develops meaning out of its relationship with theatrical myth. In this work Sastre draws on the Spanish myth of Fuenteovejuna (Sheep Well). The historical incident of the uprising of the townspeople of Fuenteovejuna in 1476 was dramatized by Lope de Vega in 1619. Lope's play depicts the uprising as a result of a world thrown out of order (injustice) by its leaders, the princes. The peasants' unity is dramatically demonstrated in the torture scene when each man persists in proclaiming Fuenteovejuna as the only party guilty of the uprising. Sastre attempts to rework the myth in terms of modern society.

Red Earth is in five scenes and a two scene epilogue. The stage, as suggested by the author, is divided into areas, one representing a part of PEDRO's house, interior and exterior, one a part of the town tavern, and one a prison cell and part of the police station.

In the first scene PABLO, a young man, arrives at the house of PEDRO, a retiring miner, having been invited by the latter for the traditional farewell celebration given

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[25]Sastre, O. C., p. 347.

by the retiring man for his friends before vacating his company-owned house. INÉS, the daughter, is awaiting the return of her father from the company office and of her mother from the market. She invites PABLO in, and the two engage in some general talk concerning the policy of having the miners vacate their homes and concerning her family's uncertain future. PABLO tells INÉS that he only plans to work at the mines for a short while until he can find some better position. INÉS sees his aspirations as only the hopeless repetition of a scene always played by the young men beginning in the mines. She has been made aware of the inevitable cycle of life that the mines represent, of the inescapable situation of generations who begin with hope and end in resignation. "Life has taught me not to hope."[26] PABLO is disturbed by this general resignation. He asks if the miners have ever attempted to act against the company's policies. INÉS tells him of an attempted strike years ago which failed, and of her father's leading role in it. Eventually PABLO confesses to INÉS the real reason for his being at the mines: he has killed a man in a brawl, and the courts have exiled him to the mines. As PABLO finishes his story, PEDRO arrives home followed soon after by his wife, TERESA. A few moments later the miners begin to arrive for the party. Just as the men begin to enjoy themselves, PEDRO

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[26]Sastre, O. C., p. 353.

stands to make the traditional toast. In his effort to find something happy and special to say he inadvertently begins to review his life and leads himself into a discovery of its meaninglessness. "So many years of suffering . . . of little moments of happiness and . . . (looking at TERESA) of love . . . haven't left a trace on earth . . . we poor, we live and die and disappear."[27]

In the next scene PABLO is in the tavern trying to drink himself into forgetting the pathetic situation at the farewell party. Some of the miners, in a friendly way, try to suggest that he not drink so much. He begins to see in them a kind of tranquility and resignation which eventually disturbs him enough that he begins to insult them. Through embarrassing them he finally rouses them to accepting a plan to block the eviction of PEDRO's family the next day.

Before dawn the next morning the men are found standing about in front of PEDRO's house. PABLO inside explains the plan to PEDRO and tells the family to remain in the house. There is a nervous excitement among the men caused by the uncertainty of their action's outcome. They discuss the probability of police intervention and what their response should be to it. One of the men sings a mining song. Another, slightly drunk, does a grotesque little dance. The work whistle has blown, and some

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[27]Sastre, O. C., p. 361.

reaction to their absence becomes imminent. Finally an OFFICIAL appears and asks them to return to the mine explaining that the incident will be forgotten if they comply. They send him back with their rejection and inform him of their simple demand to be allowed to live out their lives in their homes after retirement. Within minutes the police arrive. The SERGEANT attempts to enter the house but is stopped by PABLO. The OLD MAN talks to him, reminding him of their friendship, of the times they have played cards together. But the SERGEANT refuses to understand the situation on the human level and insists on following his orders. He trys to force his way into the house. He and PABLO exchange blows. One of the police fires at PABLO but misses him, and the fighting stops. Suddenly a WOMAN appears with her dead and bleeding infant in her arms. Like a priestess she holds up the dead child and with a trembling and strangely exalted voice invokes the men to revolution. "Now you will set the Englishmen's house on fire and kill all of them. What are you waiting for? Is this a town of men? I want to see a bonfire tonight . . . dead men hanging from the trees . . . you will all go to do it. . . . They have killed my child. . . . Let the blood flow!"[28]

Scattered shooting can be heard and the distant sky is aglow with flames in the next scene as TERESA bandages

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[28]Sastre, O. C., p. 383.

PEDRO's head. PABLO comes into the house and reports the burning of the owner's mansion and the deaths of several of the officials. More police have been summoned, and it is only a matter of time before the uprising will be put down. PABLO, realizing that the police will come first to PEDRO's house tries to get the family prepared to go elsewhere to hide. Before they can get out, however, the SERGEANT arrives. Just before they are taken off PABLO and INÉS declare their love for each other.

The fifth scene is the torture-interrogation scene. Several miners are seen talking as they await the interrogation. They talk about their ability to withstand the torture. The interrogation room becomes illuminated as one of the miners is taken into it. He is beaten and kicked and finally dragged into another room where a further beating can be heard. The only confession is that, "everyone did it." The OLD MAN is brought in. He also refuses to single out individuals. They beat him to unconsciousness and drag him out. Another MINER is brought in. "It was all of us." The CAPTAIN finally responds by sending an order to gun down the whole town. A POLICEMAN enters and informs the CAPTAIN of the OLD MAN's death. The scene ends with firing heard in the distance as the SERGEANT, holding back his tears, talks of the time he spent Christmas eve with the OLD MAN and of a holiday cup of coffee the OLD MAN brewed for him. Music comes in as the curtain falls.

The first scene of the epilogue takes place on the tenth wedding anniversary of PABLO and INÉS. PABLO is caught in the cycle of the mine. They talk of the uprising and of the massacre of the townspeople including PEDRO and TERESA. They mention the birth of their daughter TERESA.

The second scene of the epilogue takes place after another long passing of time. It is the day of PABLO's retirement and of his farewell party before vacating the house. Another YOUNG MAN appears. TERESA invites him in. The two of them begin to discuss the situation, and he begins to protest it. When PABLO arrives the YOUNG MAN tells him of his plan to prevent the eviction. He talks of comrades who will come to help and tells PABLO that the other uprising has left its imprint and has had meaning. The play ends with PABLO declaring: "Tomorrow we do not leave."[29]

In Drama and Society Sastre discusses the possibility of recognizing differing degrees of tragedy.[30] The third degree tragedy would be that which, because of its ultimate metaphysical predicament, ends with no hope. The second degree tragedy is that which, within the scope of its own story, is tragic but offers hope of possible, eventual rectification of conditions represented.

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[29]Sastre, O. C., p. 411.

[30]Sastre, D. S., p. 37.

Red Earth is a distinct example of this second degree. The moral conflicts which existed in Pathetic Prologue and Community Bread are almost entirely absent in this work. The remnants of them exist only as occasional moments of doubt in the minds of the characters. The situation presented in the work is a closed one for the miners depicted, but the circle of revolutionary action is shown to be expanding and hope exists for an eventual triumph.

That Sastre wishes to present the action clearly without the complication of moral (human-social) conflict is predicted by the story that PABLO relates to INÉS in their first meeting. He tells how he killed a man who "had abandoned a woman . . . when she most needed him."[31] Without any previous involvement or relationship PABLO acted as a necessary agent of elemental justice. "I'm not a moralist,"[32] he replies when INÉS asks him if he wanted to convince the man he was wrong. "I forced my way into the situation" (literally "I forced my way into the story [history]), which is precisely what he does in the mine situation, without himself fully recognizing the historical significance until the YOUNG MAN explains it to him in the epilogue. PABLO enters the miner's world with a view from the outside forcing a recognition of the injustice and indignity being suffered and forcing an act of rebellion in response.

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[31]Sastre, O. C., p. 358.

[32]Sastre, O. C., p. 358.

The real uprising, however, does not come until the child is killed, and the mother calls for action. At this point Sastre ties the modern story into the myth of Fuenteovejuna. It was the outrage and courage of the women which brought the men of Fuenteovejuna to act, and it is the invocation of the mother with her dead child which begins the miner's revolution.

It is precisely by relating his drama to the myth of Fuenteovejuna that Sastre is able to underline the tragedy of the modern situation. In Lope's tragicomedy (comedia) the peasant's determined unity leads them through the interrogation ("Fuenteovejuna did it") to the ultimate justice indicative of the restoration of a universal order. In Sastre's tragedy the myth is twisted at the critical moment. "We all did it together" brings on a massacre of the townspeople, a distortion of justice indicative of an unjust social system. The contrast reinforces the truth of the tragic predicament. But the tragedy does not achieve its final meaning until it is interpreted in terms of the epilogue.

Leonard Pronko finds the ending too weak to rescue the play from despair. "But how much more despairing is this play than Fuenteovejuna [in this sense the play certainly reflects its society and times as Lope's work did his], in spite of the solidarity of the workers. In Lope's drama the villagers are victorious, while in Red Earth nothing seems to have been accomplished, and there

is not even a moral victory until the arrival of the young man in the epilogue--and he is not entirely convincing."[33]

The scene, however, is much more hopeful if seen in relation to the whole work. The YOUNG MAN is not simply a repetition of PEDRO and PABLO. The circle of significance of revolutionary activity has grown larger with each uprising. In PEDRO's day the spirit did not even carry the men to burn the mine-owner's house. PABLO's uprising brought death and destruction. The YOUNG MAN talks in terms of help from outside, of sympathetic support from other workers and from students. What is provided for the first time is a sense of historical perspective. Through a sense of history PABLO is brought to a fuller recognition of the uprising which he led. The doubt expressed in the first scene of the epilogue is overcome, and his revolution is given meaning in its historical relationship with that before it and with that to come. Sastre has moved the play from mythical to historical significance. " . . . now everything is different . . . if the blood of the miners were to flow again, it would be noticed throughout the country . . . and if this happens . . . thousands of workers whom you don't even know will leave the factories . . . and the word will reach the farms and the farmers will look to us, and the students will take to the streets to demand justice, face to face with the

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[33]Pronko, "The Revolutionary Theatre of Alfonso Sastre," p. 119.

police . . . and a lot of people who are comfortable and satisfied today will turn white with fear."[34] This social and historical significance is a great change from the total insignificance of the miner expressed by PEDRO in his party toast: "we poor, we live and die and disappear."[35]

In the first two dramas of revolution Sastre could be seen to open his plays to the spectator through a dialectical process which wanted resolving and which, in the confines of the play, did not achieve resolution. Red Earth is less complex. Sastre has chosen to minimize what he terms the metaphysical substance of this tragedy in his effort to make a clear and strong case for historical perspective and social action. The revolutionary action is not brought into serious conflict with human values. The possibility of devastating results to individuals and family are recognized and accepted. The opposition is not seen to be human. In fact the opposition is not seen at all. Only other slaves of the mine owners are in evidence to represent them. The mine OFFICIAL, the SERGEANT, and

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[34]Sastre, O. C., p. 408.

[35]Sastre, O. C., p. 361. Farris Anderson points to this speech and comments: "An oppressive economic system prevents man's self-realization as a human being; it reduces him to insignificance among the creatures and things of the world. The existential and social evils of such a system are inseparable." p. 111. In all four of these revolutionary plays Sastre insists on this inseparability of the existential and social. This is fundamental to his concept of tragedy.

the CAPTAIN are tragic victims dominated by the same power as the miners. The uprising is launched against an abstract power. The question is never whether it is right or wrong to take this revolutionary action but whether it will succeed or fail. Its failure and the resultant destruction of the town and slaughter of the townspeople is the tragedy of the play. The tragic sense is most compellingly presented in the SERGEANT's last speech "(The firing has begun in the distance. [The massacre of the townspeople.]) SERGEANT. (He seems to be wiping away a tear.) [In response to the CAPTAIN's question of what's wrong.] Nothing, nothing. It's just . . . the old man, he . . . Well, he was a friend of mine . . . like last year we spent Christmas eve at his house and the next morning . . . this is really stupid . . . the next morning he made me a cup of coffee . . . "[36] The abstract power which dominates these lives destroys human beings, destroys human relationships, and does not even permit a true expression of human emotion. This sense is reinforced in the first scene of the epilogue with PABLO and INÉS apparently trapped in the same dehumanizing cycle and smothered by doubt. But a point of true conflict is not reached and one is not left with the absence of resolution. The second scene of the epilogue breaks through the tragic situation, and, by introducing a sense

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[36]Sastre, O. C., p. 398.

of historical perspective, opens the play to the spectators. In a more direct way than before Sastre brings the possibility of solution to the real, social level. The play in its final moments escapes the agony of man's existence and ends with a call to social action (praxis).

The focus on group unity and action and the attempt to depict change within patterns, historically, in Red Earth resulted in a reduced psychological development of the characters and in a free (Lope de Vega influenced?) non-Aristotelian formal development allowing for temporal and spatial movement. Entirely the opposite situation exists in the last play of this revolutionary group: In the Net.

In the five years separating the two plays Sastre experimented both formally and thematically. Anna Kleiber, The Blood of God, and The Raven fall into this period as do A Death in the Neighborhood, a semi-allegorical revolutionary work, Sad are the Eyes of William Tell, a myth-history, and Nocturnal Assault, an epic experiment. In 1959, in addition to writing In the Net, he also wrote Death Thrust. (Nocturnal Assault was also written in 1959 before In the Net.) Both works are strong in their psychologically realistic character development. In the Net is also an experiment in pure Aristotelian drama for Sastre.

The play was produced in 1961 under the auspices of the G. T. R. (Grupo de Teatro Realista: a group which Sastre helped to found with José María de Quinto in 1960.)[37] In the program Sastre included three documents which relate to the work formally and thematically. In the first he says that, "In the Net is a drama about the human condition of the 'clandestine man' . . . we are before a piece which we could call Aristotelian in a double sense: its conformity with the thesis of the three unities and the kind of dramatic elements put into play: 'reversal,' 'recognition,' and 'suffering,' which are precisely the three elements which Aristotle proposes as parts of the tragic myth [plot]."[38] The second document is a vivid description of a torture experience quoted from La question by Henri Alleg. The third is a citing of definitions of reversal, recognition, and suffering from Aristotle's Poetics.

The scene of the play is a vacant apartment several stories up in a partially occupied building in Algiers. A group of Algerian nationalists are hiding out in an attempt to escape a police dragnet. The heat is intense. The group consists of PABLO, a young man who has apparently worked as a clandestine agent for only a week

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[37]See Alfonso Sastre (Madrid: Taurus, 1963), p. 115-123 for the documents written by Sastre and de Quinto for the G. T. R.

[38]Sastre, O. C., p. 796.

but who fought for the nationalist army previously, CELIA, a young woman who was PABLO's contact to help him into hiding during the dragnet, and TAYEB, an arab whose long period of service has won him and his wife, AIESCHA, an upcoming leave from duty. The doorman of the building, HANAFI, is also part of the organization and serves to warn the group with doorbell signals of impending danger. They have been in the apartment for three days. PABLO is unknown to the others, and all conversation between them is restricted by the underlying suspicion that he could be a police agent.

As the action begins PABLO is seen standing and looking out a window. It is nightfall. CELIA enters and finds out from him that he is thinking of going outside to escape momentarily the growing sense of being trapped. She advises him against it. Their cautious conversation reveals the fact that for three days they have talked very little with each other. PABLO finds out that the building is partly occupied and that later that night the porter will be bringing some newspapers from which they will attempt to decipher some information concerning the police roundup. He talks of his army experience and of how it differed from the present confinement. They discuss how each received his information regarding his contact. For a moment they turn on the radio to try to get some news from the nationalist radio. CELIA finally expresses her fears concerning him and the possibility that he might be

a police agent who intercepted the contact information. He attempts to reassure her, but his interest in getting information concerning the operation and its leaders continue to make her suspicious. The need to communicate eventually brings her to tell him of her anxiety over having left a friend in her apartment before the dragnet began and of being unable to warn the friend because of precautionary measures. This personal note brings them to the point of enjoying the small human pleasure of listening to a few minutes of music on the radio. Their imprudence, however, immediately brings TAYEB in from another room where he has been with his wife who is under a great deal of psychological strain. He points out the danger of being heard by one of the tenants below. CELIA leaves to look in on AIESCHA, and PABLO immediately takes advantage of her absence by pressing TAYEB hard for information regarding the group and the organizational leadership. CELIA is apparently the smaller group leader but TAYEB claims to know nothing of the higher command. CELIA returns with AIESCHA and shortly after HANAFI arrives with the newspapers. TAYEB asks CELIA for the papers and she refuses him. Because of this he jumps to a conclusion that something seriously wrong is happening; his anxiety breaks forth as he wildly accuses PABLO of being the police. PABLO strikes him in the face to quiet him. The silent tension following is suddenly broken by the sound of the elevator rising. It continues past the

lower floors to their vacant floor and stops. A key is heard at the door. It opens and a man enters. CELIA immediately recognizes him and runs to him embracing him while the others look on.

The second act begins a short time later, and the man is identified as LEO, the friend whom CELIA had been unable to warn. He sits at a table trying to eat something while CELIA questions him. PABLO is reading the newspapers. TAYEB and AIESCHA have retired. LEO claims that the police have let him go and that he has successfully avoided them in coming to the hideout. CELIA accuses him of poor judgement in coming. He responds by reminding her of her responsibility for his capture. Her harsh questioning and accusations finally cause LEO to break down. He admits to using the elevator because he was unable to walk. He collapses in an effort to reach the bed, and when they take off his shirt they realize for the first time the extent of his injuries from the torture. When LEO comes to, PABLO begins to question him to find out how much and what he has told the police. CELIA is uncertain still of his motives and warns LEO against answering. But PABLO finally breaks him down, and he vividly relives his agony of the torture and confesses revealing the names of some members of the organization and the location of the party press, which ironically the police already knew. After this ordeal CELIA takes LEO to another room to rest. PABLO is left alone. He lights a

lamp and goes outside on to the terrace and appears to signal with the light. TAYEB comes in and sees him. PABLO tells him to not mention the incident to anyone.

The third act is very early morning before first light. PABLO is stretched out on the bed. CELIA comes into the room, thinking PABLO asleep, and goes to the window. PABLO startles her by speaking. They talk of LEO, of how he was broken by the police, of his being a writer rather than a fighter. They speculate on the possibility of having escaped the dragnet. Then PABLO, expressing a strange need to be admired by CELIA, takes off his shirt and reveals a huge scar running across his chest. He tells her of having been tortured with a burning iron and of his having remained silent. Their complicated and desperate state brings them together for a moment in a kind of pathetic and unsatisfying love expression. The silence following is broken as LEO enters the room, greatly agitated. He has seen a car stop below. Then the bell rings: a signal for someone to go down. PABLO insists on going. After he leaves TAYEB comes in and tells the other two about PABLO's signal with the lamp. CELIA and LEO convince TAYEB that this must have been done to warn another group in the area. When he goes out, however, it becomes obvious that they have both decided that PABLO must be a police agent. They are uncertain of what to do; neither of them has involved himself before in direct killing. LEO decides, however,

to kill PABLO when he returns. He fixes a silencer to his pistol. They wait. PABLO returns and tells them that the car is for TAYEB and AIESCHA. He has their safe-conduct papers with him. CELIA goes out to get them. PABLO approaches LEO and asks to see how his wounds are healing. In a sudden movement he disarms LEO and immediately regains his composure to face the other three as they come in. TAYEB and AIESCHA are sent down. CELIA turns to PABLO and asks if he will let them go. He says he does not understand. When she accuses him of being an agent of the police, he begins to speak with a new authority. Taking another envelope from his pocket he explains that LEO is also to be sent out of the country for a rest. They both realize that he is something more in the organization than they had thought. He explains that he had indeed had to signal another group during the night. LEO expresses disturbance over his new orders. He sees in them implications that he is failing to do a good job. PABLO tries to reassure him that this is not the case, but LEO, at the point of nervous exhaustion, begins to tear the papers to pieces. Suddenly the alarm signal sounds. PABLO attempts to quiet LEO, but LEO seizes the pistol and runs out on to the terrace and is immediately cut down by machine gun fire. He stumbles into the room and dies. In the next moment the POLICE break in. PABLO and CELIA are handcuffed together and taken out. The POLICE check the rooms and go out leaving one man behind. He looks around,

yawns, walks out to the terrace and begins to smoke a cigarette. A silence follows. Then the elevator is heard coming up. It stops. The door is opened and HANAFI enters. He is looking for LEO. He sees the body on the floor. He crosses to it, gets down on his knees and takes LEO's hand in his. "(He looks at us,) [and says] Murderers . . . (The curtain comes down and so the work ends in hope and anguish.)"[39]

Sastre's indication that In the Net exists as an experiment in Aristotelian drama makes it imperative to consider it as tragedy and to discern and study the functional elements of reversal, recognition and suffering (pathos). The situation of the "clandestine man," as an aspect of modern society in revolution, provides the almost perfect documentary case of man's tragic condition as understood by Sastre, and provides it in a manner psychologically relating to the Aristotelian elements.

A dialectical tension develops necessarily out of the situation: the need for confidence (and eventually compassion) is in conflict with the need for suspicion. The necessity for human relationship is constantly coming into conflict with the requirements of the social, political relationship. The situation of the play is one of a continuous and deliberate effort towards an Aristotelian recognition which advances by means of the

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[39]Sastre, O. C., p. 862.

dialectic described. The major development is that involving PABLO and his relationship with the others. Because he is unknown and because of the situation, the dialogue in which he participates is highly complex in nature: insinuating, suggesting, probing, testing, always playing at the edges of truth and fact.

