

Richard E. Chandler, PhD  
Kessel Schwartz, PhD

# SPANISH DRAMA

## ORIGIN: THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

### A. The Liturgical Drama

The drama in Spain, as elsewhere in Europe, probably sprang from the dramatic elements in the Church liturgy. These were gradually elaborated, and simple acting was introduced. The language used was Latin, and the themes were strictly religious, the first being the Christmas and Easter stories. Later those of Palm Sunday, the Epiphany, Good Friday, the Day of the Innocents, and the Corpus Christi festival were added. The first actors were clerics, and the first theaters were churches.

The shepherds in the Christmas story provided for an occasional comic element as well as the use of popular dialect. As secular element increased and laymen replaced clerics as actors, the plays grew unseemly and were banished from the churches to the courtyards and the marketplaces. Here the authors and actors could take liberties of which the Church did not approve. Spanish replaced Latin, the liturgical influence diminished, and the popular drama began to flourish independently. Though the secular was thus divorced from the sacred, religious themes dominated throughout the Middle Ages.

### B. The Popular Drama

Another drama, possibly a continuation of the Latin theater, flourished alongside the liturgical. No examples of this *teatro profano* exist today and it is doubtful that any were ever written down. Proof of their existence is found however, in references to them in other writings of the time, such as the *Siete partidas* of Alfonso *el Sabio*, which condemned them and referred to them as *juegos de escarnio*. Popular with the people but frowned upon by the Church for their sacrilegious satire and parodying of sacred matters, as well as for their obscenities and immoralities, these little dramas, mostly improvised, mark the genesis of a type of short one-act drama that has continued to modern times under a variety of names such as *paseo*, *entremes*, *sainete*, and *ginero chico*.

### C. Cycles of the Liturgical Drama

Numerous plays were written on the great themes of the Church, Christmas and Easter, forming what are called "cycles." Other cycles evolved also, commemorating additional Church festivals. Many moving episodes from the Scriptures also had their dramatic versions.

### D. *El Auto de los reyes magos*

This play is the sole remaining example of Spain's liturgical drama, and part of it has been lost. It belonged to the Epiphany cycle and tells the story of the Magi's search for the Savior and Herod's wrathful opposition. Probably an offshoot of the Benedictine liturgy it was based on a Latin play written in Orleans in the twelfth century. It surpasses its model, however, in its complicated versification, superior dramatic qualities, and inventiveness. It was probably composed about the middle of the twelfth century,

This, the second oldest work of Spanish literature, contains some elements of future Spanish drama; realism in depicting characters' tension in the doubts of the Magi and the reluctance of Herod's advisers to give him a straightforward answer, an attempt to suit the verse to the situation, the polymetric tendency, and the first soliloquy.

### E. The Interlude

The liturgical drama flourished roughly from 900—to 1200. An interlude of three centuries followed from which no plays have been preserved, though they undoubtedly continued to be written, a fact attested to

by Church documents of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The technical and artistic improvements of the first preserved plays of the fifteenth century over the *Auto de los reyes magos* afford additional evidence.

## THE EARLY RENAISSANCE

### A. General Considerations

The early Renaissance contains but one important dramatist, Juan del Encina. Many others wrote drama, some with moderate success, considering the retarded state of the genre and the general cultural level. Toward the end of the period, however, plays appeared that gave evidence of real dramatic qualities, the Renaissance spirit, and signs of future potential.

### B. Gomez Manrique (1412? – 1490)

With his play *Representacion del Nacimiento de nuestro Senor*, Gomez Manrique broke the silence of the three empty centuries following the *Auto de los reyes magos*. The genuine dramatic qualities of this play show great refinement compared with the *Auto*, testimony of growth in the drama during the silent centuries. Gomez Manrique also wrote *Lamentaciones fechas para semana santa* and a considerable number of other works of various kinds.

### C. Rodrigo d Costa (1405? – 1470)

To this author have been attributed a variety of works, including the *Coplas del Provincial*, *Coplas de Mingo Revulgo*, and the first act of *La Celestina*, but only work undoubtedly known to be his is a poem in debate style entitled *Dialogo entre el amor y un Viejo*. Though it is a poem, Menendez y Pelayo considers it a milestone in the history of the Spanish theater because of the artistry of its plot, dialogue, emotions, contrast, and dramatic techniques.

### D. Juan del Encina (1468? – 1529?)

Juan del Encina, who studied under Nebrija at the University of Salamanca and took religious orders early, is considered to be the father of the Spanish drama, for it is with hi that the true Spanish drama begins.

Encina took the drama into the castles and palaces of the nobility and composed nearly all his 170 works before the age of thirty. In him are combined three literary currents: Latin poetry, the Classical theater, and the liturgical drama. One also finds in his works a realistic and popular element, inherited perhaps from the *tetro profano*.

In his early works, Eglogas written in imitation of Virgil's Eclogues, he achieved a comic effect through shepherds who speak an amusing gibberish called *sayagues*, a dialect that became a conventional comic device. His early themes were religious, and he combined elements of Classical poetry with the liturgical.

The increasing refinement and sophistication of his later manner are the result of his trips to Rome. A musician and composer of music, he anticipated the *zarzuela* of his later poser of music, anticipated the *varzuela* of later centuries and injected music and dance liberally into his theater, a pattern followed in the Golden Age.

His chief works are *Egloga de Placida y Vitoriano*, in which Placida commits suicide because of her lover's scorn; *Egloga de Cristino y Febea*, a clear statement of the Renaissance spirit, which relates how Cristino is drawn from his hermit's retirement by Cupid to enjoy falling in love with Febea; and *Aucto del repelon*, a farce dramatizing a scuffle between Salamancan students and shepherds.

Encina's reputation as a dramatist has obscured his contributions in the fields of poetry and music. His most interesting poems are those on profane themes, though he wrote religious poems as well. Sixty-eight of his many musical compositions have been preserved in Francisco Asenjo Barbieri's *Cancionero musical* and have been recorded in modern times.

### E. *La Celestina*

This famous work was never intended to be acted. It will therefore be treated in Part 4.

## THE RENAISSANCE: PRECURSORS OF LOPE DE VEGA

### GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

In Spain, the Renaissance, in evidence from the last part of the fifteenth century, in the drama may be said to cover the period from 1517 the date of Torres Naharro's *Propaladia*, to 1616, the date of Cervantes' death. There is an obvious overlapping between this period and the Golden Age, as there is between the early Renaissance and the High Renaissance. Nevertheless, dramatists of the sixteenth century may conveniently be designated as precursors of Lope de Vega and the drama of the Golden Age.

Renaissance drama was characterized by experimentation and growth. Spaniards knew foreign drama but changed, adapted, refused, and in some cases accepted it according to their own tastes, clear evidence of *españolismo* and the Spaniard's individuality and love of freedom.

Not an age of dramatic triumphs, the sixteenth century refined the drama, enriched verification, broadened subject matter, invented new techniques, improved characterization and plot handling and made the drama respectable. It remained for Lope to crystallize it into a system.

### BARTOLOME DE TORRES NAHARRO (1476? – 1531?)

Torres, Like Encina, has been called the father of the Spanish drama, since he was the first to create truly Spanish characters and the first to establish rules for dramatic composition. He was the most important dramatist of his time.

Little is known of his life. He was a good student and a soldier in his youth and became a priest and later a favorite at the papal court of Leo X in Rome. We do not know whether he ever returned to Spain.

His principal publication *Propaladia* (meaning "First Fruits"), was published in Rome in 1517 and contains a prologue and six plays. Two more were added later. Though performed in Rome, these plays were banned in Spain until 1545, when they appeared in mutilated form. In the prologue Torres set forth his rules for writing dramas, as follows: Plays should consist of five acts; comedy and tragedy should be separated; the number of characters should be limited to between six and twelve; plays are divided into two types—*comedias a fantasia*, based on fictional incidents that have the air of reality, and *comedias a noticia* based on observed events (this points up once again two recurrent trends in Spanish literature the idealistic and realistic); and decorum, verisimilitude, and appropriateness of dialogue to the character should be observed.

