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**FROM DICTATORSHIP
TO DEMOCRACY:**

**the recent plays of Buero Vallejo
(from *La Fundación* to *Música cercana*)**

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Preface

BUERO'S TRAGIC THEATER, like theater in general, is rooted in a particular socio-historical context. For this reason it is a fallacy to think his plays can be studied only in terms of individual destinies they bring to the stage. All theater obviously has a source of reference outside itself since, in one way or another, it attends to the social. However, some plays do this more than others, and the socio-historical relevance of Buero's tragedies is especially marked. Most are intrinsically connected to the important events of the dictatorship and of Spain's transition toward democracy after Franco's death in 1975. Buero has underscored this connection: "Si hay un teatro rigurosamente ceñido a lo que está pasando en la sociedad española, ése es mi teatro" (Pilar Ferrer, "Buero, perdurar como tarea," *Los Domingos de ABC* 22 Nov. 1981: 18).

Text and social context form a dialectical unity in Buero's theater, as do dramatic structure and the world view that informs it. It is by studying the relationship between Buero's ideas and the particular structure he gives to the particular content he chooses to bring to the stage that we can most deeply appreciate his dramatic art in its totality. Buero reproduces social phenomena but structures them in accord with his own viewpoint, which means that he creates, and not just reflects, social meaning. However, the resonance of his tragedies obviously depends upon his art, for the social is communicated through the aesthetic.

The recurrent symbol of the prison in its various forms (jail cell, cayman jaws, and labyrinth) as well as the myth of Theseus provide a new perspective on Buero's tragic theater. The prison symbol reflects the specific conditions of Franco and post-Franco Spain. Nevertheless, although the particular conditions reflected correspond to a specific time and place, the concept of freedom does not. His tragedies will always be relevant and moving, not only be-

cause they please aesthetically, but also because they hint at the infinite human potential, the freedom that can be our achievement, despite the variety of specific historical situations lived by different generations of viewers. Through his dramatic art Buero fulfills the duty of the writer to participate in the socio-historical process, not only of his own time and place. Extensive notes document the socio-political background of the plays analyzed in this study, and Buero Vallejo's own views on the latter are provided whenever possible in the form of direct quotations.

I am deeply grateful for the many friends and colleagues in Spain who, over the years, have sent me copies of articles and reviews that would have otherwise been difficult to obtain and, especially, to Buero himself for providing copies of material from his own files on several occasions and for answering all my queries. I would also like to express my appreciation to the Research and Graduate Studies Office of the College of Liberal Arts of The Pennsylvania State University for the financial support that made this book possible and to Peggy Augustine for her invaluable expertise in the preparation of the final manuscript. Above all, I acknowledge the advice and assistance so graciously provided by Nigel Dennis and José Ruano, General Editors of Ottawa Hispanic Studies.