PABLO. (Getting out his cigarettes.) Cigarette?
CELIA. No, thank you. (He lights up. She watches him.) I would like to ask you who you are. (He starts to tell her. She stops him with a gesture.) But I never will. You would probably tell me.
PABLO. Why not?
CELIA. (Watching him.) A person would think you never worked in the organization.
PABLO. Why?
CELIA. You don't know the rules.
PABLO. (Smiles ingenuously.) That's the truth.
CELIA. The less we know about each other the better. Are you capable of understanding that?
PABLO. I think so. But . . . (He stops.)
CELIA. Say it.
PABLO. That seems . . . horrible.
CELIA. No one has said it isn't.
PABLO. I think we are denied too many things.
CELIA. Almost everything . . . now.
PABLO. And until when?
CELIA. Until . . . that happy day. That day we will all be able to look each other in the eyes.
PABLO. Fortunately, I believe in that day.
CELIA. We all believe in it. Or try to.
PABLO. It's going to be sooner than you think, believe me. I have reasons for telling you . . .
CELIA. (Interrupting him.) Let it be.
PABLO. (Smiling.) Are you afraid I'll talk too much.
CELIA. Very.
PABLO. Afraid, of what?
CELIA. They've never . . . let's say they've never hurt me. I'm not sure how much I could stand.
PABLO. I haven't had that experience either. But I think I could take quite a bit.
CELIA. You never know. Others, as strong as you, have said that, and then given in almost at once.
PABLO. This talk is getting kind of serious, don't you think?
CELIA. (Smiling.) It always happens. I'm sorry. (PABLO is moving around restlessly. She watches him.) I would like a cigarette now, please. (He stops. Goes over and sits beside her. Gives her a cigarette

and lights it.) Thank you.
PABLO. You are . . . a very pretty woman. Can you talk like that in the organization?
CELIA. You can . . . but it's not necessary. Thank you. (She gets up rather brusquely and goes to the window.[40]

(PABLO crosses to the door. He listens, as if fearing that CELIA might return. Reassured he goes over to TAYEB, who, somewhat excited, asks.) Is something happening?
PABLO. No. Nothing. (Now, he asks quickly and incisively.) Has it been some time since you came into the organization?
TAYEB. I shouldn't tell you.
PABLO. I'm a friend. What did Celia tell you?
TAYEB. That you're a friend, yes.
PABLO. Then tell me. Just to talk about something.
TAYEB. Five years . . . a little longer.
PABLO. What group are you with?
TAYEB. Twenty three.
PABLO. How many are in it?
TAYEB. I think . . . about fifteen.
PABLO. Arabs?
TAYEB. (Nods.) Except one. (Smiles.) Not counting me. I'm one too . . . partly.
PABLO. (Also smiles.) Do you know all of them?
TAYEB. Not personally.
PABLO. How many do you know personally?
TAYEB. About five or six.
PABLO. Try to remember. How many?
TAYEB. Yes . . . more, of course. But not all.
PABLO. The one in charge? . . . you know, the one who carries the weight in the organization?
TAYEB. No, I've never seen him.
PABLO. Who? Who do you mean? The head of the group?
TAYEB. No. Yes, I know him. I mean the head of . . . let's say, of the Fifth Column. The High Command.
PABLO. Right. (Looks at him hard.) You don't know his name, nothing about him.
TAYEB. No, I don't know him. That's right.
PABLO. (Hard.) We'll see about that.
TAYEB. I'm telling you the truth.
PABLO. (Coldly.) Yes, of course. But we'll see. There are other methods.
TAYEB. Why are you talking to me like this?
PABLO. (Smiling.) Like what?

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[40]Sastre, O. C., pp. 802-804.

TAYEB. Like . . . Like the police. (PABLO suddenly grabs him by the lapels. His face is set.)
PABLO. Don't ever say that . . . or I'll kill you! To anyone! Don't ever say that again!
TAYEB. I didn't mean to offend you. (A silence. PABLO appears to have calmed down. He smiles again.)
PABLO. I've almost forgotten it already. Cigarette?[41]

The contrary elements of hope and anguish that Sastre ends the play with exist throughout the work as part of the already mentioned dialectic of human and social needs. The suffering of the play can be seen as that which the various individuals experience through their lack of knowledge of each other or through the dehumanizing demands of the situation. Thus CELIA suffers in being uncertain of PABLO's identity and in being subsequently unable to relate to him in a truly human way which is ultimately in contradiction with the whole purpose of the revolution. She likewise suffers in having to press LEO towards an admission of his weakness and poor judgement. TAYEB, already suffering shame from the implications of his retirement, experiences fear and uncertainty as a result of PABLO's actions. LEO's suffering is most vividly expressed. He is required not only to relive the physical torture but also to suffer shame and anguish in having to acknowledge his weakness. His quasi-suicidal death provides the climactic Aristotelian scene of suffering.

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[41]Sastre, O. C., pp. 819-821.

PABLO's situation is unique. He is known no more to the audience than he is to the other characters. His acts have to be interpreted by the spectator in the light of partial knowledge. His anguish, therefore, can only be understood retrospectively from the last moments of the play. Only then can it be seen that his suffering lay in his superior knowledge of the situation and in his not being able to reveal himself earlier, in his not being able to bring the security and comfort of knowledge and human relationship to the others earlier, in his having to force LEO to relive his agony and experience the greater agony in a confession of weakness, in his having ultimately to destroy LEO with the orders for rest and recuperation, and in his knowledge of the situation's probable outcome. These constitute anguish in the tragedy of the clandestine man.

But hope also exists. The arrival of the police brings about the dramatic climax of the work. LEO's death is the apex in the development of suffering (anguish for CELIA and PABLO). Recognition, in the Aristotelian sense, occurs as well at this moment, after the long dialectic leading to it. PABLO is revealed or reveals himself to CELIA, having determined her to be strong enough to be worthy of this knowledge. The moment itself is realistically understated, and naturally derives from all the evidence preceding it. LEO has been killed. The POLICE have broken into the room; one of them has brutally

thrown CELIA away from LEO's body. She has run to PABLO, and he holds her. They are cuffed together. As the POLICE momentarily leave to check the adjoining rooms, he speaks to her: "Be strong now. This is your moment. (She looks at him through her tears.) I . . . am only a soldier . . . but . . . You understand? (She realizes what he has said, and overcoming everything firmly nods agreement. They take each other in an embrace made pathetic by the handcuffs. The soldiers come back out of the other rooms.)"[42]

PABLO has revealed himself to be the organization's leader. In sudden retrospect his actions are seen as a testing of his organization. CELIA has been found to be strong. Through this recognition of identity and strength the dialectic between human and social-revolutionary demands begins to move towards a resolution, out of anguish towards hope; the human relationship now works to strengthen revolutionary determination.

This reversal, however, exists more in a potential state than in an actual state as the play draws to its end. In PABLO's and CELIA's final recognition and acceptance of each other and of their situation there is hope. But mixed with hope there is also fear and pity (anguish) which inevitably arises out of the condition of impending suffering, already known through LEO's

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[42]Sastre, O. C., p. 861.

experience. This fear and pity for the spectator becomes most effective at the moment of recognition when the most human qualities of the characters are revealed in their interdependence.

Sastre has managed to reach this moment of maximum involvement, this katharsis, in accordance with his own and Aristotelian principles of tragedy. The characters and thought can be seen developing naturally out of the situation. The characters exist between anguish and hope in the dialectical progress toward recognition of each other and of themselves. TAYEB's and AIESCHA's discovery leads (forces) them out of the social conflict and into a quieter inner world of anguish and hope. LEO's discovery leads to suffering and death. PABLO and CELIA ultimately discover hope and the possibility of resolving the human-social dialectic. The thought of the work comes through the characters' expressions and actions in the dialectical movement towards discovery. The unjust political establishment of the present is that domineering force which brings about their condition of suffering, both the anguish resulting from the situation of being clandestine, and the physical suffering in being tortured. The dehumanization which occurs is part of the tragedy of revolution, but hopefully the tragedy of revolution will lead to the destruction of the unjust social order which is a more insidious tragedy. This hope, and the truth of

this hope, comes through the recognition scene with PABLO and CELIA.

Following on the power of this scene of recognition and reversal, this Aristotelian moment of katharsis, Sastre unexpectedly breaks through the perfect, closed form of the play and places the burden of guilt on the spectator. The audience is abruptly brought to a recognition itself: it is responsible for the existence of the kind of unjust social orders represented in the play. In having HANAFI direct his accusation of "murderers" directly at "us" Sastre again throws the burden of a final resolution on the individual and society.

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In the four plays discussed in this section Sastre has attempted to deal directly with the tragedy of revolution, a tragedy necessitated by the greater tragedy of an existing unjust social order. The protagonists are caught in a conflict between human relationships and the demands of revolutionary activity. In Pathetic Prologue and Community Bread the very basic questions are dealt with: the values of human life and love and blood-bond in conflict with the necessity for revolutionary activity. Although entirely satisfactory resolutions are not achieved, one clear recognition is reached: that any successful resolution cannot ignore the human aspect of man. OSCAR (Pathetic Prologue) can ultimately justify revolutionary activity only when he can relate it to very

human experience. DAVID (Community Bread) fails to recognize the human in himself when he acts, and it returns to destroy him. In In the Net the question is similar but perhaps less obvious. In a more subtle way the protagonists are faced with having to insure security by dehumanizing relationships and by denying meaning to human existence, or risk it by confiding in one another. Only in Red Earth does Sastre relegate this problem to secondary importance in his effort to achieve a social work with historical perspective.

All four plays are dramatic with no use of narrative. The basic Aristotelian elements can be found in all four. And, with differing degrees of success, they all are examples of the Sastre-Aristotle situation-plot (myth) centered theatre. The elements of reversal, recognition and suffering are handled differently in each, but they are always present.

Pathetic Prologue is episodic beyond Aristotelian standards; it progresses through a number of scenes of suffering and recognition climaxing in the surprise reunion of OSCAR and JULIO. A major discovery occurs with this scene and a reversal in OSCAR's direction and understanding of revolution. The play never leads to the level of the spectator's reality in the manner later described by Sastre in Drama and Society and used by him in most of his plays. (The fact that it was part of a series of plays which was never finished may explain this.)

In Community Bread Sastre managed to create a tightly contained Aristotelian drama sandwiched in a prologue and epilogue both of which tend to open the work to the audience. Using symbolism and a built-in myth relationship, he brings about a powerful scene of suffering and recognition with a depth of archetypical impact. The play is the most negative of the four in its conclusion and forces the dialectical struggle beyond its aesthetic boundaries by its lack of resolution.

Red Earth is more hopeful. In this play there is not the overwhelming sense of solitude felt by any one individual as there is in so many of Sastre's works. Although the miners are shown to be caught in a tragic condition, they at least are able to achieve compatible human and social relationships within their own small community. They are in fact united by tragedy in both the human and social sense. More importantly in this play a real hope for social progress and improvement is exhibited; through history a whole people begins to bring meaning to its life and actions. Suffering is depicted in union and overcome by the strength of union. Recognition is in the gaining of historical perspective, and through this the responsibility for the ultimate resolution is implicitly placed with the real society.

In the Net is Sastre's attempt to bring the Aristotelian elements into their classic relationship while dealing with the tragedy of revolution. The

situation of the clandestine man provides the necessary and probable movement towards recognition and with it brings a natural reversal. Suffering exists in two ways and quite naturally: in the anguish brought about by the necessary solitude and requirements to dehumanize relationships and in the physical experience of being tortured. Sastre uses both and brings them to a conclusion in death on the stage.[43] HANAFI's last line to the audience brings the question of guilt to the level of audience reality.

Sastre's concept of katharsis is one of a twofold experience which ultimately goes beyond the theatre and into the lives of the individual spectators and their society. In all four works the simple fact of a lack of an entirely satisfactory resolution tends to force the problem into the mind of the spectator. Assuming that he is able to achieve in the spectator some experiencing of anguish through the depiction of his protagonists caught in the human-social conflicts, Sastre then compels the spectator to carry the problem beyond the theatrical experience by refusing to do more than to glimpse the possibility of a solution or to combine some hope with the anguish. In three of these works, as shown, he uses specific devices to reinforce this process of extending

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[43]"The Scene of Suffering is a destructive or painful action, such as death on the stage, bodily agony, wounds and the like." Aristotle, p. 73.

katharsis. The final hope for the tragedy of revolution is in the eventual social purification that it might instigate.

B.

The Garbage Can was begun in 1950 and finished in 1951. It has not been produced in Spain. In a note to the play Sastre says, "Two orders are involved in the action of The Garbage Can: the personal order and the social order. The author of the crime is no more than an anarchist, produced by our time, indifferent to collective movements, incredulous of social justice; a man who believes that one has to take justice into his own hands.

"The social order functions on its own, at the margin of the personal tragedy which we witness: here is the tragic inequality of the classes and the dialectic of the struggle."[44] This dialectic is never really developed in the work. The play seems to move on two levels and even in two directions. In place of a dramatic tension existing between the personal action of the hero and the social action of those around him there exists a kind of ironic lack of relationship. It is interesting that Sastre finished this work while he was still struggling with the various revisions of Pathetic Prologue. The successful achievement of tragedy through the dialectic of

[44]Sastre, O. C., p. 109.

personal and social forces in Pathetic Prologue provides a sharp contrast to the bifurcated development of The Garbage Can.

The play begins with a short prologue scene in which a group of drunken REVELERS from a New Year's Eve party come upon a young man, GERMÁN, sleeping on a trash pile. It is early morning. The REVELERS are costumed as death, a pig, a donkey, and other grotesque figures. They awaken GERMÁN and very quickly instigate a brawl in which he is knocked unconscious, thrown on the pile, and buried with trash. As the drunken group goes off, a BOY appears, dressed in rags and cold, picking stuff out of the garbage. He uncovers GERMÁN, and the two talk. A RAGMAN also appears and mentions to GERMÁN that a certain JULIA has returned to the neighborhood. This news has a profound effect on GERMÁN, and, as the scene ends, he sits down on the trash pile and begins to cry.

The next scene takes place in the house of Señor TOMÁS, JULIA's father. GERMÁN arrives to talk to JULIA. In the course of their conversation it becomes clear that they had once been lovers but that someone else had won JULIA away from GERMÁN. Now this other man has abandoned her when she most needs him, in her sickness. She explains to GERMÁN that she has begun to cough blood. She has had to come home for help and rest. GERMÁN tells her

before he leaves, "for the first time in my life I feel that I am about to do something important."[45]

The following scene is in two parts; the place is Antonio's Bar. LUIS and JUANITO are talking over drinks. LUIS is the older man and apparently does little else than drink. JUANITO is a petty thief. The conversation centers around the disappearance of GERMÁN. No one has seen him in the neighborhood for seven days. LUIS, his closest friend, claims not to know his whereabouts but is certain that he will return. The COLONEL arrives to have a drink and talk. He tells the other two that a strike is impending because of the increasingly depressing economic conditions. JULIA comes into the bar to fill the family wine jug, and, when she leaves, the talk turns to the relationship between her and GERMÁN. LUIS claims that GERMÁN's love for JULIA was all that a man's love could have been and more than she deserved. Eventually JUANITO and the COLONEL leave LUIS coughing and drunk at the table.

The second half of the scene is three days later. LUIS is just coming into the bar. GERMÁN has still not returned. JUANITO arrives and tells LUIS of an upcoming meeting of the local political group, an illegal pro-communist organization, at the house of GERMÁN's MOTHER (GERMÁN's MOTHER, as his father before his death, is an

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[45]Sastre, O. C., p. 126.

active member of the political organization.) The COLONEL stops in for a moment, mentions that the strike is imminent, and leaves. LUIS is eventually left alone again at the table. He is in a state of great depression. Suddenly and unexpectedly GERMÁN arrives. He appears changed. He is happy, pleased with himself. He says he no longer has to drink to forget, that everything in the past has been wiped out, does not exist. "I am just beginning to live . . . there is nothing to forget, Luis . . . I feel no grief, no remorse, no concern . . . I've come back to the neighborhood a new person."[46] Rather than go home to see his MOTHER he decides to stay at the bar with LUIS, seeing his friend's deep state of despair.

The final scene is of the meeting of the political organization at the home of GERMÁN and his MOTHER. Before the group's members begin to assemble GERMÁN and his MOTHER talk of his plans. Because of his ten day absence he has lost his job at the factory. He promises her to look for work. She tells him that the password for entry to the meeting is "I've got the garbage can." He explains that he will find it difficult not to laugh in response to this curious password. The people begin to arrive and have little more than settled down to begin talking when a loud knocking is heard. It is the POLICE. They all begin

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[46]Sastre, O. C., p. 143.

to play cards as a cover, but, when the POLICE enter, it is discovered that they have come for GERMÁN. He is charged with killing a man. Before he is taken off, he explains to JULIA, who is there with her father, that he has carried out his own justice by killing the man who left her. After he has been taken out, LUIS, who is in his usual drunken state, makes a plea for the group to do something about the arrest. The group, however, led by GERMÁN's MOTHER divorce themselves from this personal situation and begin to get on with their business of planning the workers' strike.

Sastre's statement on the play's concern with the personal order and the social order has elicited a remark from Farris Anderson, one of the few critics to mention this early work. "[It] reveals a clear perception of the Marxist principles that were to characterize his future work, but the play itself suggests an immature sense of their effective dramatic translation."[47] Unfortunately he does not go on to develop this thought through an analysis of the play nor does he state exactly which Marxist principles Sastre shows such a clear perception of. From the evidence of the play and the statement, however, one

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[47]Anderson, p. 86. Sastre admits in his preface to Anatomy of Realism that he was not very familiar with the total concept of the dialectic when he wrote Drama and Society which was published in 1956, five years after The Garbage Can. His tendency in dramatic writing, however, often leads him toward a dialectical approach even before his theoretical expression of this approach.

is safe to assume that Anderson is pointing to the problem of alienation if to no other. Sastre has described the protagonist as one who has no sense or concern for the class struggle: "an example of a perfect anti-Marxist."[48] And the social order has been said to "function on its own at the margin of the personal tragedy."[49]

Even in this description of the two orders can be seen the strong possibility of failure in dramatic terms. The separation, neglect, and lack of concern between two orders may be real and it may be tragic but it will hardly be dramatic. And this is precisely where the difficulty lies in the work. The tragedy is there, but it is subtle and largely based on irony and negative factors producing irony: inability to see, to understand, and to relate.

The story of GERMÁN, taken by itself, is not really a tragedy. A young man is deeply in love with a girl. She goes off with another. He jilts her, providing the first young man with the opportunity of proving both his love and his heroism through an act of justice based on the old codes of honor and blood. He succeeds in carrying out this act thereby restoring the girl's (and his) honor. Similar stories exist in classical Spanish theatre. GERMÁN expresses himself on two occasions concerning his personal code and his lack of concern for and resignation

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[48]Sastre, O. C., p. 109.

[49]Sastre, O. C., p. 109.

from society. The first time is in response to JULIA's father's request that he interest himself in the worker's movement. "Politics doesn't interest me . . . I don't believe in 'social injustice' . . . The only injustice I believe in is what is done against me. And a Union or the Police can't deal with that. It seems to me that everyone has to make his own justice."[50] In the second instance GERMÁN is already vaguely predicting his future action. He tries to explain his attitude to JULIA. She has referred to resignation as the final step in a person's decline. And he replies, "No . . . to resign yourself is something else. To resign yourself is good. . . . A man, the more resigned he is to not getting anything out of life, the more he can do . . . things that have nothing to do with the law, or the police, or the morals of the people . . . things outside of all that, outside of hunger and misery . . . things that no one in the world can really understand."[51]

With this last insight GERMÁN comes close to an awareness of a part of the tragedy of his situation and the situation of man in modern society that Sastre awkwardly seems to be suggesting. The social order is not able to comprehend and deal with the most essential aspects of man's being. In GERMÁN's thinking and in his

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[50]Sastre, O. C., p. 120.

[51]Sastre, O. C., p. 126.

subsequent action Sastre is attempting to present man in his most authentic being, that metaphysical substance of tragedy which is dealt with in Drama and Society. And he does so by depicting this man as totally disconnected from his social context in terms of that aspect of his being. Neglect seems the best term to describe the relationship between the individual and society depicted in this work, neglect of each for the other. The result of GERMÁN's triumph of individual action (justice restored by blood) is tragedy when the action is placed in the context of society. The individual's restoration of justice is ironic in the midst of an unjust society which will condemn his act while continuing to carry out acts of injustice affecting millions. GERMÁN's love for JULIA, which brought him to act, is ironic in the context of a society (the new revolutionary organization) which fails to see the individual because of the group. Tragedy exists in these negative relationships, but tragedy of a kind that is difficult to express dramatically.

Sastre's partial awareness of this problem perhaps explains the peculiar double focus that occurs in the play, beginning with the bar scene. LUIS becomes the center of attention in GERMÁN's absence. (GERMÁN's blood revenge is carried out, as it were, outside of the play's realism.) LUIS appears to be a surrogate for the protagonist in the latter's absence. While GERMÁN is existing in a world of unreal, anti-societal action, LUIS,

representing him, is existing in the agony of reality. LUIS also rejects involvement in the upcoming worker's strike, but his alienation is expressed less abstractly than was GERMÁN's. "There's nothing to do. At least they shouldn't count on me. I fought and now I've had enough. I ended up with a bad leg from being wounded by one of the C. N. T. and my one lung will never be any good again. We lost the war, and then . . . my wife died. I was left with nothing. And now . . . where am I? . . . In a garbage can. Just where I should be. And I shouldn't try to get out of the damned place. Everybody has his place, and only an idiot looks for something better. If you're born to rot, you rot."[52] GERMÁN's personal action tends to lose meaning beside the agony of LUIS, and his exhilaration on his return is muted by the irony in the fact of LUIS' situation being a prefiguration of his own to come.

In the final moments of the play the negative relationship of the two orders is brought to a climax in the one outstanding dramatic moment. GERMÁN has just been taken off by the POLICE, and LUIS, who has come to the meeting of the organization drunk, recognizing what no one else apparently recognizes, struggles in vain to bring the group to action.

> GONZÁLEZ. [The group leader]. (After a moment of silence.) Good . . . . That's over . . . You see now,

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[52]Sastre, O. C., p. 132.

there is no danger . . . I am sorry María. This has been very painful for everyone. Now, I repeat to all of you: the watchword is . . . wait! (But LUIS comes up to him and grabs him by his coat lapels.)
LUIS. They've taken Germán! Talk about that!
GONZÁLEZ. Let go of me, you idiot.
LUIS. We have to do something! They've taken Germán! This is urgent! It can't wait! Talk about that!
GONZÁLEZ. You're drunk. (He breaks free pushing LUIS to the floor.)
LUIS. (Trying to get up.) They've taken him away! We've got to do something! They've taken Germán![53]

No recognition of the relationship of the individual's situation and the social cause occurs except for LUIS who is also rejected by this new society. The play ends with this final tragic irony.