Torres imitated Juan del Encina but soon surpassed him. With his sure dramatic instinct Torres fixed the drama in the direction of the Golden Age. He was the first Spaniard to write comedy of intrigue and even hinted at the comedy of manners. He was the first dramatic satirist. He anticipated the *loa* by insisting upon an *introito*, a comic and burlesque poem recited by a rustic as a prologue, and upon an *argumento*, a versified plot summary spoken by an actor before the play began.

Torres emphasized plot more than character, an emphasis that was later a weakness of the Golden Age theater, and used the honor theme, writing the first "cape and sword" play. He wrote for educated audiences and scorned the vulgar. His continued doubt on his influence among Spaniards. His important plays are as follows:

1. *Comedias a noticia*. *Comedia soldadesca* portrays army life based on Torres' own experiences. *Comedia tinelaria*, the first play of satire, reveals the intrigue, thievery, and corruption in a cardinal's palace. Shocked by what he saw in Rome, Torres revealed in this play his Erasmian attitude toward the Church and the *curia*.
2. *Comedias a fantasia*. *Comedia himenea*, considered to be Torres' masterpiece is the first "cape and sword" play and recounts a love affair, a point of honor and an escape from tragedy. *Comedia Seraphina* relates a triangle love affair that ends happily.

### GIL VICENTE (1469? - 1536?)

Gil Vicente was the first of the bilingual dramatists and one of the outstanding European writers of his era. He wrote forty-four dramatic pieces in all, eleven in Spanish, sixteen in Portuguese, and seventeen in mixed Portuguese and Spanish. Like his predecessors, he shunned the general public and wrote for the court.

Though he imitated Encina at first, he soon surpassed his model, and his later works show marked originality and breadth. Though he borrowed from many, he imitated nobody, assimilating his borrowings completely. The most original portion of his work is his farces, *Farsa dos fisicos* and *O velho da horta*, which reflected the ancient *juegos de escarnio*. In his complex artistic personality, he represented a union of the sacred traditions of the Middle Ages with the new freedoms of the Renaissance. As an Erasmist, he was critical of the Church. His sources and these were varied: The Bible the Church fathers and saints, eclogues, Torres Naharro's drama French *mysteres*, Spanish ballads, novels of chivalry, dances of death fairy tales, and hymns and liturgies of the Church.

He was a musician and usually inserted a song in every drama. His rich and graceful is of fundamental importance. He eclipsed Encina and overshadowed Torres Naharro, exceeding all in spirituality and inspiration. Dramatists of the Golden Age took lessons from him. His *Amdis de Gaula* (1533) and *Don Duardos* (1525) are the first plays based on novels of chivalry. *Barca de la Gloria* (1519) the third of an allegorical trilogy combines the Dance of Death theme with Erasmian comments and criticisms on social vices and customs. The first two parts of the trilogy are in Portuguese, *Comedia del viudo* (1514), one of Vicente's best works, tells with strong comic force, irony, and charming lyricism the story of the marriage of two brothers to a widower's daughters. *La comedia de Rubena* (1521), the first play of magic, presents the *bobo*, a descendant of the pastor and predecessor of the *gracioso*, along with fairies, witches, and much folklore.

Lope de Rueda (1510? – 1565)

Lope de Rueda's uncommon talents in things dramatic led him to become a professional actor-manager-playwright who toured Spain with his troupe, performing in theaters and palaces and on street corners. One of his greatest contributions was that he democratized the drama, making it a popular institution no longer the exclusive property of the aristocracy.

Though he composed longer dramas in imitation of the Italian theater and what he termed *coloquios pastoriles* modeled after Encina, Rueda found his true forte in the farce. To his come forty short, farcical compositions he gave the name *pasos*. These were very brief, one-act skits with a negligible plot, depicting everyday scenes in a realistic and comical manner with the sole intention to entertain. Perhaps they were intended to be used as prologues or between acts of longer plays, but a series of them could easily have been presented as an afternoon's entertainment. The *pasos* reflect real life and exhibit acute insights gay, wit, inventiveness, resourcefulness, and an always strong comic force. The language is realistic, picturesque, spicy and sprinkled with the proverbs, phrases, and superstitions of the people. The characters, almost all taken from the lower classes, are stereotypes: the gypsy, the Negress the matchmaker, the Biscayan, and the *bobo*. Rueda was the first to use prose in the drama, but few followed his lead. He was influenced by Boccaccio, Juan Manuel, and very likely the Italian *commedia dell'arte* a totally improvised skit known in Spain at the time. He created the realistic comedy of manners popularized the drama and gave a strong impetus to the short dramatic skit.

*Paso de las aceitunas* judged by some to be the best one-act play of the sixteenth century, is an adaptation of the "dreaming milk-maid" story relating a quarrel of a wife and a husband over the price of olives that they will not reap until years later. Other titles of Rueda's plays are *Cornudo y contento*, *El convidado*, *El rufian cobarde* and *Los criados*. Among his longer plays influenced by the Italian theater *Eufemi* is the best.

E. Juan de la Cueva (1550? – 1610)

At first, Juan de la Cueva took his dramatic themes from Classical antiquity. As his concept of the drama matured, he urged his countrymen to abjure Classical sources and write on national themes though some of his own plays are based on Ovid and Virgil. He was the first to write drama based upon the epic traditions and legends of the *crónicas* and *romances*. In his *Exemplar poetico* (1606) he set forth his dramatic doctrines improving over Torres Naharro and filling the gap between Torres Naharro and Lope de Vega. His rules include the following: disregard of the unities; reduction of the number of acts to four; use of varied verse forms; use of national themes; introduction of royalty to the stage; use of the fantastic and supernatural; and mingling of comedy and tragedy.

He was not a skillful dramatist for he was careless and an improviser sometimes allowing his pots to back him into a corner from which he could extricate himself only by recourse to the supernatural murder and the like. Since he was neither highly cultured nor artistic his merit lies largely in his role as an innovator. Despite his faults, he was one of the outstanding predecessors of Lope de Vega lacking dignity and common sense perhaps but showing good dramatic instinct. Fourteen of his plays remain extant.

*Los siete infantes de Lara* (1579), *Bernardo del Carpio* (1579), and *La muerte del rey don Sancho y reto de Zamora por don Diego Ordonez* are obvious dramatic reworkings of epic narrations preserved in the histories. *El infamador* (1581) was formerly considered a forerunner of Tirso's *El Burlador de Sevilla*, but the hero Leucino is not a true don Juan type.

#### F. MIGUEL DE CERVANTES SAAVEDRA (1547 – 1616)

Cervantes yearned to be a dramatist but could not compete with Lope de Vega. Though the two men were contemporaries, Cervantes inclined toward the Classical conception of the drama and is best listed among Lope's predecessors. In this light, he had nothing of which to be ashamed as a dramatist and was in most respects the equal and perhaps the superior of others who preceded Lope.

He fell short in the long drama, with the one exception of *Comedia del cerco de Numancia*, hailed by some as the most inspired play in the Classical tradition ever produced in Europe. It was revived in the Romantic period played in 1809 during the siege of Zaragoza and played again during the Civil War of the twentieth century to instill courage and patriotism in the hearts of the people. After Lope's advent, Cervantes ceased writing for the stage and in 1615 published *Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses nunca representados*. He noted in his work *Viaje al Parnaso* that he had written twenty or thirty comedias, but only ten of them survive.

His dramatic forte was the *entremes* with which he succeeded admirably. The word *entremes* has several meanings, but in the theater, it refers to a one-act piece, generally realistic and often satirical, played between the acts of a long drama. Cervantes' *entremeses* constitute the truly great part of his theater, and among them are the best of their kind ever written. In Cervantes' *entremeses* one finds a procession of lower-class types painted in master strokes. The dialogue is racy, spirited, and juicy. Here Cervantes reveals his kindness and love of humanity, his indulgent and never-bitter satire, and the same double vision of life, the conflict between idealism and realism, found in his masterpiece, *Don Quijote*. Plots are unimportant, but character delineation is masterful, and customs are faithfully reflected. In this style, Cervantes is not surpassed and has few equals. A few of his popular *entremeses* are *El retablo de las maravillas*, *La Cueva de Salamanca*, *El Viejo celoso*, and *La guarda cuidadosa*.