In subsequent plays Sastre will bring the qualities of GERMÁN and LUIS into single, more complex characters. Alienation will become a characteristic rather than a character. And the final dramatic scene of LUIS struggling with the society around him will be seen to have been a symbolic prototype of entire dramas to come.

In the same month (December 1951) that Sastre completed this partial failure, The Garbage Can, he began work on what was to be considered one of his most successful plays, The Condemned Squad. The play was finished in May of 1952 and produced in March of 1953. It was forced to close by the government after three performances. Sastre describes the original conception of

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[53]Sastre, O. C., p. 153. The problem of the "talking revolutionary" or social reformer versus the man of action is taken up in more detail in Sad Are the Eyes of William Tell.

the work to have been limited to the bringing together of the complex characters in the opening situation. From that point, he claims, the characters and the situation developed in ways not originally anticipated. In a note to the first edition the play is related to the then existing cold war situation. "At present international politics is in a state of tension. The (cold) war (of nerves) continues. Europe, in this panorama, is nothing more than a land of confusion and a probable field of battle . . . In The Condemned Squad there are no answers [to the question of the meaning of life in terms of the cold war situation], but, at least, it delves to the roots of the tragic questions. Drama is required to do no more. When the curtain comes down, it falls to Sociology and Metaphysics to do the talking. If the drama is good, thought--precisely--will come forth purified."[54]

In a later statement (1962) he describes the play as a "cry of protest against the menacing prospect of a new world war . . . a negation of heroism and the whole mystique of death . . . My work is also an examination of the conscience or, better said, an invitation to examine the conscience of a generation of leaders who seem disposed, in the silent clamor of the cold war, to lead us all to the slaughter house. For me the slaughter house

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[54]Sastre, O. C., p. 160.

was absurdity. Each of my characters had lived through it . . . and was interpreting it in a different way."[55]

The action occurs during the Third World War. It is a cold, December evening. Six men have been sent, in punishment, as an advanced warning unit for an expected enemy offensive. They are holed up in a small cabin in some mountain forest. One of the men, ANDRÉS, is off at the guard post. The other five are seen in the cabin. LUIS, ADOLFO, and PEDRO are playing dice. JAVIER is sleeping. CORPORAL GOBAN is cleaning his rifle. They have been together three days and are just beginning to open themselves up to each other. LUIS is apparently ill and suffering from a fever. His condition is becoming worse. PEDRO talks already of the tedium of doing nothing. At one point GOBAN awakens JAVIER explaining that he doesn't have the right to sleep in their situation. The CORPORAL is a professional soldier with over twenty years of service. He is running his unit with an iron hand. After delivering a near eulogy on the uniform and the military life, he tells the men, "the only thing left for you is to die like men." He talks of "approaching death clean, ready for review."[56] In spite of LUIS' illness GOBAN insists that he keep his guard duty. The other men refuse to interfere. ANDRÉS returns

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[55]Sastre, O. C., p. 161.

[56]Sastre, O. C., p. 172.

from his post and explains that LUIS was in bad shape when he arrived to relieve him. GOBAN reminds the men of why they are there. He tells them that he knows each man's background. PEDRO reminds GOBAN that his past is known as well. The CORPORAL has killed three men, two for running away in battle and a young recruit during a bayonet drill, for which he was broken in rank.

The next morning. PEDRO is sweeping out the cabin. ANDRÉS is shaving. JAVIER sits beside LUIS who is worse. They discuss GOBAN's regimentation and exchange blame for allowing LUIS to be forced to his duty while ill. Their condemnation to the squad is talked about. LUIS explains that he was put in because he refused to serve on a firing squad. The horror of their situation begins to make itself felt. When JAVIER says that they are condemned to die, ANDRÉS points out the greater horror of their having to wait for death. PEDRO says that there are many other similar squads waiting. ANDRÉS admits to not having had any combat experience. He and JAVIER begin to talk about their past lives and discover the irony in their being brought together: JAVIER is a professor of Philosophy and ANDRÉS is a school dropout. PEDRO goes out to relieve ADOLFO on the watch. When the latter comes in he is furious and explains that GOBAN has been spying on him. He talks about shooting the CORPORAL. The others try to quiet him, and the talk ends when GOBAN comes in.

The fifteenth day, late night. JAVIER is seen writing in a notebook. He begins to voice his thoughts. He asks that the finder of the note inform his mother of his death. He admits his past acts of cowardice. GOBAN begins talking in his sleep: "it was an accident, an accident."[57] JAVIER notes the guilt in everyone. LUIS awakens with increased pain and JAVIER tries to comfort him. Then he writes of his guilt feelings brought on by his self concern in the midst of a global war. PEDRO returns from the watch cursing the cold.

As dawn breaks, the men are at various stages of their early morning rising. ANDRÉS suddenly launches a verbal attack at GOBAN on the ridiculousness of his insisting on a rigid military routine. GOBAN lays him out with two quick blows, grabs his gear and goes out. The others help ANDRÉS up. He reveals to them his problem of losing his temper and tells them of his having killed a Sergeant in a drunken fit of anger.

A momentary shift to the guard post finds JAVIER on duty, watching, seeing things in the moving shadows. It is Christmas Eve. He begins to think of his mother, of home and his childhood. Suddenly he sees his whole generation as a condemned squad. He is overcome by fear and loneliness.

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[57]Sastre, O. C., p. 184.

The following scene is Christmas Eve in the cabin. The men have put up a tree and are singing a carol. PEDRO is reminded of his past and of the horror of losing his wife and home in Berlin when the town was taken by the enemy. His hatred for the enemy brought him to kill a group of prisoners. ANDRÉS tries to liven up the occasion by suggesting that the men, in GOBAN's absence, treat themselves to some brandy. In the spirit of the evening they agree to break the regulations, and in a short time they are thoroughly enjoying themselves. In a moment of spontaneous confession ADOLFO admits to having committed the crime of selling army wheat for personal profit. PEDRO becomes angry over his confessed profiteering, but the two are quickly reconciled. The party is abruptly ended when the CORPORAL enters. The men, somewhat intoxicated, encourage GOBAN to join in or at least understand and permit the occasion. When he refuses they decide to defy his order to stop. ADOLFO goes for more brandy. GOBAN knocks him to the floor with his rifle. PEDRO, ANDRÉS, and JAVIER simultaneously grab their machetes and move against GOBAN cutting him down with terrible blows.

The second act begins just as the men have finished filling in GOBAN's grave. LUIS, who had been on watch during the killing, asks that they say a prayer for him, which they do. ANDRÉS points out that, even if an offensive doesn't materialize, there is no escape for them

now. PEDRO begins to assume a form of command, but the others are unwilling to go along with him.

Two weeks later the lack of order has become apparent. The men are dirty and unshaven. The tedium is worse than ever. ADOLFO is urging the formation of a scouting patrol to get them out of the cabin and to determine the enemy's position. The field phone rings. PEDRO, at the watch, has spotted an enemy group. The men are momentarily spurred to action. A sense of relief is felt. Within minutes, however, PEDRO calls again to say that the danger has passed.

The last week of January. It appears that the offensive will not materialize and that the men will be able to return to their base. PEDRO tells the men that he intends to reveal the details of the CORPORAL's death. ADOLFO attempts to convince him otherwise, and failing tries to incite the men to a second murder. The men are unwilling to follow him.

Unable to get support from the men to kill PEDRO, ADOLFO, a few days later, tries to talk ANDRÉS into going into the mountains with him as a guerrilla fighter to escape the inevitable retribution awaiting them on their return. ANDRÉS argues a preference for the security-without-freedom of prison over the freedom-without-security of guerrilla life, but eventually agrees to accompany ADOLFO part way. He will go into the mountains but then separate from ADOLFO and give himself up to the

enemy. JAVIER attempts to interpret the existential difficulty presented for each of them by the death of GOBAN and the torturous freedom resulting from it.

ADOLFO and ANDRÉS are next seen as they separate somewhere in the dark forest. The night is cold and windy, and their silhouetted figures perhaps presage an imminent death.

In the cabin LUIS sits by himself. PEDRO comes in and reports that JAVIER has hanged himself. The two talk of their future. LUIS makes a last plea for PEDRO to tell the authorities that he also participated in the murder of GOBAN. PEDRO tells him that he need not bring that pain upon himself, that he will suffer pain enough just in living. As they talk PEDRO takes out the last two cigarettes from the squad's rations. He offers one to LUIS who confesses that he has never smoked. But he accepts the offer and the two sit smoking and talking as the curtain comes down.

Critical commentary on The Condemned Squad exceeds in quantity and probably excels in quality that on any other of Sastre's works. Some critics tend to emphasize the play's social and anti-military aspects. One describes the characters as, "six provisional men, produced by this provisional Europe."[58] Another calls the play a,

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[58]Juan Emilio Aragonés, "Alfonso Sastre y las trágicas preguntas," Alcalá, 28-29 (Mar. 25, 1953), n. p.

"dialogue between anarchy and the system."[59] Ignacio Aldecoa states that "Behind Alfonso Sastre's Condemned Squad lies the bittersweet fruit of our historical moment. The tragic sureness of catastrophe that we try not to think about, while the world moves ever closer to it; the uncertainty and despair of contemporary man, who at any moment may be sentenced to fall in and take his place in a condemned squad."[60] Farris Anderson points out, among a complex of interpretations, a clear analogy with European history in the play's plot which poses the question, "What good did it do Europe to defeat Fascism, if the fruit of its victory was to be only a new and more terrible anxiety and enslavement?"[61]

Anderson and a number of other critics go beyond this social and historical reading of The Condemned Squad to find in it more fundamental philosophical and religious themes. Anthony M. Pasquariello concludes: "The real theme of The Condemned Squad is what Eugene O'Neill called 'not the relation of man to man but the relation of man to

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[59]Tecglen, p. 73. DeCoster's comment on these militarism vs. anarchy critics is appropriate: "For some critics Sastre has written an indictment of militarism; for others, on the contrary, he has shown that without discipline, anarchy will result. But neither of these interpretations is really important or relevant." p. 124.

[60]Igancio Aldecoa, "Hablando de 'Escuadra hacia la muerte,'" Revista española, 1 (May-June, 1953), 119.

[61]Anderson, p. 93.

God.' It is the dilemma of living and dying . . . "[62] Leonard Pronko says, "I cannot read this tense, tightly constructed piece, where every act is prepared, where every line counts, without feeling that Goban is a god image, and his soldiers, tiring of his senseless tyranny, are representative of man striving to free himself from God, only to find that the death of God does not solve any problems."[63] GOBAN's death is seen by another writer as a more general elimination of that which hinders freedom.[64] More than one critic has pointed to the similarities with Sartre's No Exit.[65]

Obviously Sastre has produced a work rich in meaning and capable of being interpreted on a number of levels. As the cold war period recedes into history, the play's more metaphysical meanings tend to take on greater importance, exemplifiying Sastre's own theory of tragedy. And, as the human drama becomes stronger, Sastre's creative method of allowing the characters to develop, as it were, on their own, out of the situation, can begin to

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[62]Anthony M. Pasquariello, "Alfonso Sastre, Dramatist in Search of a Stage," The Theatre Annual, XXII (1965-66), 16-23.

[63]Pronko, p. 114.

[64]Juan Villegas, "La sustancia metafísica de la tragedia y su funcion social: Escuadra hacia la muerte de Alfonso Sastre," Symposium, 21 (Fall, 1967), 257.

[65]Pasquariello in "Censorship in the Spanish Theatre and Alfonso Sastre's The Condemned Squad," Theatre Annual 19 (1962), 23. Anderson, p. 93. DeCoster, p. 124.

be seen as a good part of the reason for the variety of interpretations. Some critics tend to take the view of one character and others of another. JAVIER's intellectual stance and ability to articulate has perhaps influenced more critics than has any other character's attitude. But if Sastre is to be taken at his word on the manner of the play's composition one must accept it as a kind of experiment or investigation. The author has attempted to find the results in terms of Aristotelian thought and action and character of a group of individuals who achieve a state of freedom hitherto unknown to them. This freedom brings about a recognition or discovery of the Aristotelian sort in each character. The kind and degree of recognition (and reversal) is different in every case and each has to be considered in some detail.

JAVIER's last attempt to explain to PEDRO his interpretation of what has happened, while only representing a single perspective, provides a major insight into the structure of Sastre's experiment.

> PEDRO. Javier, ever since "the incident" you've been thinking, cavilling; do you think I haven't noticed? While the rest of us have been trying to do something in our own way, you've been watching us . . . I would say . . . with a kind of curiosity . . . like a doctor looking through a microscope . . .
> JAVIER. (Laughing dryly.) Only I'm one of the bacteria in the drop of water . . . in this drop which is falling into the void. A bacteria with consciousness; can you imagine anything more terrifying? (A silence.) Yes, you're right. All this time, since we killed Goban, I've been investigating . . . trying to answer certain questions that I've inevitably had to pose.
> PEDRO. And?
> JAVIER. Now I know . . . I've found out . . . my work

is happily concluded. (A small laugh.) I have achieved success . . . from the scientific point of view . . . I have reached a conclusion.
PEDRO. What conclusion?
JAVIER. Corporal Goban's death was not fortuitous.
PEDRO. I don't understand.
JAVIER. It was part of a vast design of punishment.
PEDRO. You've concluded that?
JAVIER. Yes. While he was living, we led an almost happy existence. All that was required was obedience and suffering. One could hold on to the illusion that he was purifying himself and that he would be able to save himself. Everyone was aware of his sin, a sin with a date and with circumstances.
PEDRO. And then?
JAVIER. Goban was here to punish us and he let himself be killed.
PEDRO. He let himself be killed? What for?
JAVIER. So that the torture could continue and grow. He was here for that. He was here so that we would kill him. And we fell into the trap.[66]

While it is possible to interpret GOBAN in any number of specific ways, generally he can be seen to represent order and authority. The first-act situation is one of established and accepted knowledge and order. The only uncertainty is the precise time of the coming offensive. Each man knows what he is guilty of and feels that he is purifying himself and will save himself in death. "You're going to approach death clean, ready for review. And the last thing on earth you're going to hear is my word of command."[67] This order, whether it symbolizes military regimentation, dictatorship, Spain, Europe, or the Universe, or a kind of God-centered Eden existing before the experience of the tree of atomic knowledge and the

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[66]Sastre, O. C., p. 216.

[67]Sastre, O. C., p. 172.

death of God, this order is suddenly destroyed, not in any premeditated way, but in a moment of inspired (Dionysian) social, revolutionary action. And the result is an existential experience of freedom which dramatically corresponds to an Aristotelian experience of recognition.

In the second act the individuals become increasingly conscious of themselves and their tragic situation. Simple resignation seems no longer possible. The previous acceptance of guilt is supplanted by an intense investigation into the question of guilt. All actions are turned into matters of deliberation. By the end of the act each character has provided a separate result for the experiment; each represents a single perspective of the tragic situation. They run from the total despair of the solitary individual to a degree of hope for future human and social relationship.

JAVIER is brought to despair by his investigation into the human predicament. His final view is one of a negative universe which destines men for suffering and an ignoble end. Man is the result of a mad cosmic joke: a bacteria with consciousness. His nihilism represents the extreme perspective of the avant-garde art and its expression of the existential situation. For Sastre this is one result of the atomic or cold war age. But this view of man cannot be accepted ultimately (as in Beckett) as the only view, and JAVIER's suicide suggests why. And this perspective alone cannot be interpreted as the whole

meaning of the play as Sr. Pasquariello seems to conclude when he states that it is "bleak, dark, and full of pure, inconsolable anguish."[68]

ANDRÉS is terrified by the insecurity and risk of freedom. He prefers life over all else and chooses to surrender himself to the enemy and to a certain life of imprisonment rather than risk the uncertainty of the guerrilla existence held out by ADOLFO. "I want to rest. In the 'camp' at least I'll be able to go to bed . . . At night I'll be able to sleep."[69] ANDRÉS is that weak mass of humanity which is forever being taken over by one power or another. He is the multitude whose weakness the Grand Inquisitor of Dostoevski used in support of his argument for his church of Miracle, Mystery and Authority. ANDRÉS is the man who hates the authority figure most (he has killed a sergeant and is the first to strike the CORPORAL), because he needs him most (in both cases he has had to be drunk before he could act.) It is the recognition of this need which ANDRÉS comes to in his experience of freedom. It is appropriate that ANDRÉS, whose concern is for the extension of life under any conditions, is the one who immediately interprets the death of GOBAN as "closing off the last exist." The offensive and the military tribunal are simply equated by

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[68]"Censorship in etc.," p. 23.

[69]Sastre, O. C., p. 213.

him: they both mean death. ANDRÉS is tragic in his weakness if he is tragic at all. For Sastre everyman is tragic; for others some are perhaps only pathetic.

If ANDRÉS is a potential detriment to society in his parasitic nature, ADOLFO is equally a possible danger in his anarchistic tendency. ADOLFO, early in the play, suggests shooting GOBAN. At the party he is the one who deliberately defies him. When PEDRO attempts to restore order after the CORPORAL's death, ADOLFO tells him, "I do what I want and nobody gives me orders."[70] It is ADOLFO who attempts to get the others to kill PEDRO, and this failing he tries to talk them into becoming a guerrilla band in the mountains. He is constantly a divisive force in the microcosmic society of the squad. His final, inevitable act is his separation from that society. For ADOLFO freedom is everything and any social restriction of it is intolerable. His tragedy is the same as GERMÁN's in The Garbage Can.

Only in PEDRO and LUIS is there some degree of hope expressed. PEDRO attempts to relate his freedom to a social context. He represents the best aspects of the old order. In him there is a sense of responsibility to the social order and a commitment to human values and human relationships. His compassionate feelings for LUIS and his predicament are the necessary basis for whatever hope

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[70]Sastre, O. C., p. 200.

there may be for man and society however tragic their situation. LUIS lacks PEDRO's strength, but he is not burdened with PEDRO's guilt. He has hopefully reached some total discovery through the experience of freedom and as an undefiled witness of the others. PEDRO attempts to prepare him for the agony of life to come. LUIS comes of age as he smokes his first cigarette with PEDRO.[71]

With the crisis of freedom resulting from the death of GOBAN, each character comes to a discovery of himself, a recognition of the tragic situation of man. Each responds with some form of action. The whole process of the second act can be described as a complex reversal and it involves differing degrees of suffering. JAVIER carries out the ultimate, nihilistic act: he commits suicide; a total rejection of life. ANDRÉS attempts to break away from the responsibility of society and at the same time throw himself into the security of it; a total rejection of freedom. ADOLFO attempts to divorce himself from any social relationship. His desire is for complete freedom and responsibility only to himself; a total rejection of society. PEDRO attempts to discover the proper response in terms of society and the individual. His conclusion is to accept the consequences of his act in terms of the only existing social order. He assumes a

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[71]Sastre expressed a desire later to change the ending of The Condemned Squad to provide LUIS with more of an experience of conscious awakening. O. C., p. 162.

responsibility for another individual. LUIS exists more as a witness to the other's experience than as one who suffers a recognition of himself. As PEDRO tells him, his "sentence which remains to be completed [is] life."[72] The hope for LUIS and for those outside the work lies in the increased consciousness brought about by the experience of the drama, itself.

Some of the questions introduced in The Condemned Squad continue to occupy Alfonso Sastre in The Gag. Again he focuses on a microcosm of society, and in the manner of Pathetic Prologue and Community Bread (the work immediately preceding The Gag) he brings into conflict family loyalty and social responsibility.

The play was outlined in November and December of 1953 just months after Community Bread was completed. It was written in February of 1954. Sastre described the play as an effort of, "cautious protest: in appearance a rural drama but with an underlying message. I would try to say: We live gagged. We are not happy. This silence oppresses us. And all this may point to a bloody future."[73] The fact that the work was immediately authorized by the authorities and accepted by the public as a rural drama brought the author to consider it a failure in terms of its real message.

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[72]Sastre, O. C., p. 220.

[73]Sastre, O. C., p. 283.

From the opening moment of the play with ISAÍAS' wife, ANTONIA, in a trembling voice attempting to make excuses to her husband for their son's absence from the dinner table, it is obvious that ISAÍAS is a terrifyingly domineering head of the family. In the conversation that follows only LUISA, his daughter-in-law, dares to suggest any feelings other than those in agreement with ISAÍAS KRAPPO. Her husband JUAN is completely brow beaten, and his father delights in pointing it out. The youngest son, JANDRO, is obediently silent. When TEO does arrive late and explains that he hasn't intended to offend his father, ISAÍAS exclaims, "that's the problem! that you didn't want to offend us. That's exactly what's wrong. You do the worst things without wanting to. If you had wanted to offend us and you had done it to bother us, so that we would realize your contempt, it would be another thing . . . That would be a fight and not a fatherly reprimand . . . We would know what to depend on . . . things would be clear . . . But this situation is ridiculous. Get out of here, go to bed. Leave me in peace. I don't even want to see you. It disgusts me that you're the way you are."[74] TEO leaves, and ISAÍAS is left alone with LUISA for a moment. He tries to tell her that he has more feeling for her than he shows in front of the

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[74]Sastre, O. C., p. 295.

family, that he has to maintain a role in front of them. He expresses the feeling that not only the family but people of the town hate him and say things about him. His only real friends are those who fought with him in the Resistance. LUISA goes off, and ISAÍAS settles down for a pipe and some brandy. The maid comes in and announces the arrival of a stranger. He is let in and in a short time explains to KRAPPO that he has just been released from prison and that he has come to find the man who was responsible for the brutal death of his wife and daughter in a raid during the war. The raid, he claims, was led by ISAÍAS KRAPPO. ISAÍAS orders him out of the house. On leaving the man implies that he will kill ISAÍAS at some unexpected future moment. As soon as the stranger is out of the house ISAÍAS nervously rushes to a cabinet, takes out a pistol, and leaves. LUISA appears and moves to a window to see what is happening. A shot is heard. ISAÍAS returns and finds LUISA. He threatens to kill her if she tells anyone about the incident.

The next morning police commissioner ROCH arrives at the house and talks to ISAÍAS. They discover that each has served with the Resistance forces during the war and that each had to undergo police interrogations. When ROCH mentions that the victim was a former member of the military opposition, ISAÍAS expresses surprise at the need for further investigation. He claims that no one in the house heard a shot during the night. But when LUISA

appears a few moments later, in her nervousness she admits to having heard one. When ROCH leaves, ISAÍAS pressures her to say nothing else.

A few days later LUISA and JUAN are discussing the newspaper reports of the crime when LUISA breaks down and admits to having seen ISAÍAS commit the murder. JUAN is completely confused by this truth and insists that LUISA tell TEO as well. She goes out, gets him, and brings him back to tell him. On hearing her story he shows little surprise and admits to having suspected the same. He tells JUAN and LUISA that he has heard some of KRAPPO's old Resistance friends talk of the case in a local tavern, and that they intended to protect the old man with their silence. For himself his fear of his father has overcome his hatred of him (brought on earlier, one is told, by KRAPPO's having destroyed his engagement with the girl he loved) and is keeping him silent. He tells the others of the story told him by the father's friends of how ISAÍAS killed the victim's wife and daughter in a drunken rage the night of the raid.

The fourth scene opens with JANDRO (the son who loves his father) ironically suggesting the harshest retribution for the crime: hanging the murderer in the public square and throwing his dead body on some road. ANTONIA weakly suggests a sort of Christian forgiveness and a winning of the criminal's soul through love. ISAÍAS jovially sides with his son's strong line. As they prepare for dinner a

summer thunder storm is heard approaching. Through the meal the growing tension and eventual explosion of emotions of the family are reflected by the fury of the storm outside. LUISA confesses to having told JUAN and TEO and finally mentions the fact by name before them all. JANDRO breaks into tears. ANTONIA seems bewildered. TEO openly declares his hatred for his father. ISAÍAS in a rage strikes LUISA but then goes into a kind of psychological collapse of strength. By the end of this scene of family katharsis KRAPPO has turned into a lonely old man.

Some weeks later. JUAN and LUISA are discussing the old man's condition. He has been ill for some time and is running a high fever. LUISA talks somewhat understandingly about his intense fear of death which corresponds to his intense love of life and belief only in life. TEO comes in, and the three begin to talk of their situation. Each has some reason for not revealing the crime, and their silence is beginning to oppress them. "We're more wretched every day . . . quiet and sad . . . because we can't live. . . . This gag is choking us and some day we're going to have to talk, to shout . . . if we have any strength left by then . . . And that day is going to be a day of rage and blood . . . "[75] ISAÍAS, in a greatly weakened condition, is helped in for a few moments by JANDRO and ANTONIA. He can still be seen holding on to

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[75]Sastre, O. C., p. 326.

his domination of the others, but now the threats are of guilt instead of punishment for those who might betray him. "If any one of you ever talks you will be sorry. I swear it. And the others will never be able to forgive him for it. None of you will ever be able to be happy. I swear that too."[76]

In the following scene LUISA informs ROCH of the murder. The commissioner has made it his habit to visit the house often; he explains that he has suspected ISAÍAS and was waiting until someone finally had to betray him. ISAÍAS comes in on their conversation and immediately perceives what has happened. He and ROCH talk of the irony involved in the fact that just a few years earlier the same murder would have been agreed upon by both and would have made of one a hero. In a last confused expression of revenge and sexual desire ISAÍAS struggles to embrace LUISA. An armed police AGENT prevents him from harming her.

The epilogue opens with ANTONIA, TEO, JANDRO, and LUISA seated at the table and eating in silence. Conversation begins slowly and is forced. Eventually they discuss the father. JANDRO expresses concern for his welfare in prison and a desire to visit him. ANTONIA feels guilty about feeling a sense of peace in his absence. TEO attempts to justify his lack of grief over

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[76]Sastre, O. C., p. 328.

his father. When JANDRO confesses to LUISA that he can never forgive her, she reveals to him that his father has made love to her. The consternation over this revelation is never realized because JUAN enters with news of ISAÍAS' death. Apparently he was shot to death by the guards while attempting to escape prison. TEO insists that this was a deliberate suicide by his father to punish the family with guilt. JUAN sees that TEO's interpretation is only an easy rationalization for a situation that can never truly be resolved and which therefore will always haunt them. In a paradoxical way their new anguish is accompanied by a heretofore unfelt sense of calm.

A number of critics have pointed out similarities between The Gag and The Condemned Squad, but in rather general terms. GOBAN and ISAÍAS are mentioned as similarly oppressive forces and the former's squad and the latter's family as the oppressed. The revolt is looked at as the critical action. The concluding implication is that both plays are allegories of the same real social situation. Without denying the existence of similar problems in both works and likeness in structures and patterns, one can be blinded to significant differences by forcing the similarities. When Farris Anderson states that, "the family's revolt is analogous to that of the Corporal's soldiers . . . "[77] he misses an important

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[77]Anderson, p. 96.

difference in the two plays: the revolt in The Condemned Squad was a spontaneous, united act of physical violence (killing by the sword one who had lived by the sword); the revolt (the word itself is perhaps wrong; "release" might be better) in The Gag is the difficult and deliberate process of an individual, without group support and is expressed verbally. In addition the "oppressor" in one case is a relatively undeveloped personage functioning symbolically and in the other case is a highly complex psychological character. The total resultant dramatic difference is far greater than any symbolically thematic similarity.

A. C. Van Der Naald's statement that, "with The Gag Sastre again dramatizes the theme of tyranny and subsequent revolt,"[78] (relating the play to The Condemned Squad) disregards the fundamental structural and dramatic differences between the two works. The revolt in the earlier play occurs at the end of the first part thrusting the characters into a state of freedom which brings with it their subsequent development. In The Gag LUISA informs the COMMISSIONER near the end of the play; the characters have suffered ISAÍAS' domination throughout and continue to feel his power even in his absence. What is more, the complex human relationships which exist between ISAÍAS and each of the others bring about a dramatic situation far

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[78]Van Der Naald, p. 85.

different from that representing the corporal-squad relationship of The Condemned Squad. To equate them as "a dramatization of tyranny" is to simplify to the point of meaninglessness.

Leonard Pronko has done his share to add to this detrimental generalizing when he describes "both Krappo and Goban [as] cold and impersonal. Their inhumanity is a result of a fundamental fear: a fear of being found weak . . . these two men represent the tyranny from which man seeks to escape . . . "[79] The complexity of the character of ISAÍAS refutes any such simplification.

In addition to the damage caused by any attempt to thematically summarize a work of dramatic art there seems to be operating here the compulsion to show Sastre's plays to be a clear manifestation of his stated political views. However, Sastre's integrity as an artist and his commitment to the view of man as a tragic figure have never permitted him to reach the levels of simplistic expression so obviously favored by his critics. The Gag, in fact, is a particularly good example of his insistence on investigating the multiple aspects of man's tragic situation. In Community Bread, Red Earth, and In the Net, to

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[79]Pronko, p. 115. Anderson points out two other interpretations of The Gag which are unnecessarily narrow: José María García Escudero in "Tiempo" sees Isaías as a symbol of capitalism and his family as oppressed humanity. José Mariá de Quinto, who directed the Madrid production, sees the play as a symbol of Franco Spain which suppresses free expression (not including this play apparently.) p. 97.

name three, criticism could be leveled at the author for not representing in any human fashion the oppressive element. The degree of moral or ethical conflict was perhaps lessened by the abstract nature of the oppressor. But in The Gag Sastre has chosen to imbue his oppressor with very human qualities. The social tragedy of the play may be symbolically contained in the experience of the oppressed members of the family, but KRAPPO is also a tragic figure, and one of almost classic stature, a man who has lived beyond his proper time and context. Whatever Sastre's original intention in the way of a social message for the play, it cannot be interpreted to lessen the achievement of this major tragic figure. The work is not a simple allegory of oppression overcome, and KRAPPO is not GOBAN in mufti.

On one level Sastre's play moves in the manner of Greek tragedy. ISAÍAS KRAPPO is a tragic figure who, like Ajax, attempts to act in the present by the standards of the past. He tries to operate in terms of violence, fear, group loyalty, and élan vital: attributes of the Resistance. The problem of guilt has long ago been rejected. To kill a threatening stranger and expect the silence of his family group are entirely in keeping with his code. (His old friends from the Resistance movement will keep silent about the incident forever as TEO reports.) But in the climactic fourth scene ISAÍAS is brought to a full recognition of his true situation: all

those about him represent a different age and different standards, guilt is a major factor in determining individual actions, legal justice is a commitment of society; in terms of the new order his act is a crime which pollutes the family and society. ISAÍAS is psychologically and physically broken. He never fully recovers. His last effort to act is his confused attempt to love and destroy LUISA, and he is pathetic in his defeat. His suicide is a precise realization of the old order brought to its end by the new.

If KRAPPO represents the forces of oppression by one interpretation, he then must also be seen as a solitary tragic figure who is himself a victim of circumstances beyond his control. His flaw is his inability to change. In his last free moments he comments on the irony brought on by the passing of time. "It makes me laugh to think. . . . that if I had killed this man four years ago, you [ROCH] would have been very happy. And I, for precisely what makes me a criminal now, would have been a hero then. (He laughs.) Doesn't that strike you as funny? A man is a hero or a criminal according to his circumstances, even though the dead person is the same. (He laughs again.)"[80] He is a strong man in a society of weak people. He almost begs TEO to openly defy him and enter into a struggle of character with him. He is

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[80]Sastre, O. C., p. 335.

thrilled by JANDRO's harsh proposals of judgement on the then unknown murderer. In his final encounter with ROCH he puts the commissioner on the defensive by making him admit to his weakness and squeamishness while a Resistance fighter. Surrounded by these figures he finds no possibility of the extremely vital human relationships his soul and body require. His attitude toward the struggle is clear evidence of his unique mode of existence. What for the others has been an agonizing experience, for him has been vitalizing. "I've always enjoyed the struggle. I've never considered myself defeated . . . and during this fight I've enjoyed life terribly. I've lived every day as if each moment were the last. It's been marvelous."[81]

The quasi-mythical proportions of ISAÍAS' character may have been a development beyond Sastre's original intention, and the result is a shift of focus from the other tragic situation existing in the play. The two are, of course, inseparable, but the strength of the greek-tragic elements in ISAÍAS tends to diminish the impact of the human-social tragedy of the family. ISAÍAS' action and suffering exist on the scale of the Greek tragic hero, in this case lost in the modern context. Even his final suffering and death is, in the Greek manner, off-stage and brought to the audience by the usual messenger. His

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[81]Sastre, O. C., p. 334.

presence is ultimately felt in his absence. The others, by contrast, are the "everymen" of present day society. In typical Sastrean fashion they are caught in a dialectic of human and social responsibilities. They, like a group of Hamlets, spend their time agonizing over a decision which they cannot bring themselves to make. In their loss of freedom they are brought to discoveries about themselves and their relationships. In the end only LUISA acts.

That which most differentiates the tragedy of ISAÍAS from the tragedy of the individuals (and society) of his family is the dilemma of guilt which exists for the latter and not for the former. Underlying all other relationships recognized by the family members to exist between themselves and the father is a sense of guilt: guilt in having failed the father in the past and guilt in the contemplation of a betrayal of the father. This stands in conflict with the socio-legal concept of guilt which will inevitably be applied to the father for his action. TEO submerges this guilt in his expressed feelings of hate and fear, JUAN in a sense of loyalty, JANDRO in love, LUISA in fear of ISAÍAS and love of JUAN, and ANTONIA in Christian charity. As the tension of the conflicting forces increases, the hesitation to act brings with it greater degrees of anguish. Finally LUISA, who is not blood related, rebels against the family bond. But the release from oppression brings an unsatisfactory calm. And ISAÍAS

by his last act throws the family into an endless, tragic uncertainty. The vigor of his final action, as described by JUAN, stands in sharp contrast to the last moments of aimless conversation by the completely debilitated family.

If Sastre's drama is to be read in terms of its social symbolism, which he himself hoped for, the results are not what the above-mentioned critics tend to make them. Certainly oppression and revolt can be seen in the play, but the larger message would seem to read that if society suffers under the oppressor, it falters in his absence. This aspect of the tragedy should not be overlooked. With this conclusion The Gag stands as a harshly realistic view of the problems of a self-governing society. Just as he refused to depict freedom as anything but problematic in The Condemned Squad, so too he rejects here any simple optimism concerning the human-social condition.

The next play of this group, A Death in the Neighborhood (1955), is also a work which incorporates the complexity of the human situation in a manner which defies simplistic message summarizing. Falling in a period of very active writing, the play, completed less than a year and a half after The Gag, is separated from the earlier work by Red Earth, Anna Kleiber, and The Blood of God. It was refused production and, for a period, even publication in Spain.

As usual Sastre attached some notes of explanation. In these he points to his concern for the lack of human consideration in the doctor-patient relationship. "Doctors are ignorant of what surrounds the wound, that is: a man."[82] He sees a growing dehumanization in Medicine which is in conflict with human needs. " . . . the depths of this conflict is what is revealed suddenly and brutally in A Death in the Neighborhood . . . this 'case' objectifies all the contained rage, the unconscious fury of the neighborhood. And the important thing in this drama is not the 'case' but the fury and the conditions of the fury which end with the brutal death of a man."[83]

A Death in the Neighborhood begins with a prologue scene in the Bar Moderno. The police COMMISSIONER is trying to get the details surrounding a killing which took place a few days earlier in the same bar. PEDRO, the bartender, briefly describes the incident: the local clinic doctor, an older man with a drinking problem, had been absent from his post when a child injured by an automobile had been brought in; as a result the child died; two days later the doctor was attacked and killed by a group of neighbors who happened to be in the bar when he came in. As PEDRO begins to fill in the details of the story, it is dramatized in five flashback scenes.

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[82]Sastre, O. C., p. 529.

[83]Sastre, O. C., p. 530.

In the first of these PACO, the local newsvendor, who has been chosen for the purpose by lot from among ARTURO's old friends, meets ARTURO to tell him of the death of his child. ARTURO is something of a dandy who was JUANA's (the child's mother) lover previously. He left her before their child was born and is now living in another neighborhood. His "social success" is demonstrated by his carrying two kinds of cigarettes and a lighter. After a great deal of hesitation PACO tells him of the accident in which the child was injured and of their taking the child to the clinic and finding no doctor. The news of his child's death breaks away ARTURO's dandyish façade and leaves him in anger and tears. He decides to go back to the neighborhood to see JUANA.

In the second scene ARTURO arrives at JUANA's home. MARÍA and TOBÍAS, her mother and father, are discussing her condition. TOBÍAS insists on speaking to ARTURO while MARÍA goes off to see if JUANA will see him. ARTURO asks forgiveness of TOBÍAS. The two are reconciled. They talk of the doctor SANJO who had been absent from the clinic. ARTURO expresses a desire to carry out some personal punishment. TOBÍAS tells him that justice is a matter for society not for the individual. MARÍA returns and says that JUANA does not wish to see anyone. ARTURO leaves explaining that he will return everyday until she will see him. TOBÍAS is soon called off to play dominos at the bar with his friend RAMÓN. Before he leaves JUANA appears and

asks him to send ARTURO back. While waiting for him she and her mother talk about the little boy. ARTURO returns to share with JUANA the grief over their lost child.

Scene three occurs in the poorly furnished house of a certain SEÑORA SOFÍA. A friend and neighbor of MARÍA, she is a somewhat eccentric, heavy smoking, novel-reading lady who is about to receive an injection from the local clinic's nurse, GENOVEVA. SRA. SOFÍA insists that GENOVEVA remain after giving the injection to enjoy some of her special lemonade "with a few drops of liqueur." They talk about DR. SANJO and the incident of the child. SANJO has on occasion been very rude in his treatment of GENOVEVA. After the nurse leaves MARÍA arrives to ask SRA. SOFÍA to accompany her in trying to convince JUANA to take a paseo. SRA. SOFÍA agrees to go but only after MARÍA tries some of her lemonade.

The next scene takes place in GENOVEVA's apartment. LUIS, her boyfriend, arrives. He is a pale, thin, young man who apparently has tuberculosis. As a result of his illness he has lost his job and has spent some time in a sanatorium. The experience there was quite dehumanizing as he describes it. GENOVEVA tells him that he can be cured, but that he must not allow his physical illness to take over his spirit. He attempts to explain to her his difficulty in being rejected and treated as something unclean and to be avoided. He tries to describe the horror of being constantly sick. "The worst thing that

can happen to a poor person, Genoveva, is to get sick; to get sick, that's the worst thing in the world that can happen."[84] She asks him to go with her to the Bar Moderno to meet a young medical student, PABLO, who might be able to help him. As they leave the apartment she insists that he kiss her.

The fifth scene brings all the characters together in the Bar Moderno. A group of medical students are discussing the possibility of getting the medical college and association to revoke SANJO's license to practice. PABLO arrives and gets the group to agree to a more immediate retribution: going to the doctor's house and beating him. PACO comes in with JUANITO to drink a beer. He is complaining about not selling any papers because of everyone being at a soccer game. TOBÍAS and his friend RAMÓN arrive and begin a game of dominos with PACO and JUANITO. At this point a MAN IN RAGS with a guitar comes in and asks PEDRO's permission to play. This given, he sings a short song and collects enough money to buy himself a beer. ARTURO's arrival at the bar stirs a little excitement momentarily, but everyone eventually goes back to his conversation or game, and he is left talking to PEDRO at the bar. He tries to explain his new awareness of things and people in the neighborhood, how everything is somehow the same yet different. He talks

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[84]Sastre, O. C., p. 568.

about earlier days and even mentions his parent's death which occurred in a bomb explosion during the war. The GUITARIST finishes his beer and leaves. The only sounds for a few moments are those of the dominos clicking. TOBÍAS ends the game with a loud blow to the table. GENOVEVA and LUIS come in and she introduces him to PABLO. They begin to talk; a record is playing. Suddenly all the talking stops and only the music is heard. DR. SANJO enters and as he does the record finishes playing and the room is in total silence. He crosses to the bar and orders a double brandy. The remainder of the scene is one of Sastre's best dramatic moments.

SANJO. A double brandy.
PEDRO. Yes sir. (Pours a single.)
SANJO. I said a double.
PEDRO. Excuse me, Dr. Sanjo. (ARTURO turns.)
ARTURO. (To PEDRO.) What you say?
PEDRO. What?
ARTURO. What did you just call this man?
PEDRO. He . . . is Dr. Sanjo.
ARTURO. (Blanching.) Thanks. (He slaps the doctor on the back.) Listen.
SANJO. (Turns, out of humor.) What do you want?
ARTURO. You're Dr. Sanjo, right?
SANJO. Yes, what do you want?
ARTURO. Nothing. Just to look at you close up. (He looks at him insolently. The doctor, uncomfortable, drinks a little brandy. He looks around. Everyone is looking at him. He clears his throat nervously.)
SANJO. Would you please leave me alone?
ARTURO. (Continues staring at him.) So this is you.
SANJO. (Grimacing.) Me? Who?
ARTURO. You say who . . . (With a twisted expression. SANJO wipes his brow with a handkerchief.) In the neighborhood you're very well known. Everybody knows you. I just arrived and I've already heard people talking about you . . . and you just walk around . . . as if nothing happened. (SANJO takes a swallow of brandy.) I'm going to give you a little piece of news doctor . . . just to see if it interests you. Last Friday, in this neighborhood, there was an accident. A truck . . . hit a little boy . . . in the street.

Last Friday, in this neighborhood, a very unfortunate thing happened doctor. What do you have to say about it? What's your opinion on the matter? Do you have anything to say . . . you? (Shouting harshly.) Murderer! Do you know what I'm talking about?
SANJO. (Nervously looking around.) I suppose . . . I suppose you're talking about the dead boy they brought to the clinic. He was attended to, but . . . there was nothing to be done. He was brought in dead.
ARTURO. (Shaking his head.) He wasn't brought in dead. The fact is nobody knew what to do for him, doctor . . . The fact is that nobody was there who could help him . . .
SANJO. No . . . You've been misinformed . . . I saw the report . . . A fracture at the base of the cranium . . . There was . . . nothing that could be done.
ARTURO. It's the same thing, doctor . . . if there wasn't anyone there to do it.
SANJO. I'm sorry. No one could have done anything. Pedro, here. (He leaves some money and tries to start out. ARTURO stops him.) Please, let me by.
ARTURO. No. You're not going anywhere.
SANJO. (Remaining quiet. He turns and looks one by one at those watching him.) What do you want? (No one says anything. He cries out nervously.) Well, what do you want?
PABLO. (Steps forward.) Nothing, doctor.
SANJO. Tell this man to let me go. I don't know what's wrong with him.
PABLO. I don't think I'll tell him anything, doctor. (SANJO wipes sweat with his handkerchief.)
LUIS. Hot, isn't it?
SANJO. Pedro, what is this? What are you going to do to me?
PEDRO. Do, doctor? Nothing.
SANJO. Tell them to let me leave.
PEDRO. Me? I don't think they'd pay any attention, doctor.
SANJO. Call the police.
PEDRO. (Picks up the telephone.) Yes, sir. (Listens.) Funny . . . it doesn't seem to be working. (Hangs up.)
SANJO. Pedro!
PEDRO. What, doctor?
SANJO. Help me get out.
PEDRO. Me . . . not me, doctor.
SANJO. (He turns to the others.) Let me go! Let me leave! (The circle of people tightens. SANJO looks around, terrified.) Let me go . . . maybe I did do something wrong. I don't know! Turn me in . . . I'll give my reasons, my . . . my excuses. Sometimes I get sick . . . And I have to . . . get out of the clinic . . . The halls close in on me . . . I'm not

very well . . . I'm . . . I'm not happy . . . I'm afraid! . . . It makes me sick waiting there, all closed in . . . waiting there, for what? Anything can come in! A man with a fractured skull . . . all open . . . blood . . . ! I never wanted to work in a clinic . . . I wanted to do research . . . but I needed the money . . . to live . . . I ended up in the hospital . . . I started to drink . . . (Screaming.) I beg you . . . let me go! Let me leave! Please . . . I beg you . . . please! (He starts toward the door. In the doorway, dressed in black, still and rigid stand JUANA, MARÍA, and SOFÍA. They are silent. Almost unwillingly they cut off his path. He turns.) Someone has to help me! (he sees GENOVEVA.) You! You know me, we've worked together! Tell them to let me go!
GENOVEVA. (Simply.) No. No. (The doctor screams and throws himself at ARTURO. But he is sharply stopped. ARTURO is holding a knife. The doctor grabs a bottle, breaks it and tries to slash ARTURO. PABLO grabs him from behind. ARTURO stabs him deep with the knife. The rest have tightened the circle. SANJO falls. He painfully pulls himself up and again tries to escape, but PACO grabs him and throws him down. A mirror falls. They all begin tearing at him. He continues to struggle. Tables are knocked over, glasses and bottles broken. Suddenly everything goes silent. SANJO's body is a ragged heap on the floor. They all stand almost perfectly still, looking.)[85]

The epilogue brings one back to the present with the COMMISSIONER and PEDRO talking. The COMMISSIONER thanks PEDRO for telling him the whole story. They comment on the heat and the possible effect it had on the people. Outside it has darkened and a fast summer storm is coming up. The rain begins to fall, some relief from the heat.