### THE GOLDEN AGE

#### A. General Considerations

The progress achieved by Spain's sixteenth-century dramatists paved the way for the advent of the *comedia nueva* of Lope de Vega. Lope de Rueda's crude stages gave way to two great theaters in Madrid, the Teatro del Principe and the Corral de la Cruz, and to others elsewhere. There was a public demand for theater, actors had gained respectability, and the time was right for a strong hand to synthesize all preceding elements into a cogent whole. That strong hand belonged to Lope de Vega, the prolific author and undisputed master of the theater who created the national drama that remained virtually unchanged for a century. He called his type of drama the *comedia nueva*.

The Golden Age of the drama, which stretched from 1592 with the advent of Lope as a dramatist to 1681, the date of Calderon's death, saw Spanish drama reach its peak. Thousands of plays were composed. The public consumed dramas at an amazing rate, and many an author's work went before an audience unrehearsed. A play was intended to be viewed one, and frenzied actors did not have time to learn their lines. It was a time of excitement, of incessant and urgent theatrical productions, of keen rivalries among authors, of prodigies of wit and ingenuity and near miracles of energy and enthusiasm. An author who wrote fewer than one hundred plays was thought to be either lazy or lacking in inventiveness. It was a time when genius was common, a fact attested by the four great stars of the theater – Lope, Tirso, Alarcon and Calderon – and a host of writers in other genres.

#### B. Lope Felix de Vega Carpio (1562 – 1635)

Lope de Vega, called the Phoenix of the Spanish stage, was an amazing genius whose accomplishments have become legendary. His unique fame rests not only upon the fact that he created a national drama for Spain, as Shakespeare did for England, but also upon the incredible bulk of his writing. Though no exact count can be made, his disciple, Juan Perez de Montalban summed up the staggering total of 1,800 three-act plays and 400 autos. In addition, Lope wrote novels, short stories, lyric poetry, eclogues, epistles, and epic poems. Five hundred of his plays remain extant. He wrote three times more than the most prolific writers, such as Galdos, Balzac, Dickens, and Tolstoy.

Lope also found time for an adventurous life. He sailed with the Invincible Armada and during idle hours composed eleven thousand lines of verse, which he published in 1602 as an erudite epic under the title *La Hermosura de Angelica*. His talent for amorous adventure is almost as astonishing as his literary fecundity, for his life was a series of love affairs and scandals. He married twice had a number of mistresses and fathered some fourteen children. In 1614, however, he took religious vows and pursued his priestly profession seriously. Yet he devoted one final great love affair to a married woman thirty years his junior, dona Marta de Nevares. Her blindness, the death of his son, the elopement of his only remaining daughter, and the poor reception accorded his last plays embittered his final days. He died in 1635 at the age of seventy-three. Four words sum up his life: writing, adventure, love, and religion.

Lope, taking the elements he needed from the inchoate drama of his time, substituted for it the child of his own cunning mind, the quick-moving, romantic, popular *comedia nueva*. His best themes came from national history and contemporary life, and with them he established a national drama with Spanish subject matter, independent of all rules and theories but his own. His personal Doctrines, more defense than theory, appeared in a poem. *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo* (1609). There he established the need for artistic freedom and confessed that he wrote his plays not according to any precepts or canons but as the public liked them. The following are the formal aspects of Lope's theater taken from the *Arte nuevo*:

1. The play should have three acts. In the first act, it should have exposition in the second, plot complication, and in the third, a sudden climax.
2. The unities are abandoned. Some pretense of unity of action is proposed even though Lope regularly violated it.
3. Comedy and tragedy could be mingled
4. Noble and base characters could be mixed.
5. Lope recommended varied and appropriate verse forms, such as *redondillas* for love scenes, sonnets for soliloquies, *liras* for heroic declamations, romance for exposition, etc.
6. Puns, disguises, mistaken identities, etc., are used as devices to facilitate plot handling.
7. All themes – national, foreign, religious, heroic, pastoral, historical, and contemporary – could be used.
8. Fixed types are used, such as the *galan*, the *viejo* and the *gracioso*, Lope's invention inherited in part from the pastor, *bobo* and *parvo* of former dramatists. The *gracioso* so was a nobleman's servant and in Lope's drama served as the antithesis of his master for comic relief, parodying his master on a lower level. In Alarcon he is the confidant and advisor; in Tirso he combines comedy and advice; in Calderon he spouts philosophy and puns.

Lope did not change the drama greatly in form, borrowed heavily from his predecessors, and disobeyed even his own rules. His eminence derived from the fact that he breathed the essence of national life into his drama, identified totally with the popular mind adapted folk poetry to the stage, dramatized ballads, and wrote what the audience wanted. He was the voice of the people and the echo of a dynamic, proud, vigorous, active nation.

He had an immense range and variety, unequaled eloquence, and an astonishing facility for versification. Aiming at creating emotion, he contrived plot with ingenuity and amazing freshness, always persuasive and in good taste. He banished the ugly, base, and sordid from his work. His favorite themes were honor, monarchy, faith, and love. When he used other themes, he gave them a Spanish flavor, identifying them with the national soul. He had charm, grace, eloquence, lightness of touch, and infallible tact, and his plays are brisk, clever, full of action and intrigue, animated, and above all entertaining. He had an uncanny instinct for the drama, unlimited energy, and a boundless imagination.

His success with the historical play, in which he was the protector of the people, the scourge of the oppressive nobleman, and the defender of the king, endeared him to the common folk. He handled the "cape and sword" play with ease and made it the truly national drama to remain unchanged forever.

Yet Lope was an improviser, perhaps by nature or in answer to the demands of an adulatory public. Since he wrote rapidly, he was never able to condense all his talents into one play. His plots are ingenious, and one marvels at their freshness and variety. But plot is not enough. His characters are sometimes shallow, and none competes with don Quijote or Hamlet. Yet on occasion he created great characters, especially female types. He dazzled with his versatility and cleverness, but one looks in vain for philosophical import or moral intent. He viewed his dramas as "pot boilers," regulated by his own infallible instinct and by audience reaction.

Despite these faults which seem minor compared with his merits, Lope has inspired writers of all succeeding generations at home and sometimes abroad. His undeveloped ideas have often found fuller expression in the drama of others. A few deny him any lasting values; others enthrone him as a demigod. He was a unique figure, surpassed in ways by some of his followers but bowing to none in sheer spontaneity, brilliance, and creative power. Two of his better-known works are *El mayor alcalde, el rey*, a historical play in which a man of the lower class, oppressed by a nobleman, is avenged by the king himself; and *Peribáñez y el comendador de Ocaña*, another historical drama, stressing the Spaniard's inherent dignity and resistance to oppression. The nobleman is again the villain, and the king, the commoner's defender. Other famous plays are *Fuenteovejuna* and *El caballero de Olmedo*.

After his death, Lope was obscured by the brilliance of Pedro Calderon de la Barca, and he did not emerge from the shadows until German Romanticists of the nineteenth century rediscovered him. Yet he was still ranked the inferior of Calderon. In the twentieth century he has been generally regarded as Spain's foremost dramatic genius.

### C. Tirso de Molina (1583 – 1648)

Tirso de Molina is the pseudonym of a Mercenarian friar, Gabriel Tellez, who devoted much time and energy to his order and finished his life as prelate of the monastery at Soria. He may have been the illegitimate son of the Duque de Osuna, a fact that, if true, would explain his complaints about his lack of social position and the injustices of certain social conventions. Tirso was a disciple of Lope de Vega's and agreed with him on the principles of dramatic composition, which he expressed in *Los cigarrales de Toledo* (1624). Had he devoted his entire life to the theater, he might have outshone Lope, for he had all the assets to become the greatest of playwrights. He was a master of the language, had a resourceful imagination, was ironic at times and sly at others, and had a clever way of introducing risqué situations. He was skillful in plot technique and unsurpassed in comic force, but he fell short of Lope's grace, facility, and lightness of touch. He surpassed Lope in character creation and showed a predilection for strange, extreme, or unusual types. His don Juan is the only Spanish dramatic personality to attain the worldwide renown of Hamlet, Othello, Romeo, and Faust. He was particularly skilled in creating spirited, bold female characters who are particularly adept at compromising themselves and intrepid in pursuit of their lovers. He directed sharp satire at the hypocrisy of women, as in *Marta la piadosa*, but at the same time painted virtuous, noble women who relentlessly pursued their goals, generally the restoration of their honor. His men, on the contrary, are often weak, timid, and irresolute, lukewarm in love, and in the end cornered by frank, daring women. His plots frequently are battles of wits between women, one of whom conquers in the end by being cleverer more daring and more ardent than her rivals.