In emphasizing the social, revolutionary aspects of A Death in the Neighborhood, where similarities can easily be drawn with other works, critics have again tended to overlook the unique nature of the play as a tragedy in

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[85]Sastre, O. C., p. 581.

Sastre's body of tragic theatre. The usual dialectic, however, is not the process used in developing the characters here. Their suffering, for the most part, is that constant condition resulting from a life of deprivation. It does not come as the anguish of decision between conflicting demands or as the agony of expanded consciousness in the moment of some Aristoelian recognition as in most of Sastre's tragedies. While the characters (including SANJO) are the tragic victims of a dehumanizing social system and ultimately act against it, there is almost no sense of tragic awareness developed. Only PEDRO and the COMMISSIONER, in the prologue and epilogue, achieve any degree of moral perspective.

Using these two characters to tell the whole story in the prologue and then following with a detailed dramatization, Sastre manages to cast a sense of Greek, tragic inevitability over the action. In addition he generates in his audience enough anticipation to carry it through a series of realistic vignettes which serve more toward character creation than plot development. The success of the tragedy largely rests on the late climax, which occurs less as the probable outcome of a carefully constructed plot than as a ritual demonstration of basic human impulse and social purification.

If Sastre's purpose is, as Anderson puts it, an "investigation of social injustice"[86] in A Death in the

[86]Anderson, p. 100.

Neighborhood, his method emphasizes the depiction of the very human attributes and foibles of society's members. The ironic discovery of the COMMISSIONER's personal investigation is that the guilt lay in the dehumanization of individuals by the social order rather than in the ultimate, exaggerated human response to this. The target in this case is the medical profession which, by ignoring the human nature of man, brings about an extreme demonstration of that nature.

In four scenes Sastre attempts to dramatize different expressions of human need met with human relationship, compassion and understanding. PACO tries in his awkward way to sympathize with ARTURO in his loss. TOBÍAS and MARÍA relate in their suffering, and MARÍA and her daughter attempt to comfort each other in their inability to comprehend the death of the child. ARTURO and JUANA are brought together in grief and forgiveness. On a different level GENOVEVA and SOFÍA are seen to be related by human kindness and LUIS and GENOVEVA by understanding and love. Even in the bar the medical students are shown to be held together by a group joie de vivre and by their reaction of anger over the malpractice in their anticipated profession.

If these dramatizations are not tightly woven in a plot development toward the climax they serve to prepare for it as demonstrations of the very most human moments of existence which are ignored or disregarded by the social

order (as represented specifically here by its medical branch). But Sastre has gone beyond the simple contrast between the humanizing relationships in these scenes and the dehumanizing experience of the empty clinic, unresponsive to human need. He has complicated the tragic situation, as he did in The Gag, by revealing the human nature of SANJO in the climactic scene. The oppressive, dehumanizing force of the social order works through individuals like SANJO who themselves are victims of the same process. Sastre's constant awareness of the individual's tragic situation again causes him to reject the simplicity of a single level interpretation.

Without denying the symbolism of a human victory over a dehumanizing social order that exists in the play, one can argue that the real dramatic strength of the work rests in the surge of primordial tragic action (fear, pity, suffering), partially ritualized, which constitutes the climax. Having already experimented with the modern reenactment of a Dionysian moment of madness and slaughter as a type of social purge in The Condemned Squad, Sastre now recreates the experience in fuller dramatic form and with greater depth of meaning. The event is already known to the audience before it occurs which tends to raise it in one way to a level of ritual reenactment. The sense of fate and the inevitability of things which arises with this foreknowledge granted the audience, in the manner of Greek tragic theatre, is here tied to the unchanging

nature of man as demonstrated in his moments of extreme expression. The community's violent slaughter of SANJO in the Bar Moderno is inextricably linked to the actions of primitive tribes at the dawn of man's social existence. Theatrically Sastre has in this moment added to the dimension of psychological realism the dimension of archetypical action which in this case is that "extreme action" of Artaud's theatre, approaching his "agitation of . . . masses, convulsed and hurled against each other."[87] With the help of brandy and the otherwise meaningless GUITARIST,[88] the event achieves a mythical dimension of meaning, one of Dionysian madness, when SANJO is torn apart by the crowd. With the dramatization of this purging of society Sastre is attempting to bring about in his audience a katharsis involving pity and fear.

The effectiveness of this experience, however, depends on SANJO's being depicted as a real and suffering

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[87]Antonin Artuaud, "The Theatre and Cruelty," in Barrett H. Clark, European Theories of the Drama (New York: Crown, 1965), p. 398.

[88]Van Der Naald (p. 169) states that "the third and fourth scenes have little relation to the rest of the work," and she sees no possible relationship to the work in the GUITARIST and in ARTURO's conversation with PEDRO in the bar scene. The third and fourth scenes are part of Sastre's effort to build up a community of human individuals shown in various human relationships one with another. ARTURO's conversation with PEDRO also serves to strengthen his relationship with the neighborhood. The GUITARIST can be interpreted in a number of ways: he is unrelated to the action as realistically one could easily be in a public place; he is related symbolically, as Lorca might have used him, and can be seen as foreshadowing death; he is a symbolic Dionysian figure.

human being. At this critical moment in the play Sastre insists on effecting the Aristotelian kathartic experience at the possible expense of the social message. SANJO could have been a cardboard figure or a brutally inhuman type, and the social message of the play would have been clear. But to depict him as a pathetic individual caught between a dehumanizing bureaucracy and its irate human victims is to intensify the human tragedy at the moment of its climax, to make the violence and death meaningful to the depths of man's conscious and unconscious being, while recognizing the impossibility of a simple solution. The audience must be able to recognize themselves both in SANJO and in the violent crowd. Fear is both the fear of the victim and the fear in discovering the primitive impulse (the Dionysian madness) in oneself. And pity comes through the recognition that everyone is a victim in the situation. The play proves to be not only an investigation of social injustice but an investigation "of the darkest zones of human reality [and] of human existence."[89]

In A Death in the Neighborhood Sastre has attempted to probe the tragedy of human existence and social injustice by beginning with a kind of documentary situation (the death of the child and the death of SANJO) which could possibly have been drawn from his contemporary

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[89]Sastre, D. S., p. 107. Sastre uses this phrase to describe Sartre's tragedy. See chapter I.

society. In Sad Are the Eyes of William Tell he begins with a myth (as he did in a less developed way with Community Bread and Red Earth) which successfully reflects the social conditions and the human condition in present day reality that he wishes to investigate. But in relating reality and the myth Sastre forces a change in the story which gives it a new tragic existence. "Tell ceases to be the protagonist of great feats and becomes the subject of a tragedy. He acquires the greatness of a redeemer by whose sacrifice the salvation of others is made possible. He is destroyed so that others may live."[90]

Sastre wrote his "William Tell" in November of 1955 in response to a request for a modern version of the myth by José Tamayo, director of the Teatro Español. Tamayo received the script enthusiastically, but was prevented from producing it by the Ministry of Information.

The script calls for present day costumes and abstract sets. The first scene is the Plaza of Altdorf at the far end of which a gigantic edifice is in construction with scaffolding rising out of sight and MASONS moving about constantly at different levels. Two BEGGARS sit in the foreground discussing the hard times that have come on themselves and the country. The FOREMAN of the work crew at the building, which the BEGGARS have identified as a

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[90]Sastre, O. C., p. 587.

new prison, rings the lunch bell, and as the men begin to come off the scaffold and find places to sit and eat, a BLIND MAN is led on by a BOY with a guitar. The BLIND MAN sings a ballad of the crimes of the governor, GESSLER.[91] The FOREMAN attempts to drive the BLIND MAN away fearing that the authorities might interpret his staying as an indication of a seditious attitude on the part of himself and his workers. When the BLIND MAN refuses, the FOREMAN goes off and returns soon after with a SERGEANT and some GUARDS. As they attempt to remove the BLIND MAN, WILLIAM TELL appears on the far side of the plaza and stands watching the situation. The BLIND MAN delivers a long harrangue at the SERGEANT and finally begins shouting for the death of the governor. The GUARDS shoot him down. TELL comes over to the SERGEANT and threatens to kill him at some future time. The SERGEANT in a panic orders the GUARDS to shoot, but as they do TELL pulls the SERGEANT around to shield himself, and the SERGEANT is killed. The GUARDS take TELL prisoner and go off with him. The FOREMAN orders the workers to cover the bodies and go back to the scaffolding. The two BEGGARS sit talking, one, of the possible fate of WILLIAM TELL, the other, of the weather.

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[91]An example of ridiculous criticism is Luis García-Abrines, "La poesía accidental en el teatro de Sastre," Duquesne Hispanic Review, I, No. 1 (1962), 47. In this article Sr. García-Abrines criticizes Sastre for his poor rime scheme in the BLIND MAN's ballad.

The second scene is seven days after TELL's arrest. The SEATED BEGGAR is in a tavern talking to the TAVERN KEEPER. An OLD WOMAN comes in and informs them of TELL's release. Moments later WALTER FURST, TELL's father-in-law comes in and indicates that his son-in-law was to meet him there. On hearing this the TAVERN KEEPER immediately begins to express concern for himself. Just as the FOREMAN in the earlier scene, he explains that he has a wife and children and doesn't want to get into trouble even though he admires TELL. The BEGGAR engages FURST in conversation and discovers in him a man of theory who is unwilling to act. FURST tells him that others must be the ones to carry out his theories. Finally TELL arrives and talks about his imprisonment and torture. He expresses a strange sense of tranquility and a lack of desire to involve himself in political matters. He is amused at FURST's anger especially when the old man explains his intention of publishing an article and holding a meeting. TELL's only interest at the moment is in his family. He informs FURST that he will not attend the planned meeting of the resistance leaders.

The scene following is that of the meeting. FURST and five others are assembled in his house awaiting the rest of the leaders. Eventually the representatives of the other cantons arrive and the meeting gets underway. They are in the process of selecting by vote someone to head up the entire resistance movement when TELL arrives.

He refuses to participate in the vote but stays to listen to the discussion which follows, led by the newly elected FURST. The group becomes embroiled in argument over abstract plans and semantic differences, and TELL gets up to leave using his son's fever as an excuse. But pressured by FURST he finally tells them his real reason. "I listen to you and I'm left cold. I listen to you and it seems like there isn't any injustice and misery in the country. As if everything were a lie. As if you were telling stories. Or as if you were about to undertake some business project. As if this were a university seminar. No. I'm going. There's nothing for me to do here. I search through all those words your saying, and I don't see any children begging for bread. When someone makes a child suffer, I'll kill him. In the meantime I'm going home. I'm sorry I interrupted you."[92]

The fourth scene, back again in the Plaza of Altdorf, is a depiction of the tragic-comic absurdity of existence under GESSLER's rule. Two GUARDS are in the process of erecting a pike with a hat on it in the center of the square.

FIRST GUARD. (Brushing off his hands.) Looks O. K. huh?
SECOND GUARD. Looks O. K.
FIRST GUARD. Strong enough?
SECOND GUARD. (Moves the pike.) It won't fall.
FIRST GUARD. The hat won't blow away will it?
SECOND GUARD. Hey, that's right.
FIRST GUARD. Should we tie it?

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[92]Sastre, O. C., p. 626.

SECOND GUARD. The orders don't say so.
FIRST GUARD. It might blow away . . .
SECOND GUARD. The orders don't say so.
FIRST GUARD. Better not then.
SECOND GUARD. Now what do we do?
FIRST GUARD. Stay here.
SECOND GUARD. Do the orders say so?
FIRST GUARD. Of course.
SECOND GUARD. Well, here we are.
FIRST GUARD. Here we are.
SECOND GUARD. Should we stand at attention?
FIRST GUARD. The orders don't say so.
SECOND GUARD. Then how should we stand?
FIRST GUARD. I don't know!
SECOND GUARD. I'm going to ask the corporal.
FIRST GUARD. Let's stand at ease. O. K.?
SECOND GUARD. I don't know . . .
FIRST GUARD. Come on. Look. (He stands at ease.) You see? Nothing happened.
SECOND GUARD. Well, since you're older, if you give the order . . .
FIRST GUARD. Don't be afraid.
SECOND GUARD. Go on![93]

The comic routine is continued with a DRUMMER and TOWN CRIER who arrive and read a proclamation. The message proclaimed, however, is far from comic. GESSLER is insisting that everyone who passes the square bow down to the hat and shout out, "long live the governor," on pain of torture or death. The OLD WOMAN and one of the BEGGARS have been watching the entire spectacle. As she leaves she very ostentatiously pays homage as demanded leaving the GUARDS confused as to whether she has made fools of them or not. The GUARDS begin to talk of their family problems, sick children, wives, and insufficient pay. While they talk, FURST comes by and fails to stop at the hat not knowing why it is there. Suddenly the GUARDS

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[93]Sastre, O. C., pp. 628, 629.

become two brutally inhuman creatures. They beat FURST to the ground kicking him and jabbing him with their pikes until he cries out, "long live the governor," in ironic contrast with his call for the death of the governor which ended the previous scene.

The fifth scene occurs in TELL's cottage. He and his wife HEDWIG are talking about WALTY their son as they wait for him to come home for supper. When WALTY arrives he tells them about FURST's experience in the town square. TELL decides that he must act, but before he can leave, a citizen comes by and informs them of the suicide of FURST. TELL takes down his crossbow and starts off. He stops at the door and asks WALTY to go with him, explaining that he doesn't know why he wants him to go, but that he feels he should. The two go off leaving HEDWIG mourning for her father.

The sixth scene is back at the town square. Dusk is coming on. The two GUARDS are still on duty by the hat discussing their day's events. TELL and WALTY appear at the far end of the square. TELL aims his crossbow and shoots the hat off the pike. The GUARDS are thrown into confusion. Suddenly the sounds of the governor's approaching hunting party are heard. The stage fills up with people carrying torches. GESSLER comes on. He is drunk. The GUARDS throw themselves down in front of him explaining the incident with the hat. TELL approaches and admits to having shot it down. GESSLER questions him on

his marksmanship and comments on his sad countenance. Then he insists that TELL shoot an apple off of WALTY's head. When TELL refuses GESSLER threatens to have them both shot. TELL requests a last talk with his son. GESSLER permits him this but insists that everyone observe the scene as if it were a theatrical performance. TELL and WALTY play out their last moments together in the full awareness of an audience. Then TELL prepares to shoot, he falters, GESSLER brings his guns to the mark; TELL shoots and shatters his son's head. The death of WALTY and TELL's piercing animal cry set off the revolution. TELL kills GESSLER, and all the townspeople who have gathered around explode in a fury of killing. Fires are set on all the mountains to announce GESSLER's death.

In the final scene, at TELL's cottage, the citizens are trying to convince him of his heroism and of the significance of his act. But for him the loss of his son has taken the meaning from everything. He expresses bitterness towards the citizens for not acting before the tragic death of WALTY and for allowing themselves to remain an audience to the tragedy. He articulates his dream of a happier ending, the traditional ending of the legend, which is now forever impossible.

Sad Are the Eyes of William Tell has been called by one critic the best tragedy of the contemporary Spanish theatre.[94] Of Sastre's published plays it is certainly

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[94]Tecglen, p. 73.

without equal in its scope of theatrical and dramatic variety. If, however, the tragic dilemma of TELL, himself, seems less intense and less compelling in a realistic, psychological way than that of the characters in some of the other works (The Condemned Squad, In the Net, Death Thrust), the cause may lie in the sense of theatrical self-consciousness the play possesses. Anderson sees an imbalance caused by an insufficiently developed individual character and a rather well developed social context.[95] He expresses doubt, "that Tell's exposure prior to the play's climactic scene has been sufficient to arouse the audience's empathy," but is willing to admit that, "a skillful production could compensate for the play's uneven dramatic quality."[96] This production requirement, unfortunately still unmet in Spain, provides a hint to an understanding of the play's unique nature: its almost Brechtian theatricality (to be somewhat free with terms recognizing Sastre's almost total unfamiliarity with Brecht at the time and the play's dramatic, i.e., not epic, form). This is evident in a number of ways and is highly relevant to a correct interpretation of the work.

In the first place it is important to recognize that Sastre has chosen to use a piece of theatre, or theatrical

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[95]Anderson, p. 87.

[96]Anderson, p. 89.

myth, as the basis for his investigation of the tragic condition rather than the usual situation ostensibly drawn from life. And while his characters obviously reflect individuals in modern society, they display an unusual degree of consciousness of their roles, and they very often find themselves in "staged" situations.

Life, as depicted in the play, frequently seems to imitate theatre. The two BEGGARS, as Pérez Minik points out,[97] act as a chorus, commenting on the actions of the protagonist and others and interpreting situations and conditions. The BLIND MAN makes his life a public demonstration of the results of GESSLER's oppressive rule and forces a suicidal death in the town square as a climax to his demonstration. The square in fact becomes a stage for a number of "theatrical" events. The hat on the pike forces the citizens, specifically the OLD WOMAN and FURST, to perform before the GUARDS and the TOWNSPEOPLE. The OLD WOMAN's comic performance is seemingly set up to intensify by contrast the tragic sense of FURST's display. GESSLER's sense of theatre is exhibited in the square and results in the play's climactic scene, as he insists on a dramatic demonstration of TELL's marksmanship and on a theatricalization of the father and son's parting moment. This scene, with TELL and WALTY entirely conscious of

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[97]Domingo Pérez Minik, "Se trata de Alfonso Sastre, dramaturgo melancólico de la revolutción." Alfonso Sastre (Madrid: Taurus, 1964), p. 25.

themselves as actors, under a dictator's direction, playing out the most desperate moments of their tragic situation before an audience of passive spectators, is the ultimate expression of Sastre's experiment in self-conscious theatricality and reveals its purpose.

As the scene begins the drama expands to incorporate the audience's reality into itself. By forcing a complete identification of the real audience with the passive spectators of Altdorf, Sastre brings his audience to a new consciousness of its own role in the expanded drama.

> TELL. You see, Walty. It's like a theatre. All those indifferent eyes on us.
> WALTY. Yes, father.
> TELL. (Indicating the audience.) A lot of people are watching us.
> WALTY. Yes.
> TELL. Sitting there digesting a good meal, it doesn't matter to them what happens to us.
> WALTY. That's right, father.
> TELL. Or they've had a few glasses of wine and they're just feeling mellow, watching us through a soft filter of alcohol.
> WALTY. They can hardly see us, father.
> TELL. You see that? We're just a spectacle, Walty. A show . . . and their part is to applaud or whistle.
> WALTY. Yes, father.
> TELL. And our part is to be hurt . . . or killed.
> WALTY. Don't be sad, father. I'm not sad.
> TELL. Nor I. The only thing that hurts me is that no one tries to help us.[98]

With the audience clearly established in its role of a society unwilling to respond to the individual's need, willing to permit his suffering, the climactic moment is played out. The myth of the self-reliant hero, which relieves society of responsibility, is shattered by the

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[98]Sastre, O. C., p. 648.

misdirected bolt. TELL is discovered to be an ordinary human being, and society is forced to recognize its necessary modern role. The revolution begins, and the passive audience becomes an active force destroying GESSLER who ironically becomes a victim in the drama which he initiated. The tragedy of TELL cannot be undone, however, and his withdrawal from the new society and his dreaming of the impossible mythical ending reveal Sastre's insistence on recognizing the inescapable existential tragedy which no amount of social progress can eliminate.

The entire process of the play can be seen as a dialectical one in which the truth of a tragic situation is made more compelling by its being held in a tension against the theatricality or theatrical self-consciousness inherent in its presentation. To describe the effect metaphorically: the theatrical manner tends to pull the spectator toward the situation in an unsuspecting way to a point where he suddenly discovers an unexpected reality beneath the playing, a sadness in the eyes behind the mask, a horror in the silence between the lines. The reality revealed and the theatrical presentation of it seem at the point of discovery to be both pulling apart and yet moving together. The tension sharpens the experience of discovery.

As a specific example, the two GUARDS perform an almost traditional comic routine as they go about putting up the pike with the hat on it. They are clowns and as

clowns they become the butt of comedy for the OLD WOMAN. She makes fools of them by overplaying the role of the citizen rendering homage to the governor. In their confusion over her action they even begin to slowly appear pathetic. As they begin to talk about their family problems they become sympathetic. And just as one begins to think he understands these characters who are growing human, FURST comes through the square, and they begin to act another role. Suddenly they are recognized to be fools with power. Sympathy turns to antipathy. They are no longer pathetic; they are brutal. Pathos is superseded by terror.

> (FURST looks curiously at the hat, shrugs his shoulders and starts to go by. He is stopped by a voice.)
> FIRST GUARD. Heh, you.
> FURST. (Turning, surprised.) Yes, what is it?
> FIRST GUARD. Don't you know your duty?
> FURST. What duty?
> FIRST GUARD. (To the second.) Get a load of this guy. (To FURST.) Are you trying to make fun of us, or what?
> FURST. Make fun of you? . . . No . . . certainly not.
> FIRST GUARD. Yes. Are you laughing at us?
> FURST. No, I'm not laughing at you.
> . . . . . .
> FURST. I say . . .
> SECOND GUARD. (Furiously.) Do you want to shut up or not?
> FURST. I haven't broken any law. I have nothing to fear.
> SECOND GUARD. Do you know whose hat this is?
> FURST. No. I don't.
> SECOND GUARD. It's the governor's.
> FURST. What's it doing here?
> FIRST GUARD. It's here so you can get down on your knees in front of it and say, "Long live the governor."
> FURST. That's absurd. (The FIRST GUARD strikes him in the face.)
> FIRST GUARD. Say that it's absurd again.
> FURST. It's absurd . . . ! (They beat him down

brutally. The SECOND GUARD kicks him. FURST starts moaning.)
FIRST GUARD. And now you say, "Long live the governor," or we'll kill you right here.
FURST. (Looking around for help. There is no one to help him. The STONE MASONS are working all the way at the top of the scaffold.) Citizens of Altdorf, help me! Citizens of Altdorf . . . ! (No one responds.)
FIRST GUARD. "Long live the governor." (FURST feels the pikes of the GUARDS on his chest. He is terrified. Trembling he shouts.)
FURST. Long live the governor!
SECOND GUARD. Again.
FURST. (Shouting.) Long live the governor!
SECOND GUARD. Come on. Again.
FURST. Long live . . . (He can't finish. He is sobbing convulsively.)[99]

The inhuman brutality of these men, themselves brutalized by an oppressive system, comes as an unanticipated discovery and is the more compelling as it exists in a tension with the seemingly innocuous fool's play earlier in the scene. FURST is correct in pointing out the absurdity of the situation, but the absurd is the real; reality has become absurd.

In another example and on a different comic level, the fools of intellect and theory play out a parody of democracy in action as FURST and the resistance leaders of the other towns secretly meet and concentrate their efforts on determining parliamentary procedure. FURST's later encounter with the GUARDS and his subsequent suicide stand in contrast with the actions of FURST, the theoretical fool, and the human and social tragedy of the man is sharpened by the contrast.

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[99]Sastre, O. C., pp. 632-633.

It is, however the action and character of TELL, himself, which provides the best example of this dialectic of the real and the theatrical. He is a character who acts in terms of a conscious awareness of his own heroic and legendary stature. For the audience he is a figure whose actions and success are mythically determined. Paradoxically the most intimate scene of the play, between TELL and WALTY, is the most consciously theatrical, but in the paradoxical tension the tragic condition of the individual, TELL, is even more sharply revealed. Following this is TELL's moment of public (theatrical) triumph as a mythical hero which Sastre turns into a moment of existential angst, a tragic climax. The mythical mask is shattered and behind it is revealed the face of a man whose sad eyes express the discovery of his true tragic condition. Finally, in the last scene the myth of the hero has become for TELL an inaccessible dream which continues to occupy his thoughts as an ironic contrast to his real and tragic existence. In all three cases the dialectic of the theatrical (mythical) and the real (existential) brings about an intensified revelation of the tragic condition.

Outside of this relationship of the theatrical and the real there is another relationship, more regularly found in Sastre's works, of society and the individual. The conflict of responsibilities toward family and toward society at large is established with the speeches of

excuse by the FOREMAN of the masons and by the TAVERN KEEPER. TELL prefers the quiet of family life and chooses not to participate in the activities of FURST and his resistance group. His acts of rebellion against the oppressive government are both somewhat spontaneous, spurred by a general belief in the rights of man, and not, at the moment of action, considered in relation to the family responsibility. It is only after WALTY's death that TELL fully recognizes this relationship and reacts by refusing to participate in the new revolutionary state. TELL's experience is only one more example of the tragic dilemma in which men are caught during periods of revolution. But the tragedy of revolution, TELL's tragedy, is placed against the greater tragedy of the existing social order, FURST's tragedy, and the message of society's responsibility is clear even while the individual's dilemma continues to exist.

Sad Are the Eyes of William Tell is unique among Sastre's plays in its manner of utilizing the element of theatrical self-consciousness to intensify one's awareness of the tragic situation. In this manner he also opens the play and the play's problem to the real world of the audience. The deliberate engagement of the audience through the theatrical device in the TELL-WALTY scene prevents any escape from recognition of responsibility and guilt through identification, and the shattering of the

myth in the famous apple scene attempts to emphasize the position of man in a real and unheroic century.

The next work to deal directly with the individual and society and their tragic relationship is also something of a theatrical experiment but of a quite different sort from Sad Are the Eyes of William Tell. Nocturnal Assault was written between September of 1958 and February of 1959. It follows the writing of The Raven, and a translation of Euripides' Medea, and in its unusual handling of the time element it relates closely with the first of these works. Sastre's notes for mounting the work suggest the use of simple stylized scenery and lighting to facilitate the required fluidity of movement through space and time. He further suggests an accentuation of the play's spectacular dimension and gives the director a free hand to do what he will using the script only as a guide. The use of period music is essential to the production. Sastre recommends Rock and Roll, Tango music and the Can-Can for the three periods. The seven scenes of the play carry titles which are to be printed in the program.

I. Shots in the Night. It is evening. PROFESSOR GRAFFI is just entering his darkened home somewhere in New York City. He appears nervous, and while pouring himself a drink, drops the glass. The maid, MARGARITA, comes in to help him clean up the broken glass. In their conversation it is learned that his wife and son are

returning home the next day from a vacation in Florida. GRAFFI indicates to MARGARITA that she should prepare to meet their train if he is unable to do so. He then begins to hint at the possibility of something happening which might prevent him from meeting it. Eventually he tells her that he has encountered a man that day who has threatened to kill him. She attempts to convince him that the incident was probably a prank, but he implies that he has reasons to believe otherwise. After more conversation she retires leaving GRAFFI at his desk where he proceeds to record a lecture on tape concerning the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the innumerable deaths resulting from them. A knock is heard at the door. GRAFFI opens it to find THE MAN he has previously described, standing outside. He invites him in, but THE MAN pulls a submachine gun from under his coat and murders the old PROFESSOR.

II. Criminal Investigation. A police office. The murderer, MULLER, apparently a hired professional, is being rather crudely interrogated by detective ASHLEY. Another detective brings in MR. O'CONNOR who relates how he heard the shooting and followed MULLER and managed to disarm and capture him using his old WW II Marine training. O'CONNOR's fascination with weapons and killing techniques disturbs even the detectives. After O'CONNOR finishes, ASHLEY again attempts to get something out of MULLER by using brute force. Inspector ORKIN's arrival

stops the interrogation. He causes MULLER to immediately break down by telling him that his wife is on her way to see him. She obviously is unaware of his profession. MULLER is taken out, and MARY GRAFFI is shown in. ORKIN asks her to listen to her husbands last words on the tape. Just as he is about to turn on the machine, the lights change, and he walks out of the scene, lights a cigarette and begins to talk to the audience. He explains how his interest in the case brought him to a more complete investigation than that required for the usual social justice. He then begins to describe the broader historical context in which the drama takes place, a narrative of newsworthy events.

> To tell the truth, these are bad years. You remember, for example, the Rosenbergs had just been executed shortly before.
> The war of nerves and the Anglofrench landing in Suez. The bombing of Port Said.
> . . . . . .
> Blood is being spilled in Hungary. And the communist party is living through the aftermath of Stalin's death and the Twentieth Congress.
> There will be racial disturbances in Little Rock.
> . . . . . .
> It's three years since
> men climbed Mount Everest. In the movies we see:
> Brigitte Bardott, nude. James Dean's accidental death causes great consternation.
> . . . . . .
> Elvis Presley and Bill Haley launch
> "rock and roll."
> Listen.[100]

And loud rock and roll music begins and is used as a transition from this to the next scene.

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[100]Sastre, O. C., p. 745.

III. Crime Syndicate. Two weeks earlier in MULLER's house in Tampa, Florida. MULLER and his wife, ANNA, are in their living room. The rock and roll transitional music is blaring. He goes to the record player and cuts it off. Their conversation reveals something of her past as a nightclub singer, his desire to make enough money to enjoy some luxuries, their expected child, and his nervousness over his job about which she knows nothing. The doorbell rings and ANNA answers it. She shows in UGO BOSCO, a man unknown to both of them. MULLER and UGO are left alone to talk, and the contract to kill GRAFFI is made.

IV. Vengeance. ORKIN continues to talk to the audience, telling them about the organization for which MULLER works and of the little MULLER knows about either the individuals who contract with him or those who are his victims. Another narrative moves the context from the fifties to the post-war forties. The lights come up on GRAFFI's house some ten years earlier. GRAFFI and MARY are talking. A man comes to the door. When shown in he asks for GRAFFI and identifies himself as ANGELO BOSCO. He indicates that he is being pursued by the GRAFFI family for some crime apparently committed against them by his family years earlier. He begs MARCELLO GRAFFI to call off his pursuers and end the feud between families. MARCELLO, who is no longer a part of the family organization, appears willing to help, but his brother TONIO arrives

home and finding out who BOSCO is, takes him into the next room and kills him. TONIO flees and when BOSCO's wife and son, UGO, come into the house in search of ANGELO, they find MARCELLO with the dead man. FLAVIA calls on her son to avenge the murder.

V. The Tyrant's Death. ORKIN again appears and pushes the play back to the period of the late twenties and early thirties and to an island off of Italy. A gramaphone is playing an old tango. Suddenly the music stops and is replaced by the wailing of women in mourning. Amid the wailing the declarations screamed out by the women make it clear that the dead man, CARLO GRAFFI, has been something of the sexual and political strong man of the island. As the lights come up the women are dismissed and thanked by SOFÍA, the dead man's daughter-in-law, married to SANDRO GRAFFI. She turns to leave the room and is surprised to find MARGA, a fifty year old woman, who has entered unnoticed. In the ensuing conversation it is learned that the dead man had been generally hated by those on the island not of the family and that MARGA's life had in some way been destroyed by him. SOFÍA finally leaves MARGA alone in the room not wishing to talk with her any longer. MARGA goes to a door and signals for someone outside to come in. ANGELO BOSCO, her younger brother, now forty five, comes in. They have planned to kill SANDRO to avenge the crime committed by the old man against MARGA many years before. ANGELO tells her that

his family is waiting in a boat which will take them to Africa. She leaves, and moments later SANDRO comes in. The two men engage in a knife fight which ANGELO wins leaving SANDRO dead on the floor. His sons, TONIO and MARCELLO, find the body as they come into the house and vow to carry out a vengeance.

VI. The Stronger. ORKIN continues his narration by filling in some of the details in the peregrinations of the GRAFFI and BOSCO families between the murder of SANDRO and the murder of MARCELLO. He then moves backward again in time to 1890 and sets the scene with some general historical background for the initial incident between the two families. Can-Can music provides the transition from the narration to the opening of the scene. The house is the same as in the previous scene. Two young people, SANDRO and SOFIA, are dividing their time between kissing and conversing. MARCO, a man of humble appearance, forty five, enters and asks if his daughter is there. SANDRO deals with him disdainfully, and it becomes apparent that the daughter, MARGA, is upstairs with the father, CARLO. A moment later she is seen at the stairs; her appearance makes clear that she has been violated. She asks her father to avenge her by killing the drunken CARLO in his bedroom. MARCO is unable to act. As they leave they discover the young ANGELO who has been observing the entire scene. As the lights lower a blaring rock and roll music swells up.

VII. Professor Graffi's Testament. ORKIN and MARY GRAFFI are again at the point of playing the tape with MARCELLO's last words. He turns it on, and the lecture is repeated. As they listen, the fifteen year old son enters the room unnoticed. The knock on the door is heard on the tape, and GRAFFI's voice speaks to his wife: "Mary, they're at the door . . . It may be nothing, but I'm afraid . . . In case something happens to me, don't ever tell our son . . . so that this thing will end for good . . . If something happens to me . . . continue teaching him to love peace . . . to struggle for peace the way his father has done . . . "[101] The remainder of the death scene is heard on the tape. ORKIN then realizes that the son has heard everything. The lights fade out leaving the inspector again talking with the audience. He fills in the final details concerning MULLER and his wife, UGO BOSCO, and GRAFFI's son who is growing older. To end he makes one last sweep of the broader world context and expresses the common fear of the ever possible atomic nocturnal assault which would turn the world into a flaming holocaust.

Of all Sastre's works Nocturnal Assault is the most obvious manifestation of his conception of "tragedy as a form of criminal investigation."[102] In an interview with

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[101]Sastre, O. C., p. 788.

[102]Sastre, El teatro de Alfonso Sastre visto por Alfonso Sastre," Primer acto, No. 5 (Nov.-Dec., 1957), 7.

Ricardo Doménech in 1958, eight months before beginning Nocturnal Assault, Sastre outlined in greater detail his idea of investigation in a manner that predicts the attempted scope of the play. "I am trying to realize a massive investigation of culpability: Who is guilty? Who is responsible for all this? 'All this' would be terror, persecutions, exoduses, military occupations, war, concentration camps, the destruction of cities, suburbia, hunger, cold and misery . . . 'All this,' in a word, is suffering."[103] As with other works the investigation in Nocturnal Assault works in terms of relationships between individuals and society. In this case, however, in place of the more usual conflict or dialectic of opposing responsibilities or bonds which constitute the tragic condition, a structure of parallel or analogous development is discovered which relates the tragedy of the individual to that of society for the purpose of the investigation.

The structure of parallel development or the formal aspect of the play obviously cannot be dealt with separately. It functions organically as part of the total meaning of the work and is particularly important as an experiment relating to Sastre's concept of the social function of tragedy. Unfortunately the critical writing

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[103]Stated in an interview with Ricardo Doménech, "Alfonso Sastre, un dramaturgo en marcha," La estafeta literaria, No. 113 (Jan. 1958), 4.

on Nocturnal Assault has been satisfied to mention Brecht,[104] or "epic theatre,"[105] or even avant-garde[106] to describe the formal aspect of the work (failing at this level even to point out the existence in the play of the strictly Aristotelian-dramatic scenes), and then to go on with a discussion of the meaning or message or "what happens" as if they had no relationship with the formal aspect. For Sastre the combination of strictly dramatic, psychological realism with elements of the epic theatre (narrative, commentary, theatrical spectacle) represents one more attempt to relate the truth of the theatrical experience with the facts of everyday life, to bring together the meaning of social, historical reality and the meaning of tragic theatre. In Drama and Society he suggested the possibility of the Aristotelian kathartic experience bringing about such a relationship by carrying

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[104]"Nocturnal Assault is a work very much in the Brechtian style, or perhaps, better said, a splendid continuation of it." Ricardo Doménech, "Tres obras de un autor revolucionario," Alfonso Sastre (Madrid: Taurus, 1964), p. 47. It must be noted that Sastre stated in his notes to Nocturnal Assault, written later, that at the time he "was ignorant of the theory of distanciation of Bertolt Brecht, although I have had some contact with his theatrical work." Sastre, O. C., p. 722.

[105]Anderson calls Nocturnal Assault, "Sastre's earliest epic experiment." p. 119. One could point to earlier plays if one is using a broad definition of the epic theatre. Certainly Anna Kleiber might qualify. Van Der Naald says, "Nocturnal Assault is an excellent example of epic theatre." p. 178.

[106]Van Der Naald. "Technically Nocturnal Assault is Sastre's most avant-garde work." p. 176.

the individual out of the theatre and into society inspired to seek a resolution to the problems the play had forced upon him, a second katharsis, a social purification, analogous to the personal experience of the theatre. By the time of Anatomy of Realism he will have made a theoretical move away from his wholly neo-Aristotelian concept to one involving a dialectic of Aristotelian-dramatic and Brechtian-epic principles. Nocturnal Assault stands between these two works as something of a theatrical experiment moving instinctively and artistically towards a position that will be later theoretically defined and historically related to Brecht. And its dramatic-epic structure is but one aspect of the work organically related to the whole.

As ORKIN's two-fold investigation proceeds in the reverse chronological manner of crime-solvers since Oedipus, the recognition of human suffering and guilt, of the tragic condition, occurs in terms of the individual, through drama, and in terms of the society, through narrative. And just as the anxiety and violence in the life of the individual (MARCELLO) can be found to be rooted in the acts of an earlier generation (the sins of the father?) so too is the anxiety of a society living in the shadow of the weapons of its own scientific development (potential for the ultimate violence) found to be rooted in the attitudes and achievements of an earlier historical period. Thus the Curie's discovery of radium

is viewed as ironically as the young ANGELO BOSCO's accidental witnessing of his violated sister's pleading for vengeance. On the microcosmic level of the two families a kind of Greek tragedy is carried out which begins in the traditional sense of a fatal mistake and develops into an internecine struggle lasting for generations.

In a Euripidean way (Sastre had just translated Medea) suffering tends to brutalize the victim, leading him to acts of violence hitherto beyond his capabilities for realization. This is reflected (Aeschylean?) in the historical narrative as society develops its capabilities through wars to the point of possessing the weapon of ultimate destruction.

Beyond the tragedy of brutalized man, however, an even more devastating situation is suggested: the tragedy of dehumanized man. MULLER, like the bomb, is a mechanized instrument who acts, not out of human passion or hatred as do the GRAFFI and BOSCO, but in an entirely dehumanized manner. The violence of sexual assault, the furious hatred which drives in the knife, the anger in the strangling, tightening hands, none of these is so terrifying as the calculated act of the hired killer who politely refuses entry to the house before he cuts down MARCELLO with a machine gun burst. MARCELLO is the victim of his family quarrel and of his age.

As the investigation is concluded a number of ironic relationships are seen to exist, all of which enrich the total tragic meaning of the work, and which would have been impossible without the unusual dramatic-epic structure. The end point of ORKIN's investigation is, on one level, the incident of sexual assault, and, on the other, the depiction of an age of blind optimism in the unlimited ability of rational man through his scientific knowledge. CARLO GRAFFI's act, evidence of the beast within, is something of an ironic comment on his age. At the other end of the investigation CARLO GRAFFI's sexual exploit has led to the violent death of MARCELLO GRAFFI, and scientific knowledge has brought violent death to hundreds of thousands of Japanese and a sense of impending doom to the rest of mankind. MULLER, as dehumanized a killer as the bomb, brings death to MARCELLO while the professor prepares a lecture on the horror of atomic war and the need for peace. GRAFFI dies hoping for peace, but modern technology, in the instrument of his recorder, brings both his request and the sounds of his violent death to his son, whose future action is as unpredictable as the fate of society.

Sastre's experiment in combining the dramatic and epic elements of theatre using ORKIN as a pivotal character is certainly not unique, and it is perhaps not entirely successful. There is major disagreement

regarding this among critics[107] due in part, no doubt, to the fact that the work has never been produced. Sastre's specific notes concerning the elements of spectacle are clear evidence that he considers the work unfinished if unproduced. In production ORKIN's narrative of context and commentary would be mixed with music, sound and visuals, all of which would provide the work with an uninterrupted, fluid movement while at the same time establishing a sense of history, the tragic flow of forces in the real world. The investigation, through incidents of relationship, attempts to bring the audience to a recognition of man as a creature inextricably bound up with society and history; from the extreme sexual act of the primitive individual in CARLO GRAFFI to the cry for a social and historical consciousness by MARCELLO, each action is shown to be tied in to a larger fabric of occurrences. ORKIN attempts to follow back the threads of one pattern and at the same time to describe the larger design surrounding it.

Sastre has created a tragedy with very little hope. By having ORKIN discover parallel designs of microcosmic

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[107]As cited above Van Der Naald considers Nocturnal Assault an "excellent example" of epic theatre. Ricardo Doménech calls it "one of [Sastre's] best works, and perhaps, the most timely [actual] Spanish work of those I have encountered in recent years." "Tres obras . . . " p. 45. Anderson calls the play "a relatively unimportant piece of work, suffering from the same imbalance characteristic of the less successful dramas of social realism." p. 119.

and macrocosmic proportions moving towards conditions of anxiety or dehumanization or self-annihilation, he almost eliminates in advance any hope that might exist with MARCELLO's final plea for peace, which, heard on the tape, is followed by the rattling sound of machine gun fire; a devastating bit of symbolism to finish the play. The parallel development of Nocturnal Assault is a recognition of a unique historical situation which equates the metaphysical tragedy of man with the tragedy of society.

For the first time in history the whole of society, like man, is faced with the problem of death. Man's social and existential selves are, therefore, brought together in a new tragic experience of angst. The play ends with ORKIN buying a newspaper to see if the world will be spared for one day more. It will, and man will live through one more day of anxiety as the possibility of a nocturnal assault continues to exist.

The attempt to carry on in the investigation of tragedy by a parallel process to probe both the individual and his socio-historical context by means of dramatic and epic techniques makes Nocturnal Assault an interesting experimental piece in that part of Sastre's work which can be described as socially conscious theatre. The play is an instinctive reaching towards a more complete theatrical experience for the audience, an effort to bring about an emotional and intellectual understanding of the tragic predicament of man and society. The Aristotelian-

dramatic process works to bring about something of a kathartic experience through the actions leading to the murder of MARCELLO GRAFFI. The methodical stopping of the action, the reverse chronological movement, the objective commentary and narrative building of social and historical context, all part of ORKIN's investigation, bring the spectator to intellectually and objectively relate the tragic situation of the individual and that of society, and that of himself as an individual in society and affected by history. To climax this complex process of Aristotelian and epic response the murder of MARCELLO is replayed on the tape recorder, and the action is experienced by the spectator in a manner characteristic of both dramatic and epic theatre, a dialectic of responses.

This experiment is only one in a year of unusual output for Sastre. Following it by a few months, In the Net is an effort to discover the maximum capabilities of Aristotelian theatre to represent the tragic condition of modern man. In retrospect Sastre sees the two works as parts of a growing dialectical process between the opposing dramatic and epic conceptions of theatre.[108] Death Thrust, the third play written in 1959, is also a part of that process.