Tirso's comic sense, always strong is particularly evident in his *graciosos* and is irrepressible even in the most solemn moments, such as the final terrifying scenes of *El burlador de Sevilla*. His language is incisive, his satire frequent. He had a salacious spirit, at times a little streak of malice, and a fondness for daring themes, treating, for example, the question of incest in *La venganza de tamar*. Consequently, as in the case of Juan Ruiz, the question has been asked whether he was a stern moralist in a seemingly quite permissive age or an indulgent monk. Whatever the case may have been, he was rebuked in 1625 by the Council of Castile for alleged obscenities and the portrayal of vices in his plays. This forced him to cease writing for the theater; some believe he never wrote again, others that he stopped for about ten years. He probably returned to his pastime sooner than suspected, however, for it seems improbable that he produced the four hundred plays ascribed to him between 1606 and 1625, given the demands of his vocation; and he wrote no plays in the last ten years of his life. He was the second most prolific dramatist of the Golden Age, but only about eighty-five of his four hundred works are known today.

Tirso's background as a priest enabled him to write the best religious plays of his time, but also because of his vocation, his genius never found its fullest expression. Yet nothing can obscure his admirable talents

and the beauties of his works. After his death he was forgotten for nearly two hundred years until Dionisio Solís rediscovered him.

1. *El burlador de Sevilla y convidado de Piedra* (1630), rated by some as the best Spanish play ever written, introduced the famed don Juan Tenorio to the world. The theme already existed in folklore before Tirso's day, but it was Tirso's distinction to treat don Juan artistically for the first time. Tirso's version of the don Juan legend is basically religious showing that divine mercy is not infinite and that the unrepentant libertine is punished. Don Juan has fascinated the Spanish mind since his first appearance in this drama, in which bravery is his outstanding virtue and he has become a world-renowned personality. This famous character has made the rounds of world literature, and his name has become a household word. Unfortunately, Tirso's name has been forgotten in don Juan literature, and don Juan has been curiously distorted in the hands of others.
  2. *El condenado por desconfiado* (1635) is hailed as Spain's best religious drama. A sinner is saved by repentance, and a religious man is condemned for too little faith.
- Other well-known plays by Tirso are *El vergonzoso en palacio* (1621) and *La prudencia en la mujer* (1633).

#### D. Juan Rui de Alarcon (1581? – 1639)

Born in Mexico, Juan Ruiz de Alarcon y Mendoza returned to Spain at about the age of twenty to attend the University of Salamanca. Five years later he went back to Mexico and was graduated from the National University. He then returned to Spain where he remained and began to compose for the theater.

His twenty-four plays, most of which were published in 1628 and 1634, make him the least productive of the four leading dramatists of the Golden Age. He followed Lope's tradition but deviated from it perhaps more than any writer of his time. Not an improviser he carefully planned and wrote his plays. By insisting upon nearly Classical perfection of form, ethical significance, logic and reason, and the didactic function of the drama, he anticipated eighteenth-century Neoclassicism. He was concerned with human values and relationships and extolled courtesy sincerity, honesty, chivalry, loyalty, discretion, and truthfulness as virtues to be admired, condemning odious types such as liars and slanderers. Alarcon's verse is not the equal of Lope's, but it has a dry, sober dignity that reflects that author's personality and his careful craftsmanship, which avoided the Gongoristic excesses of his day.

Alarcon was a hunchback, and his contemporaries cruelly taunted him about his deformity. He also had a knack for alienating people and had few friends. Embittered by all this he turned to composing comedies of manners in which he defended virtuous conduct, partly to defend himself and partly to humiliate his detractors. By depicting human vices through character portrayal, he developed a technique of characterization that, along with his formula for writing comedies of manners, was copied by Corneille in *La menteur*, adapted from *La verdad sospechosa*, and also by Molière.

Despite his personal suffering, little bitterness or cynicism carried over into his plays, and Alarcon exhibited a reflective, reasoned attitude toward life, a longing for the triumph of virtue and a hope for cordiality in human relations. Unlike Lope, Alarcon did not write to please the public. He wrote for gain and fame and also because he had a message for the world. *La verdad sospechosa*, Alarcon's best drama, attacks the vice of lying. *Las paredes oyen*, another comedy of manners, shows the odiousness of slander. Other plays are *La prueba de las promesas* and *Mudarse por mejorarse*.

#### E. Pedro Calderon de la Barca (1600 – 1681)

Like Lope, Calderon wrote his first play as a boy and served in the military, but there the similarities of the two men cease. Calderon studied at Alcala and Salamanca, won prizes for his poetry, and adventurously youthful, engaged in several duels. His military service was more extensive than Lope's, and he was reputedly wounded in the hand.

Upon Lope's death, the nation recognized Calderon as the poet best fitted to carry on the master's work and Felipe IV appointed him court poet. He never married but had at least one love affair. His son passed as his nephew until Calderon took orders, at which time he recognized him as his son. In 1656 Calderon was ordained a priest and withdrew from the world, although he continued to write one or two religious *autos* each year and mythological *comedias* for the entertainment of the court. His life, compared with Lope's tempestuous one, was quiet and assured. His last thirty years were spent in solitude, reading, and reflection.



He wrote much less than Lope, some 200 lyric poems, 120 *comedias*, 80 *autos*, and 20 shorter dramatic pieces. His plays can be roughly divided into two groups: the secular, and the religious and philosophical. He followed Lope's models and in fact, recast some of Lope's plays and improved them.

His honor tragedies and his "cape and sword" plays are of greatest interest among his secular production. Though Lope had used the theme of the conflict between love and honor, Calderon showed the honor theme in its most abhorrent aspects. One must understand the point of honor (*pundonor*) and resulting social complications to comprehend Calderon's theater as well as the Golden Age drama in general. As a court poet Calderon understood the intricacies of the honor code and apparently condoned it despite its extremes.

Calderon's "cape and sword" plays represent the perfection of this type of drama, which was introduced by Torres Naharro and improved by Lope. Incredibly complicated plots lovers' intrigues, honor dilemmas, sudden appearances, and many other tricks and devices to complicate and then disentangle the plot typify these plays. Calderon, the most profoundly Spanish poet of his era, speaks intimately to the Spaniard.

Calderon was king of the stage from Lope's death until his own in 1681. He lacked the spontaneity and variety of the Phoenix, but he frequently equaled and at times surpassed him in the sheer beauty and rapturous heights of his poetry. He was an aristocratic poet, did not cater to the public, and was more profound and philosophical than Lope. Lope was the improviser, Calderon was the planner. He was a formal and Baroque writer, susceptible to the exaggerations, distortions, and rotund style of *cultismo*, and he was the chief exponent of *conceptismo* in the theater. He brought to his work a fine power of reasoning, an intellectual outlook, a keen dramatic instinct, a delicate imagination, and a lyrical power unsurpassed in his day. His theater was more calculated, more elegant, and more refined than that of any other. Both his life and his drama show a steadily growing predilection for the allegorical, mythological, and metaphysical, and he finally withdrew from the human scene preoccupied, perhaps, with the deeper concerns of life and dissatisfied with what the world had to offer, succumbing finally to the illusion that life is a dream.

As a writer of *autos sacramentales*, Calderon is supreme. The *auto*, cultivated in Spain since the time of Gil Vicente, is a one-act play, generally allegorical, that at some point or other treats the miracle of transubstantiation. Some believe that these short pieces represent the best of the Calderonian theater, for in them his fertile imagination had free rein and his sincere religious motives and faith found their purest expression.

Both Calderon and Lope fell into disfavor with the Neoclassicists of the eighteenth century, but Calderon was rediscovered by the German Romanticists of the nineteenth century, who worshiped him and pronounced him the equal of Shakespeare. This recognition of Calderon and lack of it for Lope has been ascribed to the easy accessibility of Calderon's works and the relative rarity of Lope's editions. Whatever his rating may be, all acknowledge Calderon's rare gifts. With him the drama gained in precision and power, grandeur and profundity of conception.

1. *La Vida es sueno* (1635), Calderon's masterpiece symbolizes the struggle between free will and fate. It is deservedly famous and ranks among the foremost Spanish dramas of all time.
2. *El alcalde de Zalamea*, his best historical play and second only to *La vida es sueno*, was inspired by a drama of the same theme by Lope de Vega. It recounts the story of Pedro Crespo, a commoner with a high sense of personal honor and justice, who, elected mayor of Zalamea, orders the execution of any army captain who had kidnapped and raped his daughter. The mayor's action was later upheld by the king.
3. *El magico prodigioso*, Calderon's best religious play, tells the story of a man who makes a Pact with the devil to gain a woman's love.
4. *El medico de su honra*, his most horrifying honor tragedy, recounts how a husband, suspicious of his wife's infidelity, forces a physician to bleed her to death washing away his dishonor in her blood.

Other plays include *La cena de Baltasar*, his best *auto*; *El principe constante*; and *La devocion del la cruz* all examples of his religiophilosophical bent.

#### F. Guillen de Castro (1569 – 1630)

The fact that Guillen de Castro claimed to be a descendant of the Cid's ancestor, Lain Calvo, may have prompted him to write his great popular success, *Las mocedades del Cid* (1618), the first drama to deal with the Cid's exploits. Castro's Cid is the impetuous young man found in the *Rodrigo*, far removed from the sober, dignified national hero of the *Cantar de Mio Cid*. This play depicts the struggle in Jimena's heart between love and honor, the theme used by Corneille in *Le Cid*.

Castro was an admirer and imitator of Lope and composed a total of fifty plays. He was praised by Lope and other major writers of the *Siglo de Oro*. His success was due to his skillful use of themes from the ballads and folk legends of Spain and to his ability to transfer much of their heroic spirit to the stage.

#### G. Antonio Mira de Amescua (1577 – 1644)

Mira de Amescua was the illegitimate son of Melchior de Amescua y Mira, a fact that rankled him somewhat and may have accounted for his irascibility. He became a priest but did not take his profession seriously until his later years and spent most of his time writing for the stage. He followed Lope's lead but avoided Gongoristic tendencies.

His sixty dramas show a variety of types, and he is best remembered for *El esclavo del demonio* (1612), the story of a man's pact with the devil. This play may have influenced Tirso's *El burlador de Sevilla*, Calderon's *El magico prodigioso*, and Moreto's *Caer para levantar* (1662).

#### H. Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla (1607 – 1648)

Rojas Zorrilla's success as a playwright began in 1636 when a number of his plays were presented. In 1637 Felipe IV called on him to write for the lavish entertainments held in honor of the visit to Madrid of Maria de Borbon princess of Carignan.

Plagued by financial difficulties, Rojas ceased writing *comedias* in 1641 for the more lucrative work of composing *autos sacramentales*. Before his untimely death at the age of forty-one, Rojas had completed approximately one hundred plays seventy of which were *comedias*, a large output considering the few years he lived.

Rojas is best remembered for *Del rey abajo, ninguno* (1750), known also as *Garcia del Castanar*, a play that still has a great appeal for Spaniards, probably because it expresses so well their inherent love of freedom, equality, and dignity. Highly respected among his peers, Rojas collaborated in writing plays with Mira de Amescua and Calderon. He mitigated the excesses of the later's treatment of honor, objecting to the king's omnipotence and championing women's right. The immense popularity of *Del rey abajo, ninguno* overshadowed the obvious merits of Rojas' other works; his *comedias de graciosos* are especially good. French imitators, among the Corneille and Scarron, borrowed from him abundantly. Other titles are *Donde hay agravios no hay celos* (1637); *Entre bobos anda el juego* (1638); and *Cada cual lo que le toca*, which presents an unusual approach to feminine honor

#### I. Agustin Moreto (1618 – 1669)

Moreto took minor orders in 1639 but had already gained a measure of success in Madrid's literary circles. He too wrote for the gala entertainments of Felipe IV's court. From 1657 until his death, however Moreto was busy with religious affairs and withdrew from Madrid, although he continued writing for the stage up to his death. His correct, quiet calm personality and his ordered and peaceful life account for the tranquility in his writing.

Moreto was not resourceful or inventive, but he was skilled in borrowing from his fellow dramatists, often improving on their work, and exceeding the all-in stagecraft and in delicacy of touch, humor and tact. This plagiarizing technique was practiced by all dramatists of the time and was not considered in any way dishonorable or criminal. In all, Moreto wrote over a hundred plays.

*El desden con el desden* (1654) improves in almost every detail on its model. Lope's *Milagros del desprecio* and was imitated by Moliere with little success in *Princesse d'Elide*. *El lindo don Diego ticiro* (1657) is based on the legend of Pedro el Cruel.

#### J. Lesser Dramatists of the Golden Age

1. *Juan Perez de Montalban* (1602 – 1638) is better known as Lope's biographer than as a writer although there is some injustice in this. In the fifteen years of his literary activity, he wrote fifty-eight dramas, mostly on historical themes. Criticized for his slavish imitation of Lope, Montalban was acknowledged even by his most vociferous critics to be popular with the public, a distinction that lasted well into the nineteenth century. Representative of his plays is *Despreciar lo que se quiere*.

2. *Luis Veliz de Guevara* (1579 – 1644), also a novelist, preferred historical themes and regal personages for his theater.  
Two of his plays are *Mas pesa el rey que la sangre*, based on an episode from the life of Guzman *el Bueno* and *Reinar despues de morir*, a dramatization of the tragic life of dona Ines de Castro.
3. *Luis Quinones de Benavente* (1589? – 1651) made his reputation with short dramatic pieces. He wrote hundreds of *entremeses*, *loas*, and *Jacaras*. Next to Cervantes, he is Spain's best writer of *entremeses*.

## THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

### A. General Considerations

Following Calderon's death in 1681, Spanish intellectual life deteriorated. The last Hapsburg kings were inept, and political and economic stagnation and hopelessness were reflected in intellectual and literary life. The nation was exhausted from its immense efforts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and its spiritual and physical resources were drained.

Dramatists continued the Golden Age tradition of Lope and Calderon but produced nothing significant. More progressive writers tried to refashion the drama in imitation of the Classical qualities of the French literature of the age, but the attempt failed. The result was that, except for the work of Leandro Fernandez de Moratin and Ramon de l Cruz, no successful drama was produced in Spain for 150 years.

The Neoclassic system failed in Spain, where art has always been free and national. Fettered and inhibited by foreign rules and regulations, Spanish writers could not create. They tried to write in the French manner, but the results were cold, graceless, and tasteless correct imitations that failed to please the public or the critics. Neoclassic doctrinaires and critics could legislate art but could not create it. Neoclassicism did have the positive effect, however, of restoring some order, common sense, and decorum to the degenerate national drama.

### B. Ignacio Luzan (1702 – 1754)

Luzan's sojourns in Italy and France gave him a cosmopolitan point of view that is reflected in his writings and doctrines. His *Poetica o reglas de la Poesia en general y de sus principales especies* (1737), corrected and modified in 1789, is based largely on the theories of Aristotle and Horace as reflected in the critical works of Boileau and Muratori and is the Spanish manifesto of Neoclassicism. Together with the efforts of the Academia del Buen Gusto, founded in 1749, it furthered the introduction of Neoclassicism in Spain. Luzan condemned Spain's Golden Age drama and proposed to transform literary taste and production by imposing upon them rules imported from abroad. His efforts failed in the end, but they set off a half century of polemics between the Classical devotees and the traditionalists.

Luzan did find something good in the drama of Lope and Calderon, but he rightly concluded that something went awry toward the turn of the seventeenth century, when language became obscured and turgid through the excesses of Gongorism, and good taste, common sense, and decorum disappeared. Blas Antonio Nasarre and Agustin Montiano Luzan's disciples carried his critical attitude toward the Golden Age to the extreme.

In drama, Luzan insisted that some virtue be exalted, or some vice condemned and pleaded for a return to common sense, reason, morality, and simplicity. His work aroused Spaniards and stimulated an intellectual activity where little had existed before. Though unable to produce the literature they desired, Luzan and his disciples possessed a solid erudition and helped Spain emerge from one of her least productive eras.