The first production attempt for the play was aborted because of Sastre's opposition to the traditionalist

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[108]Sastre, O. C., p. 795. Sastre places In the Net as a dramatic piece against Nocturnal Assault, an epic piece.

approach taken by the director. It was produced immediately thereafter using a number of distancing devices (absence of color, concrete music) which were in agreement with the play's intention but which met with little public success.[109] The difficulty with the work arises from the fact that Sastre has used metaphorically a world which in previous Spanish literature has only been dealt with realistically. The world of the bullfighter is used dramatically to represent the whole of society. In an autocriticism of his work Sastre explains his intentions. "I have the impression of having written a drama of an almost anthropophagic relationship: something resembling a certain treatment of the myth of Cronus-Saturn; a myth which, unfortunately, I find alive in this society."[110]

The prologue scene of Death Thrust takes place in a small room which is part of the infirmary of the Plaza de Toros of a large city. From outside the sounds of wind, rain and thunder are heard mixed with the music and noise of the bull ring. Sastre indicates in a note to the text that these sounds ought to be considered as almost the central "personage" in the prologue. DOCTOR SÁNCHEZ and his assistant JIMÉNEZ spend their duty time playing chess and talking of the inclement weather, the general

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[109]Sastre, O. C., p. 866.

[110]Sastre, O. C., p. 868.

stupidity of bullfights and the particular idiocy of the one going on outside: a one man fight (six bulls) under the worst of weather conditions. SÁNCHEZ brings into the discussion some background information on JOSÉ ALBA, the day's matador and his manager, MARCOS. He likens the latter to Goya's painting of Saturn eating his children and tells of some of the poor young men MARCOS has destroyed by driving them towards fame. JIMÉNEZ steps out to watch the fight for a moment. The doctor moves a chessman to checkmate position just as a great sound of collective anguish comes from the crowd outside. JIMÉNEZ runs in with the news of a goring. They prepare themselves for the emergency. In a few moments ALBA is carried through the ante-room to an operating room which adjoins it where the doctors await him. Soon after JIMÉNEZ appears and sends someone for the POLICE COMMISSIONER, who, when he arrives, is told that ALBA has died, not from the minor goring but from a knife wound apparently suffered before the fight. At this point MARCOS enters and is told the news. From outside the sounds of the crowd can be heard again; the substitute matador is having a good fight. The COMMISSIONER takes MARCOS off to question him about ALBA's fatal wound. SÁNCHEZ clears the chessboard as the lights come down.

In the first act ALBA and MARCOS are seen earlier the same day in the bullfighter's hotel suite. The same grim weather that was in evidence during the fight can be felt

already; heard in the intermittent rain and wind, seen in the changes of light through the window, and sensed psychologically in the concern of the two men. MARCOS talks of the enviable season that he has scheduled for ALBA and what it will mean for the fighter. ALBA complains of being exhausted. The conversation turns to his physical and psychological condition. He has been suffering minor lapses of memory, black outs. The doctors have advised him to stop fighting. MARCOS insists that the occurrences are unimportant and warns him of the risk to his growing reputation that a public disclosure of his condition would be. ALBA also attempts to express to MARCOS his gradually increasing sense of fear. They talk of MARCO's previous fighters specifically of one PLATERO whose career was destroyed by fear after a goring in the face. They talk about ALBA's wife and the growing estrangement that his career is causing. MARCOS obviously sees the wife to be a threat to the fighter's success. ALBA goes off to shower and change and MARCOS is left alone. He contemplates the weather. He pours himself a brandy. With the bullfighter out of the room MARCOS seems to metapmorphose into a desperate old man, the strength and confidence disappearing from his face like a mask. While he awaits ALBA's return, GABRIELA, the bullfighter's wife, arrives. MARCOS lies to her, telling her that ALBA is not in. In their conversation it becomes known that MARCOS has destroyed their marriage, but that GABRIELA

intends to try to return to ALBA. MARCOS asks that she wait until after the fight to see him, explaining that his psychological condition is precarious. She leaves. When ALBA returns, MARCOS does not tell him of his wife's visit. They are surprised when the young understudy fighter for the day, RAFAEL PASTOR, comes to talk with ALBA. MARCOS leaves them. The young man in an awkward way attempts to express his almost desperate desire to get an opportunity to perform in a major ring. After the two men talk PASTOR leaves. GABRIELA returns and finds ALBA. Their love and need for each other are immediately apparent. As they embrace MARCOS is seen getting off the elevator in the hall outside. He hesitates at the door to the suite sensing what has happened. He lights a cigarette. He turns to the door, his back to the audience. The smoke curls up around him as he drags heavily on his cigarette. He turns from the door to the audience, and his face can be seen to be grotesquely twisted.

Act two is a short time later. MARCOS enters the suite and is met by ALBA who comes from the bedroom. Their short exchange is strained. GABRIELA appears and informs MARCOS that ALBA is coming back to live with her. She is, however, insecure in her triumph, and although MARCOS appears to agree to a temporary truce with her, it is obvious that he is not yet ready to surrender his power over ALBA. The matador's SECOND arrives and proceeds to

dress him while MARCOS and GABRIELA continue their verbal struggle. When ALBA comes into the room again fully dressed for the bull ring he appears to be in an almost trance-like state of terror. MARCOS orders the SECOND to take GABRIELA from the suite. ALBA claims to be ill and asks MARCOS to call a doctor. He refuses, telling him that he will be all right. It becomes clear as they talk that ALBA is totally dependent on MARCOS for his whole being before he goes into the bullring, and MARCOS, in resenting the intrusion of the wife's love, refuses to provide the usual encouragement. Instead he fills the conversation with fearsome descriptions of anticipated complications in the weather and the bulls and of death in the ring. "You'll be fighting in the mud . . . and the bulls as big as all hell."[111] ALBA in a panic grabs a knife from a table and lunges at MARCOS insisting that he won't leave the room. Suddenly the wind is heard screaming outside the windows. "ALBA. (deathly pale, looks upward--at what?--terror overwhelming him.) Now? (With a sudden movement he sinks the knife into his belly.) Now? I'd . . . rather not leave . . . now."[112] MARCOS goes to the phone and calls for a doctor, a young woman-friend of ALBA's who had called and talked to him earlier. She arrives almost immediately and, dressing the

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[111]Sastre, O. C., p. 928.

[112]Sastre, O. C., p. 928.

wound, informs them that it is not extremely serious but that ALBA should be taken to the hospital. MARCOS promises to do this and dismisses her. As he and ALBA start out, he explains that they must go by the bullring and hope for a weather-cancellation, thereby avoiding any scandal. In the hall they meet GABRIELA who is returning to the suite to await ALBA after the fight. Unaware of his condition she wishes him off with the usual word to take care.

The epilogue takes place in a dimly lighted bar some undetermined time later (months?). On one wall, just visible, is a poster announcing ALBA's fatal fight. MARCOS enters and sits at a table. The tavern keeper approaches him. It is PASTOR, the understudy matador. His youthful determination expressed earlier is no longer apparent in his manner. MARCOS asks to talk to him, In the dialogue which follows MARCOS tries to pull PASTOR away from his life as a tavern keeper and back to that of a matador, offering to manage him. He paints a vivid picture of the imaginary career that awaits the young man, with a public image that MARCOS will fashion by deceptively using the ills of the society. "If you let me, I'll surround you with the typical Spanish story. You will have grown up playing with hunger, even though you, yourself have never known it . . . Hunger and death! The horns of hunger; that's what the tourists go for!"[113]

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[113]Sastre, O. C., p. 938.

But PASTOR rejects the temptation. He reminds MARCOS of the destroyed lives of PLATERO and ALBA; he begins to see in MARCOS the embodiment of an inhumanely destructive force in the society. Against the imaginings of the manager he tries to articulate a conception of a simple but socially responsible existence. MARCOS in disgust gets up and goes out on the way brushing past a BEGGAR who has come in without noticing his extended hand. As the BEGGAR moves into the light a large disfiguring scar across his face is seen. "He didn't recognize you,"[114] PASTOR says to him. The BEGGAR, PLATERO, turns to the audience and stands dumb, his hand reaching out to them.

The production of Death Thrust was something unique for the Spanish theatre as it entered the sixties. Adolfo Marsillach, working closely with Alfonso Sastre, attempted to combine a Stanislavskian approach to character development with a rigidly geometrical patterning of stage movement.[115] The sets were simple, clean lined, only suggesting realism, and very deliberately mood provoking. Rising high over the interiors and constantly present, though subdued (In the manner of Meilziner's tree and building scrims for Death of a Salesman), was a scrim cyclorama of the almost endless tiers of the bullring,

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[114]Sastre, O. C., p. 942.

[115]Adolfo Marsillach, "Cuaderno de dirección de 'La Cornada' de Adolfo Marsillach," Primer acto, No. 12 (Jan.-Feb., 1960), 17-26. This notebook is an account of the rehearsal period.

looking up from the bullfighter's point of view, with heavy clouded sky above it.[116] Sets and costumes were in the blacks, whites and greys of photographs. The sound was an orchestration of concrete music by Cristóbal Halffter: a music "found between music itself and pure sound [which attempted to] situate the spectator as much psychically as realistically before the dramatic situation."[117] All this in an attempt to discover a new potential in the relationship of Aristotelian, dramatic theatre and the epic theatre of Brecht, and through this relationship (dialectic) to effect an experience of tragedy.

The critical reaction was mixed, but public response was generally negative resulting in almost empty houses within a week of the play's opening and in a number of angry statements directed at Spain's unthinking theatre audience. Only an unsolicited newspaper article praising the play and its writer by José María Pemán, one of the country's leading, older generation critics, kept the work on the boards for an additional week; a three week run in all.

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[116]The drawings of Emilio Burgos appear on page 27 of Primer acto, No. 12 (Jan.-Feb., 1960).

[117]Cristóbal Halffter, "La música de 'La Cornada,'" Primer acto, No. 12 (Jan.-Feb., 1960), 26.

A great part of the difficulty with the work, reflected even in some of the more serious critical discussions,[118] is the problem of interpreting the situation of the bullfighter. Most of Sastre's plays which deal with social predicaments through the symbolism of a microcosm of society (the family, a military unit, a Swiss canton) place the action of the play outside of Spain and the specific Spanish circumstance. (Sastre has, in fact, received criticism for his apparent lack of interest in the specific problems of his own country, criticism the absurdity of which he has been quick to point out.) Death Thrust does just the opposite in using what is probably the most Spanish of subjects, but not in the traditional way or with the usual purpose.

Pérez Minik has suggested that Sastre would have had little difficulty had he treated the myth of Saturn through the dramatic relationship of a dictator and his subjects (which in a sense he did with The Gag), a capitalist and his workers, a professor and his students (Ionesco's The Lesson), or a lady and her maids (Genet's The Maids).[119] But recognizing the problem he tends to

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[118]The reviews: V. Fernández Asís, "Review of La cornada," Pueblo (Jan. 15, 1960), 20; Pablillos, "Corro de espectadores en el Teatro Lara," Pueblo, (Jan. 15, 1960), 20; Paul Werrie, "Où en est le thèâtre espagnol?" Écrits de Paris, 182 (May, 1960), 118. Van Der Naald also slips into seeing the play as a criticism of the "degeneration of the fiesta de toros." Page 193.

[119]Pérez Minik, "Se trata de Alfonso Sastre . . . ,' p. 28. No one seems to have pointed out the probable influence of Strindberg relating to the theme of

move too far in the direction of a limited economic interpretation which excludes the fuller meaning of the tragedy. The play is read as a depiction of the evils of capitalism, with people being converted into objects of the market place, and ALBA and MARCOS both victims of a system which is entirely commodity oriented.

Others have interpreted the work as representing exploitation in a more general sense.[120] José María Pemán more accurately states that, "in a broader sense it is a drama of men set loose from values and principles climbing over each other to establish a hierarchy on the pure law of animal density and the strength of daring, like oil on water."[121] Sastre himself has likened the relationship of ALBA and MARCOS in his play with those of Pozzo and Lucky, and Estragon and Vladimir in Beckett's Waiting for Godot,[122] emphasizing apparently the human aspect rather than the larger social meaning. He has also related his work to a line of verse from García Lorca's Lament for

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anthropophagy. Sastre has had an interest in the plays of Strindberg, and within a year of writing Death Thrust he translated Creditors into Spanish. In an essay on Strindberg in Anatomy of Realism, pp. 70-74, Sastre, himself, points out the theme of anthropophagy in that very play.

[120]Anderson, p. 102.

[121]José María Pemán, "El artículo de José María Pemán," Primer acto, No. 12 (Jan.-Feb., 1960) 13-15. This article first appeared in the Spanish daily, ABC on January 28, 1960.

[122]Sastre, O. C., p. 867.

Ignacio Sánchez Mejías. The line reads, "The rest was death and only death/ at five in the afternoon." But this aspect of the work, which seems to be so central to an understanding of Sastre's use of the bullfighter situation, has been largely ignored by both those who interpret the play strictly on its first level of meaning, criticizing its technical errors in the details of bullfighting, and those who explain the work primarily in terms of its broadest social meaning.

In Death Thrust Sastre is looking at the seamy side of the tauromachian tapestry of Spain. From that side he discovers the grotesque in man that Goya discovered in the institutions of Spanish society a hundred and fifty years earlier. Behind the dazzling weave of success, fame and glory he reveals the tangled web of the tragic condition of the individual and the anthropophagic nature of a society which devours the idols of its own creation driving them to a public display of death.

The festival of the corrida at its religious beginnings may have been something of an attempt by man to demonstrate his overwhelming longing for immortality by virtually facing and defeating the black bull of death. For García Lorca with the fatal goring of Ignacio Sánchez Mejías the ring momentarily becomes the center of the universe and overflows with death, and the uniqueness of the individual is discovered in this most personal of experiences. For Sastre the fact that the event brings

together the individual and the society in the experience of death makes it a viable subject of modern tragedy. This seemingly anachronistic festival is found to reflect the modern predicament with unexpected accuracy. But the primordial symbolism of transcendence and the sense of poetic discovery are gone. In place of the triumph over death or the affirmation of individual uniqueness are the tragic dissolution and mortal defeat of the individual. The bullfighter is modern man caught in the conflict of his private and public beings and brought to a recognition of this conflict and a discovery of the alienated self. Part of ALBA's being is wholly determined by social forces. Beginning as a victim of poverty he grows to become a victim of ambition, having been caught in the value-system of a capitalistic society, and ends up the victim of his own public image. (The society which has determined this development of the dehumanized and alienated figure is symbolized in its most extreme form, the goyesque grotesque, by MARCOS, a Pygmalion who metaphorically devours his creations.) In opposition to this public self is the anguished being who discovers himself to be alone and, in the midst of a growing fear, desperately in need of a human relationship. The arena becomes a metaphor of the human condition: the individual before the whole society yet totally alone;[123] and the

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[123]In his second work, Cargo of Dreams Sastre placed his character in a similar situation. See Chapter III.

death thrust is the perfect climax for the modern social-existential tragedy: the public exploitation of the ultimate personal experience.

Sastre's handling of the climax is a demonstration of his theatrical dexterity. Beginning, as he does in a number of works, with a late point of attack, he brings about the climactic death scene almost immediately. The disembodied sounds of the crowd produce the realistic presence of the bullring but can also be heard metaphorically as the ravings of the monstrous titan devouring his children (sounds to correspond with Goya's painting). ALBA's death is symbolically represented by the checkmate move of DOCTOR SÁNCHEZ at the chessboard. And the hero is seen for the first time, mud covered, bloody and broken, already dead as he is carried into the operating room of the bullring. What is usually the final image of the classic tragedy here is the first and remains with one through the rest of the play as one witnesses the character moving towards it again. In addition the climax of the death thrust in the arena is discovered to have been ironically played out previously in the privacy of ALBA's hotel suite. The death thrust by ALBA's own hand provides a climax in its traditional location in the structure of the play, and it represents the final, pathetically ineffectual effort of the inner self to overpower the alienated, public self. He fails and is forced to enter the arena to play out the last tragic scene.

In the three works written in 1959 Sastre can be seen to be exploring the tragic condition of man caught in an unusually violent world. In all three the existential condition of the individual is directly related to, and brought on at times by, the social circumstance. The relationship in each case is welded by a dramatic climax involving violent death.[124] In Nocturnal Assault the internecine struggle between two families is related by formal parallel structuring (dramatic-epic) to the slaughter between nations culminating in the atomic attack on Japan. The audience watching In the Net discovers itself to be responsible as the status quo society for the death of LEO and those he represents when HANAFI unexpectedly breaks the classic structure of the play and speaks his last accusing line directly to it. And in Death Thrust ALBA brings together in the arena of death the self of existential anguish and the person that society has formed. The audience is again indicted at the end of the work when the indigent former bullfighter reaches out for help. But as symbolized here, the indictment is also a plea, in each of the works, a plea for society to begin to humanize itself, to regain the proper relationship between itself and its individual members. MARCELLO GRAFFI's last request, PABLO and CELIA's mutual trust, and PASTOR's understanding of the

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[124]Violence is prominent in a number of Sastre's plays but usually exists as an aspect of the tragedy of revolution; here it is part of the tragedy of establishment society.

human condition are all directed toward the audience as expressions of some hope which grows out of the tragic struggle, hope set in a realistically grim context, but hope nevertheless.

Sastre's next and last published tragedy (a children's play, The Little Chalk Circle, was published, and a number of later works remain unpublished and generally uncirculated)[125] is devoid of this hope. The work was begun in 1960 but not completed until 1962. (Two translations were also done in 1960, Ibsen's The Lady of the Sea and Strindberg's Creditors.) The play went through a series of titles until 1967 when it was produced in Madrid as The Tenebrae.[126] As this title suggests the action occurs during Holy Week. The setting is a chalet in the mountains near Madrid.

The play opens with darkness and the sound of the noisemakers which are used to represent the earthquake in the Service of the Tenebrae on Good Friday in Spain. The sound grows to a deafening pitch and then stops suddenly as the curtain goes up revealing a dirty and disordered room, the obvious morning after a night of heavy drinking.

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[125]An Italian version of a later play has been published in Milan. Il sangue e la cenere, María Luisa Aguirre and Dario Puccini, trans. (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1967).

[126]Oficio de tinieblas, translated here as The Tenebrae, has been called Office of Darkness by Farris Anderson. This title does not carry with it the liturgical meaning of the original, and thus the change here.

A woman, ISMENE, who has apparently slept the night on the sofa, covered with a trenchcoat, is getting up. She begins shouting in French to someone who can be heard showering and shouting back from a nearby bath. The noise awakens a figure, unseen previously, curled up in a chair across the room. This is MIGUEL, a young man who is obviously suffering a bad hangover. After a few false starts ISMENE and he begin to engage in some dialogue which little by little grows into conversation. Through the talk one learns that MIGUEL remembers almost nothing of the night before but has experienced a dream in which he has cut a girl's throat with a broken bottle. ISMENE reassures him that from the time she joined the group he has done nothing unusual. (The group consists of VANEL, a former friend of ISMENE whom she knew in Algeria, a pied noir, hiding out in Spain; NIC, a young man of a wealthy Spanish family, owner of the chalet; ARTURO, an older man and something of a guardian to MIGUEL; and LOLA, a girl who was picked up at a nightclub the previous evening.) MIGUEL's innocence, as demonstrated by his inability to cope with his first hangover, warms ISMENE up to talking a great deal about herself and the situations which forced her from all innocence. She tells of her rise from poverty, through prostitution, to dance-hall stripper, all of which took place in the context of terrifying guerrilla war in Algeria. (There are a few moments of pathetic humor, uncommon in Sastre's work, such as a description of

a burial in the nude, according to the last request, of a stripper who was killed by a bomb explosion.) At one point MIGUEL notices blood on the sleeve of his jacket which brings him around again to his homicidal nightmare. VANEL and ARTURO come in with a paper which reports the murder of a girl in the club they had visited the night before. Through the conversation which follows it appears that ARTURO, VANEL, and NIC are attempting to convince MIGUEL that he has committed the crime while drunk, and that he should leave the country temporarily in order to protect himself and the others. MIGUEL, who would prefer to turn himself in, leaves the room and attempts to hang himself in the bathroom. ISMENE finds him and calls for help. Everyone rushes off to cut him down as the act ends.

The second act finds ARTURO, VANEL, and NIC in the same room half an hour later. They are discussing the best time to leave the chalet and drive to Madrid to get MIGUEL on a plane to Paris. There is also some enigmatic mention of the girl from the nightclub and of how she will be dealt with. ISMENE comes in to report that MIGUEL is resting well. They discuss her returning to the club for a rehearsal. There is a general sense of relief that momentarily is felt as ARTURO tells some stories of other all night drinking experiences, and the group begins to partake of NIC's vintage stock of wine. MIGUEL comes in, somewhat pale, but appearing quite calm. Almost immediately ARTURO begins to talk of the advantage of

MIGUEL's going to Paris until things quiet down. He also attempts to casually suggest that MIGUEL not implicate the others if he later decides to turn himself over to the authorities. MIGUEL by his silence appears to accept ARTURO's suggestions. VANEL tries to speak to MIGUEL's guilt feelings by citing some of his attitudes formed during his activities in Algeria. "It's either kill or be killed. If I had worried about feelings of remorse for every hard thing I've had to do, my life would be a complete madness. Look mon gars, I have nothing against these inferior people, the moslems, negroes, prostitutes, and all the rest . . . nothing; but at the same time I'm not going to get myself all upset when they die, because they're not good for anything and they don't hold any ideals like we do. . . . You fight for something beautiful and enjoy it; there isn't anything else; believe me."[127] MIGUEL expresses concern that he committed the crime without motive. The gratuitous frightens him by its lack of reason. As the others describe for him the details of the incident, he is reminded of an earlier experience as an amateur actor playing the role of LUIS, the innocent one, in Sastre's The Condemned Squad. He comments on the ironic twist that has cast him as the guilty one in real life. He sardonically describes himself to ISMENE as "the product of the petty middle

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[127] Sastre, O. C., p. 981.

class . . . intellectual and nihilist."[128] Finally he decides that he wants to be taken back to Madrid and turn himself in. He goes off to shower and get himself ready. NIC goes with him to prevent any recurrence of the suicide incident. ARTURO and VANEL go off apparently disturbed by MIGUEL's decision. They have no sooner left when LOLA, the young girl from the nightclub, appears. She explains to ISMENE her fear that the men will kill her. When ISMENE asks the reason for her fear, LOLA tells her that she was with MIGUEL the night before when her friend was killed and knows that he did not kill her. VANEL enters unexpectedly, and the act ends as he, feigning nonchalance, attempts to determine how much LOLA has told ISMENE.