Luzan's reforms in the drama include the following observance of the three unities; limitation of the number of characters; variation of Golden Age stereotypes; strict observance of decorum, verisimilitude, and good taste; condemnation of loose imagination; use of blank verse instead of thyme; insistence upon utilitarian justification; attention to costume; simplicity and clarity of style and avoidance of the excesses of Gongorism; and humor not found solely in the *gracioso*.

### C. Ramon de la Cruz Cano y Olmedilla (1731 – 1794)

Ramon de la Cruz, the only dramatic author to run contrary to the Neoclassic current during the eighteenth century wrote his first *decima* at the age of thirteen and at fifteen produced a *dialogo comico*. He attempted unsuccessfully to write some tragedies in the Neoclassic fashion. The first Spaniard to translate *Hamlet*,

he also reworked some dramas by Calderon. Finally deserting the sterile forms of Neoclassicism, he turned to realism and naturalness with gratifying success.

With the failure of Neoclassicism, the public was ready for something new by the middle of the century. Much-needed social reforms instituted by the Bourbon monarchs made life more tolerable for Spaniards, who more satisfied and relaxed, wanted to enjoy themselves. In response to the public resistance to Neoclassic theater and the resurgence of popular national spirit, classic theater and the resurgence of popular national feeling and realism back to the stage. Through his *sainetes*, he gave the public what it wanted – realistic theater based on observed customs, permeated with the spirit of Spain. He was scorned by the *afrancesados* but idolized by the public.

The *sainete* is a descendant of dramatic forms dating back to mimes of Roman times. In Spain, the one-act farce began with the medieval *juegos de escarnio*. It was later cultivated by Juan del Encina (*Aucto del repelon*), Lope de Rueda (*pasos*) and Cervantes and Quinones de Benavente (*entremeses*). In the Golden Age, the *entremes* was played between the first and second acts of a longer play, and the *sainete* between the second and third. These types declined like everything else, but Ramon de la Cruz revived, renovated, and popularized the *sainete*. In his hands it became a one-act play in verse, about twenty minutes in length, with a negligible plot in which the comic element dominated.

The *sainete*, still used in the eighteenth century between acts, became a realistic portrayal of picturesque lower – and middle - class types of Madrid society and of Madrid life. The merit of Ramon de la Cruz's *sainetes* lies not in their short verse poetry, which was ordinary in quality but in their documentary accuracy and portrayal of popular classes and interesting types of the day, such as *castaneras*, *majas*, *manolos*, *petimetres*, and many others. Typical scenes that he re-created were dances, picnics, the marketplace *tertulias* and street quarrels. He satirized his contemporaries and ridiculed the *afrancesados* and their Neoclassic theater. He humorously mocked social abuses and vices in his trifling plots but always with vivid, accurate descriptions of Madrid life. He transferred to the stage without change what his eyes saw, and his ears heard, for his creed was "Yo escribo y la verdad me dicta."

He inserted song and dance in his plays; used natural, colorful, idiomatic language; strove always to entertain; helped in the triumph of popular speech over the stilted artificial language of Neoclassicism; and achieved lasting renown with a dramatic form that at best is a minor one. Some of his better-known *sainetes* are *La pradera de San Isidro*, *La casa de Tocame Roque*, *El Rastro por la mañana*, *Manolok* and *El Prade por la noche*.

#### D. Leandro Fernandez de Moratin (1760 – 1828)

After the death of his father, Moratin turned to writing and won two prizes from the Spanish Academy. Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos secured him the position of secretary in the Spanish embassy in Paris. While there, Moratin frequented the salons and libraries, met Goldoni, translated two plays of his idol, Moliere, and studied the French theater firsthand. Upon his return to Spain, he was patronized by Godoy and produced his first play in 1790, *El viejo y la niña*. *La comedia nueva o el arte* in 1792 attacked the inanities in the theater at the turn of the century and ridiculed the hack writer Comella.

Though Moratin was timid and reserved, his sober and noble concept of the drama permitted him to satirize weaknesses and foibles. He believed that the drama should be a portrayal in dialogue of an event with realistic development of characters and speech and that it should exalt some virtue or truth or condemn some social evil. His masterpiece, *El sí de las niñas* (1806), reveals these principles and as the first modern thesis play condemns parental meddling in children's marriages. He followed Neoclassic principles in this play, although he used prose instead of verse and reduced the number of acts from five to three. Here, as in his plays in verse, *El viejo y la niña* (1790), *El barón* (1803) and *La mojigata* (1804), Moratin showed a special interest in the relations of youth and old age.

Having accepted from Joseph Bonaparte the position of director of the Royal Library, he felt his fellow Spaniards looked upon him as an *afrancesado*, and after withdrawing with the French when they fell from power, he eventually escaped to France, where he died in 1828.

Moratin's literary production is scant. His letters written during his extended travels in Europe are classed as the best in Spain excepting those of Santa Teresa. He wrote only five original dramas. One regrets that his fears dried up his creative talents and splendid literary gifts, for he was the only Spaniard to combine successfully Neoclassicism and the Spanish spirit. Unlike Golden Age drama, Moratin's plays had simple plots, observed the unities, and were restrained.

Other works include a prose satire against literary affection, quite humorous at times, *La derrota de los pedants* (1789). In 1830 his *Origenes del teatro español*, a study of the early Spanish drama, was published.

#### E. Minor Dramatists of the Eighteenth Century

1. *Nicolas Fernandez de Moratin* (1737 – 1780), father of the more famous Leandro, was a vociferous critic of Calderon and Lope and a frequenter of all the literary academics and *tertulias*. He became the discussion leader at the Fonda de San Sebastian, a leading Neoclassic center in Madrid. Among his works are *La petimetra* (1762), which was the first Spanish Neoclassic attempt at comedy, though it was never performed; and three tragedies; *Lucrecia* (1763), *Guzman el Bueno* (1777), and his best known though equally unimpressive play *Hormesinda* (1770). Although highly rated by the intellectuals, *Hormesinda* was a failure in the eyes of the public. Despite his efforts to imitate Neoclassic models, his next literary effort was a panegyric poem on bullfighting. *Fiesta de Toros en Madrid*, which succeeded because of its true national spirit.
2. *Agustin Montino y Luyando* (1697 – 1765), one of the founders of the Academia del Buen Gusto, attempted unsuccessfully to put into practice his Neoclassic theories in two tragedies, *Virginia* (1750), which he hoped would serve as a Neoclassic model, and *Ataulfo* (1753). Lacking originality and creative ability, he insisted not only upon the three traditional unities of time place, and action but also on a fourth that he called “unity of character.”
3. *Vicente Garcia de la Huertra* (1734 – 1787), though a Neoclassicist, somehow was able to surmount the coldness of the Neoclassic form and breathe a genuine Spanish flavor into his play. *Raquel* (1778). This drama written in strict conformity with Neoclassic rules adhered to the three instead of five acts. According to Menendez y Pelayo, it was “the great theatrical event in the reign of Carlos III.” Although its exterior was Neoclassic basically it was national in spirit, for it exemplified honor, bravery, gallantry, and an ardent Spanish nationalism, related in spirit to the Golden Age tradition. Its theme, which Juan Diamante, Lope de Vega and Mira de Amescua had used before, concerns the love of Alfonso VIII for the Jewess of Toledo Raquel.
4. *Tomas de Iriarte* (1750 – 1791), better known as a fabulist is important in the Neoclassic theater for his two comedies, *El señorito mimado* and *La señorita malcriada*, the first about a dissipated youth and the second about a spoiled daughter and an indulgent father. Both appeared in 1788. His *Hacer que hacemos* (1770) was a failure, and his *El don de gentes* appeared posthumously.

A number of eighteenth-century authors, not primarily known as dramatists, tried their hand at this literary form. Their dramas include *El delincuente honrado* (1774), by Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos (1744 – 1811); *Sancho Garcia* (1771), by Jose Cadalso (1741 – 1782); *Las bodas de Camacho* (1784), by Juan Melendez Valdes (1754 – 1817); *El duque de Viseo* (1801) and *Pelayo* (1805), by Manuel Jose Quintana (1772 – 1857); and *Zoraida* (1798), by Nicasio Alvarez Cienfuegos (17674 – 1809). Some authors among them Candido Maria Trigueros (1736 – 1801) and Dionisio Solis (1774 – 1834), made revisions (*refundiciones*) of Golden Age plays.