The third act opens with loud "twist" music and the same room in extreme disarray about two hours later. ISMENE, LOLA, VANEL and NIC are dancing. When they finish ISMENE and LOLA ask to go outside. VANEL says that he will go with LOLA. At this she grabs hold of ISMENE and begins to scream that the others want to kill her. She begins to talk about the dead girl and of how the three men killed her and then led MIGUEL through a ghastly enactment of murder with the girl's body. As a counterpoint to LOLA's description of the incident, ARTURO begins to babble about the waste his life has become and of the

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[128]Sastre, O. C., p. 987.

difference between his inescapable middle class morality and the amoral nature of VANEL. He confesses to MIGUEL his part in the attempt to divert the guilt from NIC. NIC, at the same time, begins to break down and pleads with ARTURO to help him, offering to pay him any amount. VANEL is the only person who remains cool. Realizing their desperate situation ISMENE and MIGUEL attempt to divert the attention of the others, with the revived "twist" music to which she does a striptease, while he calls the police. VANEL, however, notices MIGUEL at the phone and engages him in a struggle. MIGUEL after almost beating himself to death against the more experienced VANEL, is finally thrown backwards, hits his head and is killed. The play ends with ARTURO sitting over the body of MIGUEL, sobbing and turning half-consciously one of the rattles used in the service of The Tenebrae.

There is little question that The Tenebrae exists as Sastre's most negative depiction of the middle class. Florencio Martínez Ruiz finds it a nihilistic absurdity rather than a tragedy, a "'dolce vita' madrileña,"[129] with no real sense of tragic suffering. Farris Anderson, with only a short paragraph of discussion, dismisses the work by stating that it "suffers from a weak relation between the plot and its broader social implications."[130]

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[129]Florencio Martínez Ruiz, "El último teatro realista español," Papeles de sons Armadans, No. 45 (1967), 189.

[130]Anderson, p. 86.

Both opinions could be obviously argued against, but the aspects of the play from which they stem ought to be recognized and dealt with. The play does appear to be nihilistic in its conclusion, and, unlike Sastre's other works, it fails to open itself to the audience in the search of a solution. There is also less than the usual relationship between the particular problem of the work and a broader social predicament. It is, nevertheless, not devoid of social significance or tragic content.

The play progresses on a number of levels. It follows the procedure of an investigation, as do many of Sastre's works, with the difference being that here the investigator, MIGUEL, considers himself to be the guilty party. At the same time the plot follows an archetypical ritual pattern with MIGUEL as the central figure. On this level are found the elements of classic tragedy (ritual and Aristotelian): agon, recognition, reversal and pathos. The symbolism of Christianity and the Christian calendar are used with relation to this ritual pattern. In the combination of these levels is found a meaning which, although negative, relates to the social reality of the day, and which is tragic by nature.

As an investigation the play ostensibly deals with a specific incident, but the discoveries made concern the whole problem of man as a tragic figure and social being. MIGUEL is motivated by guilt to question his own existence and actions. He recognizes himself to be, "the product of

the petty middle class . . . intellectual and nihilist." The discovery of his innocence in the specific incident of IRENE's death ironically underlines this greater discovery of the guilt of the individual and the class who lack a social consciousness and who degenerate into nihilism. For MIGUEL the investigation leads to a recognition of self and of the society around him as represented by those at the chalet. This microcosm is a devastating depiction of the middle class in full decline. ARTURO symbolizes the spent morality of the class, a morality unable to sustain the individual against the demands of the money-system. NIC is an effete second generational representative of this system which converts everything and everyone into items for the ledger. VANEL is the terrifyingly amoral creature of political expediency and policy through military force. ISMENE and LOLA are the victims of the society, helpless and degraded. With this group surrounding him MIGUEL struggles to an awakening of social consciousness only to discover the helplessness of the individual in such a context. His death must be read as a condemnation of the middle class, capitalist societies of the world.

As a ritual movement the play focuses on the experience of MIGUEL, the tragic individual. His awakening to the pain of his first hangover is the beginning of a kind of "coming of age" process. With the initial "discovery" of "guilt" he assumes a purpose (to

use Kenneth Burke's terms) which has already been described as investigatory. This leads to passion or the suffering he experiences as an existential man. In despair out of believing himself to have acted without motive he first attempts suicide. This failing, he takes on a more active struggle with the amoral and immoral forces around him (ARTURO, VANEL, and NIC). This constitutes the classic agon of the tragic figure. This struggle is continued even after his innocence is established in the specific murder case, the larger concept of guilt having been recognized. This recognition (Aristotle) or perception (Burke) is also the ritual recognition of the destroyed Daimon (in this case MIGUEL, himself, who is first seen to be destroyed in social terms by the lack of social consciousness, and then physically destroyed by the brute force of the middle class society, i.e., VANEL).

At this point, however, the tragedy ceases to follow the traditional ritual pattern and the ritual pattern as performed according to the Christian tradition, this pattern having been introduced through the chronological situating of the play. The human spirit has suffered, but everything has ended after the period of suffering. There is no rebirth. In terms of the Christian liturgy Sastre has chosen to end the experience with the Tenebrae, the darkest moment, the moment of Christ's death on the cross. In terms of the classic ritual which relates to tragedy

the work ends with the threnos, the lamentation. In Aristotelian terms recognition has taken place, but without reversal, the latter having been prevented or cut off by the most negative force of the society depicted (VANEL). There is no Easter, no rebirth, no apotheosis and no possibility of social reform or new social consciousness from within.

From the point of view of the middle class the play, without question, appears to be entirely negative. From a different point of view (marxist-existentialist) outside of the middle class it can be described as a negative statement specifically aimed at that class or an attempt to accurately depict the hopelessness of its situation. In The Tenebrae Sastre has made a clear judgement of the middle class: it is depleted of moral and social values, and it brings about the eventual degeneration of man as an individual and as a social creature.

This judgement is not unique to this work, but the truth of it is depicted in a more totally closed way than is the case in Sastre's other socially oriented plays. Usually some positive factor survives the tragedy of the individual (the Swiss revolution, GRAFFI's tape, PASTOR's refusal of MARCOS) or some direction towards a solution is suggested by formally "opening" the play to the real world of the audience, some hope of a rebirth of social consciousness and new regard for the human attributes of the individual. Neither is the case with The Tenebrae.

The world of Sastre's audience is precisely that of the middle class which is here depicted as depleted. By the terms of The Tenebrae no opening exists to this audience and no opening for it. The rattles sounded in the office of the Tenebrae have become the death rattle for the whole middle class. Unlike the other, earlier works there is no katharsis which attempts to carry through toward a real individual and social purification. The katharsis of The Tenebrae is one of defeat and hopelessness, brought on by the inevitable triumph of senselessly brutal forces spawned by one's own society. The audience is asked to witness its own last tragic moment wrapped in the symbolism of recognizable ritual.

The Tenebrae is a dark concluding statement in Sastre's public dramatic work. With it the possibility of any real homeopathic effect resulting from a tragic katharsis is abandoned. With it the generative process of dialectic between individual and society is symbolically rendered meaningless by the inevitable forces of inhuman and asocial expediency. In this final work Sastre appears to have brought together the ritual rhythm and Aristotelian form of tragedy in order to ultimately divulge its social impotence.

CONCLUSION

From Alfonso Sastre's many separate theoretical and dramatic expressions of tragic theatre over a period of twenty years (from Uranium 235 to Anatomy of Realism) certain conclusions can be drawn. While his concept of tragedy is continually changing and while his theatre is continually experimenting in its search for tragic expression, there are some constants or parameters generally undergirding the process. One of these is a view of man as both an existential, individual being who will die (always tragic) and a social, historical being who should responsibly participate in his context. The other is a poetics, ever developing, which is fundamentally though not entirely Aristotelian and which appears to provide the playwright the best possibility for artistically dealing with the situation of man's existence.

This situation, while first specifically defined in Drama and Society (1956), exists as the underlying concept of the plays from the earliest to the latest, but not without changes in emphasis and a certain refinement of expression. Some works, as this study indicates, emphasize the closed, existential condition of man, that "ultimately . . . tragic situation,"[1] as Sastre calls it.

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[1]Sastre, D. S., p. 24.

The others attempt to express both the existential and social nature of man and the dialectic that exists between them. This dialectical relationship intuitively develops in the dramatic works before it is clearly defined as a concept theoretically. The dialectical mechanism already exists in a crude way in Uranium 235 (1946) but without the proper opposites. It is somewhat lost in Cargo of Dreams (also 1946), but rediscovered and with the proper elements in Pathetic Prologue (1950), and from that point on remains a basic part of almost all the works, the emphasis shifting between that dialectic of the individual and the tragic revolutionary situation (Community Bread, Red Earth, In the Net) and that of the individual and the tragedy of an oppressive social status quo (The Gag, A Death In the Neighborhood, Nocturnal Assault, Death Thrust, The Tenebrae). (A few works fit into both situations: The Garbage Can [being the least successful], The Condemned Squad, Sad Are the Eyes of William Tell.) In theory, the essays in Anatomy of Realism (1965), working from certain seminal impressions in Drama and Society and from the experience of the plays, develop highly sophisticated constructs dealing with this dialectic of human existence.

Sastre sees the Aristotelian, dramatic, mimetic mode generally capable of meaningfully recreating this tragic, dialectical existence of modern man. In a purposefully experimental manner his theatre has explored the mimetic

possibilities from the heavily symbolic, avant-garde drama attempting to express the angst of twentieth century man (Cargo of Dreams) through the theatre of Marxist realism, a la Georg Lukács (The Condemned Squad, Red Earth, In the Net), to that of a dialectic between dramatic realism and epic theatricalism (Sad Are the Eyes of William Tell, Nocturnal Assault). In spite of this experimentation, however, Sastre has tended to defend the merits of a basically Aristotelian-dramatic, Marxist-realistic, tragic theatre as that most capable of reflecting and, more importantly, interrelating with pre-revolutionary, middle class man and society. He has in his theoretical writings defended this theatre on both aesthetic and historical grounds,[2] and in so doing has placed himself with writers such as Miller and Sartre while declaring the avant-garde theatre (he lists Beckett, Dürrenmatt, and Frisch) and the epic theatre (Brecht) deficient in their views of man, and somewhat irrelevant socially and historically to the present.[3]

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[2]See chapter II.

[3]Sastre's relationship to other playwrights is not a consideration of this study, but certain names come naturally to mind. He has been most often compared to Sartre, and he places himself with Sartre and Miller. He has called O'Neill "the most important of the dramatists who have made contemporary tragedy possible." (D. S., p. 202.) His work, The Gag has been compared to some of O'Neill's plays. Sastre has expressed admiration of Ugo Betti, and certainly Betti's pursuit of justice has similarities with Sastre's investigations into the question of guilt.

For Sastre man's situational predicament is best recreated in a drama which is plot dominated. He sees modern psychological drama and thesis (i.e., unidirectional or one dimensional propaganda) drama as manifestations of inverted orders of value assignation to the Aristotelian parts, placing character or thought above plot and thereby deforming the mimetic process. His position here is quite clear. "In the beginning is the plot with its temporal unfolding of situations of which Aristotle studies three: reversal, recognition and pathos or pathetic occurrence, and out of this comes everything. In the plot characters reveal themselves and out of the plot ideas arise. At least that is how it should happen."[4] This statement from Drama and Society is well supported by the plays as the situational conditions described above indicate. Myth and situations evoking mythical or archetypical patterns are quite common (The Blood of God: Abraham and Isaac, Job; Red Earth: Fuenteovejuna; The Condemned Squad: Eden; Sad Are the Eyes of William Tell: William Tell; A Death in the Neighborhood: Dionysus, Fuenteovejuna; Death Thrust: Cronus; The Tenebrae: Dionysus, Christ).[5] Action often takes the form of

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[4]Sastre, D. S., p. 123.

[5]Except for Sad Are the Eyes of William Tell, Sastre stands with those who keep the mythical movement considerably beneath the surface of contemporary events rather than with those who contemporize the minds, manner and dress of the original mythical figures (e.g., Anouilh).

investigation, personal or official, into the cause of man's predicament. Recognition, reversal and suffering, often coincidental in occurrence, are always major elements of plot development.

Recognition in Sastre's theatre is an awakening by the character or characters to a consciousness of one's existential and/or social situation, or to the dialectical struggle between the two. Thus IVÁN (Uranium 235) is shaken into an awareness of the life and death forces of the spiritual and material worlds represented by their verbal manifestations in Uranium 235 and The Bible. MAN (Cargo of Dreams) is brought to recognize his helplessness and the significance of even a momentary compassion. In Anna Kleiber, The Blood of God, and The Raven characters are forced into a consciousness of a closed existential condition: man is denied happiness and man dies. Against this the efforts of love, faith, and intellect (prescience) fail. In the plays of social revolution (Pathetic Prologue, Community Bread, Red Earth, and In the Net) there develops a painful awareness in the involved individual of the dialectic between one's existing as a separate human being and one's functioning as a social, historical being. With the exception of The Garbage Can the remaining works (The Condemned Squad, The Gag, Sad Are the Eyes of William Tell, A Death in the Neighborhood, Nocturnal Assault, Death Thrust, and The Tenebrae) all involve a dramatic recognition of the dialectical nature

of man's existence while some deal more specifically with the increase in the dialectical tension that the evolution of capitalism produces (Nocturnal Assault, Death Thrust, The Tenebrae).

Reversal in Sastre's tragedies is most often an ironic occurrence related to, or coincident with, recognition and dramatically reinforcing the truth discovered. Thus the last reunion between ANNA KLEIBER and ALFREDO, the result of her anxious efforts, the only one she cannot escape, is at her grave. In Community Bread DAVID attempts the purification of man in his social (political) existence and consequently pollutes him in his human existence. When the "gag" is removed, the KRAPPO family discovers itself to be incapable of meaningful verbal expression. The tape with GRAFFI's message of nonviolence is punctuated with the deafening burst of machinegun fire which is heard by his son, and a new link in civilization's homicidal chain is forged. The death thrust to ALBA is dealt by man who is shown to be the real beast of the bullring.

In some works the reversal relates to a myth from which the plot derives. In The Blood of God the first ending violently wrenches the movement away from the Abraham and Isaac myth and throws it into that of Job. Red Earth reverses the myth of Fuenteovejuna to reveal the injustice in a modern capitalistic society. And WILLIAM

TELL's bolt kills his son thereby destroying the romantic unreality in that myth of revolution.

In one work the absence of a reversal is significant. The Raven manipulates time only to exaggerate man's sense of helplessness in his recognition of the irreversible nature of his tragic movement towards death.

The Tenebrae is a work whose complex meaning involves both reversal and its absence. MIGUEL's recognition or awakening (both to consciousness and of conscience) leads not to new life and hope but to death and despair. In this ironic course of events an Aristotelian reversal does indeed occur. Growing out of this, however, is an ultimate sense of the irreversible in the pattern of society's movement discerned in the play's microcosmic depiction of society. The ritual arrangement reinforces this sense. In fact middle class society is shown to have reached or be very near the terminus of its evolution where meanings begin to fall away, where things become the reverse of what they once were, or ought to be or are thought to be, where finally the innocent (MIGUEL) is executed by the guilty.

Suffering is in evidence in all of Sastre's plays. It is sometimes angst, that, "consciousness of objective nothingness, verifiable at the level of individual existence: of the being-towards-death"[6] (Cargo of Dreams,

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[6]Sastre, A. R., p. 126.

Anna Kleiber, The Raven). It is sometimes enduring, "the tragedy of an unjust social order"[7] Red Earth, A Death in the Neighborhood, Death Thrust) or suffering the excruciation of choice between the individual and the society in revolution (Pathetic Prologue, Community Bread, In the Net). And it is sometimes that, "destructive or painful action, such as death on the stage, bodily agony, wounds and the like"[8] (Sad Are the Eyes of William Tell, Nocturnal Assault, The Tenebrae, etc.). But whatever the principle form it takes, Sastre insists on eventually relating it to the ultimate experience of death. The Unamunian "tragic sense of life" is to some degree a part of all suffering, and death is a constituent of every play.

In the earliest works (Uranium 235 and Cargo of Dreams) death is presented symbolically. In a number of plays it occurs offstage but, in the Greek tragic manner, remains a major organic element of the plot. This is the case with The Gag, Anna Kleiber, and Death Thrust. (In the first a hero of classic proportions is dealt with and the messenger is used; in the last the mutilated body is brought onstage.) More common is a violent onstage death of the kind enacted in Pathetic Prologue, The Blood of God, The Condemned Squad, Sad Are the Eyes of William

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[7]Sastre, O. C., p. 226.

[8]Aristotle, p. 73.

Tell, A Death in the Neighborhood, Nocturnal Assault, In the Net, and The Tenebrae. Occasionally death will occur early in the work and be followed by a flashback sequence which moves the story inevitably towards the death again, underlining that inescapable metaphysical tragedy which Sastre sees human existence to be. This device is used in Anna Kleiber, A Death in the Neighborhood, Nocturnal Assault, Death Thrust, and with a variation in The Raven. In a few plays death is a climactic intersecting of the lines of existential, social, Aristotelian and ritual meaning. These lines converge in the slaying of GOBAN in The Condemned Squad, of DOCTOR SANJO in A Death in the Neighborhood, and of MIGUEL in The Tenebrae.

The dramatic mimesis operating through its principle elements of recognition, reversal and suffering reaches its ultimate meaning and purpose in Sastre's tragic theatre in the experience of katharsis. In the avant-garde theatre, as Sastre sees it, this experience becomes angst-ridden, is entirely individual and fails to relate to society. And in the epic theatre, while a directive for social purification exists, there is a deliberate working against any individual katharsis. But just as it mimetically provided the best possibility for reflecting the whole of man's condition, the Aristotelian, dramatic theatre, broadly interpreted, carries the best potential for interrelating with and effecting that condition by accomplishing both an individual and a social katharsis or

purification. The two are seen by Sastre to be necessarily related. Added to Aristotle's consummatory purpose is an instrumental purpose. Sastre in Anatomy of Realism[9] explains this relationship in terms of a dialectic of Aristotelian and Brechtian effects. According to this explanation in the theatre and later in real life experiences which reflect situations theatrically presented, the spectator tends to both distance himself from the tragic figure and unexpectedly recognize himself in him, sees him alternately as "the other" and as "the self." As "the other," guilt is easily attributed to him; in the unexpected recognition of "the self" one is forced to accept it and act. This act is hopefully one of self and societal purification.

This complicated theoretical concept, published in 1965, must be recognized as a position that was reached through a great deal of practical experimentation. His plays are in one sense a series of experiments, some crude, some refined, working towards a practical realization of the concept of katharsis as it develops.

One method of stimulating the individual toward eventual activity in society is that of bringing plays to an obviously unresolved ending, with the implication that the only resolution lies outside the theatre. For Sastre this lack of resolution is necessarily a feature of

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[9]See Chapter II.

tragedy: in the case of man's existential predicament there is no resolution, only an increased awareness; and in the case of man's social predicament, a true resolution must take place in the reality of society. By aesthetically exaggerating this sense of the unresolved he accomplishes a state of tension in his spectator (certainly in his critics) which can only be reduced by action outside of the play and on the part of the spectator. In this procedure Sastre obviously breaks through Aristotelian limits.

This situation without resolution is not often left to operate alone however. Other devices function to open the work to the reality of the audience thus preventing any final consideration of the mimetic world as entirely separate from the real world. And whether these devices be seen as original with Sastre or borrowed, consciously or unconsciously, from other playwrights is less significant than that they be seen as an integral part of his experiment with the effectiveness of tragic theatre. Thus the writer-as-narrator in Anna Kleiber should be seen in his function of the tragic chorus, the ideal spectator who not only comes to recognize the tragedy of the common man, but who probes it, investigates it, involves himself in it. The double ending of The Blood of God, is an attempt to force the perplex existential predicament of the play on to the spectator, making him recognize the inevitable fact of it in his own existence. In Red Earth

Sastre has created a cyclic drama of ever expanding revolutions which hopefully break through mimetic boundaries by the end of the play into the real historical context of the audience. More direct is HANAFI's single word accusation of the audience at the end of an otherwise aesthetically closed work (In the Net), or the ruined bullfighter's mute petition to the spectators in Death Thrust. These unanticipated actions throw the question of guilt directly on to the observer but in a manner not so heavy as to founder in its purpose.

Katharsis therefore, by Sastre's understanding of it, climaxes the theatrical process and initiates a new process in reality. It is the last of a number of factors which make tragic theatre a viable theatre for modern society, factors which Sastre sees as prerequisite to achieving effective theatre, existential or social. By katharsis tragedy reaches effectively back into the reality from which, through mimesis, it drew its being. And it is only in its being tragic theatre that Sastre's theatre can express the dialectic of man's existence,[10]

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[10]"Tragedy proposes a difficult tension between the two poles of a double seizure of consciousness (conscience): of our situation as existing beings and of our historic situation; between the immersion in the very anguish of a being-towards-death and the collective activity in the sense of progress; between ethical purity and social efficacy; between private anguish and public action, as far from a disintegrated existential nihilism as from an imperturbable political activism." A. R., p. 66.

and only in its being tragic theatre that it can ultimately effect changes in that existence.[11]

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[11]"The spectator [through katharsis] may be moved to revise his view of the world and the assumptions of his life. He may be moved to make meaningful social decisions, ranging from individual assistance to revolution. When this happens, the tragedy has achieved its supreme end: purification (katharsis). Understood thus, purification consists of two stages: immediate or personal purification, and social purification." See Chapter I.

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