## ROMANTICISM

#### A. General Considerations

With the explosion of Romanticism in Spain in 1833 the unproductive formulas of Neoclassicism died, and Spain succumbed to the new literary fashion sweeping Europe. Romanticism was more a revolt against the precepts and moderation of Neoclassicism than it was a concrete literary movement. Consequently, Spain's dramatists abandoned all restraint discarded the unities, mingled prose and verse, and mixed comedy with tragedy. Emotionalism sensationalism. Sinister atmosphere, and the melodramatic replaced reason and moderation. Subjectivity replaced objectivity. Spaniards discovered Romanticism in Lope and Calderon and learned that the new movement was as much a revival as a revolt. There was a new interest in the national past especially the Middle Ages, prompted in part by the studies of Johann Nicholas Bohl von Faber and the Schlegel brothers enthusiasm for the *romancero* and Calderon. Violence inexorable fate, and characters distinguished by their passions appeared on the Spanish stage. Musical and flexible poetry served as the vehicle for the mysterious and passionate.

Agustin Duran's influential document *Discurso sobre el influjo que ha tenido la critica moderna en la decadencia del teatro antiguo espanol* (1828), in which he based his idea of romanticism on the *siglo de Oro* Bohl von Faber's idea defends the national theater; insists that each country must follow its own genius; declares that Spain's genius rests in the *Siglo de Oro* and in the popular element found in the epic the *romancero*, and the theater; and maintains that Spanish literature declined because it left its natural bent.

#### B. Francisco Martinez de la Rosa (1787 – 1862)

Martinez de la Rosa, a compulsive neurotic about cleanliness, was in and out of politics all his life. Imprisoned and exiled for six years, he was freed by the *levantamiento de Riego* in 1820. Hated by the reactionaries and cruelly labeled "Rosita la pastelera," he attempted always to choose *el justo medio*.

Although he wrote one Romantic novel, *Dona Isabel de Solis* (1837), and other Romantic plays, Martinez de la Rosa is known primarily for two Romantic dramas: *Aben Humeya*, written in French in 1830, translated into Spanish in 1834, but not performed in Madrid until 1836; and *La conjuracion de Venecia* (1834) in which some critics see the profound influence of Victor Hugo's *Hernani*. In *Aben Humeya* he stated that he wished to present a Spanish historical theme as something new and original but in keeping with good taste. *La conjuracion de Venecia* presented for the first time the essential traits of Romantic tragedy: ubiquitous and inexorable fate, the pantheon, and unrestrained emotionalism. Yet lovers are well drawn. In both plays the author makes use of local color, disregards the unities, and cultivates the sensational and exotic, mystery, extravagance, and suspense.

#### C. Angel de Saavedra, Duque de Rivas (1791 – 1865)

The Duque de Rivas, born into a family of *grandees*, fought valiantly for the Republic and was wounded several times. For his political activities he was twice exiled, first as a liberal and later as a conservative. In after years he served his country in important posts at home and abroad.

While living on the island of Malta, he was urged by the Englishman John H. Frere, a Romanticist, to seek poetic themes in the history of his own country. This Rivas accomplished with the writing of *El moro exposito*, his first Romantic work.

Rivas wrote several Neoclassic dramas, such as *Alfatar* (1816), but his is most famous for the Romantic drama *Don Alvaro o la fuerza del sino* (1835), which confirmed the triumph of Romanticism in Spain. Here Rivas condensed all the aesthetic ideas of Romanticism and created a Romantic hero to compete with Werther or Manfred. Its premiere in Madrid was sensational, as Rivas ran the gamut of the elements of the Romantic theater; duels, nocturnal meetings, tempests, thunder, fate, and suicide.

Don Alvaro, the typical Romantic hero, is of mysterious origin yet clearly a gentleman. Denied even a moment's happiness by an unrelenting fate, he is driven to commit crimes against his will and even denied the solace of an honorable death. The drama is full of wild, emotional elements, and its verse is sonorous and passionate.

Despite the intense Romanticism of the play, Rivas, an excellent painter, made use of realistic local color at the beginning of each act through *cuadros de costumbres*, which portray situations true to life. This, along with a few comic elements, afforded relief from the tenseness of the plot. With his excellent plastic sense and power of observation, Rivas was able to give detailed instructions for stage settings, scenery, and machines. The implicit social commentary and Alvaro's final despair, defiance, and suicide add to this drama's unique impact. *Don Alvaro* was immensely popular in its day and is still readable. Its fame soon spread abroad, where it influenced Verdi's opera *La Forza del Destino*.

*El desengano en un sueno* (1844), considered by many to be as important as *Don Alvaro*, is reminiscent of Gracians *Criticón*, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, and especially Calderon's *La vida es sueno*. On the basis of his work, Valbuena ranks Rivas second only to Calderon in symbolic drama. Readers have praised Rivas's poetry, dramatic interest, and especially his profound philosophical thought in this version of the theme of the awakened sleeper. Filled with the standard Romantic intrigue, mystery, apparitions, and murder, the play emphasizes disillusion with the world.

#### D. Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch (1806 – 1880)

Hartzenbusch, son of a German father and Spanish mother, had to practice his father's vocation, cabinetmaking, when the absolutist reaction of 1823 deprived his family of all its wealth. Later his acknowledged erudition gained him good positions, and he was happily employed all his life.

In addition to solid works of literary criticism, Hartzenbusch wrote *costumbrista* sketches and poetry that was mostly erudite, moral, philosophical, and political. His fables reveal a good sense of humor. He translated French and Italian plays and later turned to reworking *comedias* of Lope, Tirso, and Calderon and producing editions for the *Biblioteca de Autores Espanoles*. He wrote twenty-nine dramas, most of them carefully constructed and polished, in which he used historical, Biblical, and magical themes. He also wrote some thesis plays.

His place in Spanish literary history stems, however, from his best play, *Los amantes de Teruel*, written in 1835 but not produced until 1837. Actually, he wrote two versions of this drama, based on an old Spanish legend used previously by other dramatists. His 1837 version contains five acts. The 1849 revision has four acts and changes especially the role of Margarita, Isabel's mother. Hartzenbusch may not have succeeded in producing the great love drama of the Spanish theater, but personal tragedy and Romantic techniques aside, he managed to create an unusual historical play filled with a strong social sense and with characters who far excel the Romantic stereotypes of the day.

#### E. Antonio Garcia Gutierrez (1813 – 1884)

Partly because of disappointment at not seeing his play *El trovador* produced, the author joined the army. When it was produced for the first time in 1836, he left his post without permission to see it.

Garcia Gutierrez composed some poetry and some *articulos de costumbres*. He authored some eighty plays, served as director of the National Library and was elected to the Spanish Academy in 1862. Among his half dozen outstanding plays, one should mention his masterpiece, *El trovador* (1836), as well as *Simon Bocanegra* (1843), *Venganza catalana* (1864), and *Juan Lorenzo* (1865). He wrote in the usual manner of the Romantics, employing historic legendary themes, sonorous and declamatory verse, startling dramatic effects, dungeons, battlefield scenes, and unbridled passions revealing a rich and vivid imagination.

In *El trovador*, combining prose and verse in five acts, Garcia Gutierrez reveals his outstanding ability to portray female protagonists. As in other dramas, he concentrates here on the power of love and vengeance. He used his play to deliver his sentiments about revolution and a liberal political and social message.

#### F. Jose Zorrilla y Moral (1817 – 1893)

This "spoiled darling" of Romanticism became a public favorite overnight when he recited his poetic composition at Larra's burial in 1837. He wrote voluminously, leaving volumes of lyric poetry, *leyendas*, and drama. Leading a haphazard bohemian existence, he unwisely married a woman many years his senior and was later widowed.

He went to Mexico, where Maximilian made him court poet and granted him a pension. He was enthusiastically received upon his return to Spain, and many honors were bestowed on him. Yet he spent his last days in poverty.

Zorrilla was an exuberant often careless, and hasty writer, and inveterate improviser, and a shallow thinker; but perhaps his greatest literary sin was verbosity. Although genuine pearls appear in his work, one is dismayed at the amount of mediocre verse one must digest before coming across one of the loftier passages. He had the knack of versification however, and regardless of his faults, he was capable of attaining great lyrical heights almost effortlessly. His theater is alive, passionate, and national in spirit. He wrote *comedias de capa y espada* in the Golden Age tradition, Classical tragedies, and historicolegendary plays based upon moving incidents from national history. Among the best of his more than thirty plays are *El punal del godo* (1842); *El zapatero y el rey* (1840); and *Traidor, inconfeso y martir* (1849), the latter of which is considered by many critics to be his best play. In three acts and verse, it revives the *sebastianista* theme as the mysterious central character, Gabriel Espinosa, is suspected of being King Sebastian of Portugal. Jose Maria Diaz is credited with having collaborated on the second act.

Zorrilla is remembered mainly however, for one play *Don Juan Tenorio* (1844). This world-famous figure, first dramatized by Tirso and used by others before Zorrilla, received his most successful reincarnation at the hands of the "troubadour poet." Zorrilla despised his own play for its obvious imperfections, which he himself pointed out, and sold it for a handful of *reales*. He referred to its *mal gusto*

and *ligereza improvisora*. Yet it became the most successful play of the nineteenth century and is still played at the approach of All Saints' Day in many important Spanish-speaking centers. Despite its shortcomings, such as its improbabilities, inconsistencies, and other signs of careless craftsmanship, it has become an international institution and has delighted the common people for almost a century and a half.

Some of the appeal of this drama may be accounted for by the fascination of the main character himself, his charm and seductiveness, and the popularity of the theme. Equally attractive is the combination of adventure with a religious theme. Also, Zorrilla's don Juan may be more appealing to some than Tirso's, for he is more human and more generous, and his dona Ines is more attractive than her counterpart in Tirso's version. Finally, the conclusion of Zorrilla's drama, in which don Juan repents and is saved from damnation, may be more pleasant to contemplate than Tirso's ending, in which don Juan, repenting too late is consumed by the fires of hell. Brisk, vigorous, colorful, filled with emotion and melodiously versified, *Don Juan Tenorio* is one of Spain's best-known dramas.

#### G. Mariano Jose de Larra (1809 – 1837)

Angel del Rio has pointed out that Larra was the opposite of Rivas. Rivas was Romantic in form and Classical in spirit, while Larra was Classical in form and Romantic in spirit. Best known as a composer of *articulos de costumbres* and a literary critic, Larra wrote one of the successes of the Romantic theater, *Macias* (1834). He had written a novel on the same theme, *El doncel de don Enrique el Doliente* (1834), and the play is a dramatization of the novel, but the theatrical production differs considerably from the novelistic account. Enrique Pineyro considered *Macias* which influenced both *El trovador* and *Los amantes de Terul*, to be the first Spanish Romantic drama in verse, though Larra refused to label it as either Neoclassic or Romantic.

Larra had excellent gifts as a satirist and prosist, but he was not exceptionally endowed as a dramatist. He wrote several adaptations of French plays, mostly under the pseudonym Ramon Arriala. The best of them, which Larra defended as quite original, was *No mas mostrador* (1831), a satiric comedy based on a work by Scribe.

#### H. Other Romantic Dramatists

Many others contributed to the Romantic theater in Spain. Some were total converts, some were lukewarm experimenters in their youth, some were Eclectics, others were writers of thesis plays, and still others wrote chiefly in altogether different genres. At one time in their careers, however, they tried the Romantic drama, an indication of how deeply Romanticism had permeated the literary fabric of the time. The following belong at least in part to Spain's Romantic theater: Mariano Roda de Togados (1812 – 1889), Tomas Rodriguez Diaz Runi (1817 – 1890), Gertrudis Gomez de Avellaneda (1814 – 1873), Eulogio Florentino Sanz (1825? – 1881), Patricio de la Escosura (1807 – 1878), Carolina Coronado (1820 – 1911), Eugenio de Ochoa (1815 – 1872), Antonio Gil y Zarate (1793 – 1861), Manuel Breton de los Herreros (1796 – 1873), and Ventura de la Vega (1807 – 1865).

### THE REALISTIC THEATER OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

#### A. General Considerations

The Realistic theater of didactic intent existed before the Romantic movement became the leading literary movement, and outlived Romanticism by some fifty years. In the first half of the century the Eclectics dominated, combining Classical and Romantic ideas. In the transition period between Romanticism and Realism, playwrights largely abandoned historical dramas, though some continued to produce them with more attention to detail and psychological elements. With the rise of the middle class around 1850, a new type of social satire called *alta comedia* appeared. By the end of the century it had evolved toward the elegant modern comedy of Benavente.

Realists developed the drama of social satire and the thesis play, showing a decided preference for criticizing the weaknesses, foibles, and vices of their contemporaries. They also felt compelled to censure materialism in an age when money provided more luxuries and pleasures. In many cases the liberal and modern ideas expressed by an author through his characters offered a



dramatic contrast with the traditional motives of honor and duty. In their thesis plays dramatists failed to find any real answers and often resorted to commonplace doctrines or even passionate outbursts.

B. Manuel Breton de los Herreros (1796 – 1873)

Breton who wrote before, during, and after the Romantic movement, was immune to its effects. He cultivated instead a *costumbrista* theater related in spirit to the work of Mesonero Romanos. First a soldier and later a journalist, as a dramatist he was the best follower of the Moratinian tradition, without his master's precision but with more naturalness and comic force. Abandoning the strict Moratinian style, he took the first steps toward a Realistic comedy of manners and drama of social satire but without serious philosophical pretensions.

Breton was at his best when dealing with bourgeois customs, especially in a satiric and critical manner. Yet, never bitter, he exemplified a festive and pleasant spirit that allowed him to satirize without offending. In addition to composing more than one hundred original dramas, he translated copiously from the French theater and produced ten *refundiciones* of Golden Age dramas.

Among his best dramas are *Marcela o cual de los tres?* (1831), a comically satiric play dealing with the quandary of a girl who has to choose one of three unfit suitors, a situation that gives Breton the opportunity to satirize middle-class types; and *muerete y veras* (1837), a satiric play in which the rarity of true friendship is illustrated by the admonition: die, and you will see who your true friends are. Other important titles are *El pelo de la dehesa* (1840) and *La escuela del matrimonio* (1852).

C. Ventura de la Vega (1807 – 1865)

Born in Buenos Aires, Vega came to Spain at an early age and soon achieved prominence. His early reputation stemmed from his translations and imitations of the Song of Songs (1825) and Psalms (1826). He adapted tragedies from the French, especially from Scribe, and wrote some historical plays, but his best work is in the Moratinian style, and he was most effective in the drama of social criticism. An eclectic, he continued Breton's work and initiated the *alta comedia*, later perfected by Lopez de Ayala. Of fifteen plays, his best is *El hombre de mundo* (1845), a satiric portrayal of the life of the middle classes, anticipating somewhat the work of Benavente.

Also, interested in a minor art form, Vega initiated the modern *zarzuela*. His *Jugar con fuego*, with music by Barbieri, can still be heard with pleasure.

D. Manuel Tamayo y Baus (1829 – 1898)

Born the son of actors and married to an actress Tamayo showed an inclination for the theater at an early age and developed into one of the outstanding dramatists between Moratin and Benavente. An eclectic, he tried every form of the drama among his more than fifty theatrical pieces: Classical tragedy, Romantic national dramas, and Realistic comedies of moral intent. He also adapted and translated foreign plays. Among his works are *Virginia* (1853), a five-act tragedy in verse about honor and liberty; *La locura de amor* (1855), a Romantic historical play based upon the life of Juana *la Loca*, filled with sentiment and passion; *La bola de nieve* (1856), about the effects of unfounded jealousy; *Lances de honor* (1863), a thesis play about dueling; *No hay mal que por bien no venga* (1868); and *Los hombres de bien* (1870).

His masterpiece, *Un drama nuevo* (1867), a three-act tragedy, excels other plays of its time. It tells the story of Yorick, the clown of Shakespeare's troupe, who plays on the stage the part of the deceived husband only to find that he is playing the same part in real life. This play influenced Leoncavallo's opera *I Pagliacci*.

As a social critic, Tamayo continued the trend established by Breton and Vega in satirizing the middle class. Particularly incensed by the Positivism and love of money in his day Tamayo criticized them in *Lo positivo* (1862). His dramatic creed, he claimed, was to paint "el retrato moral del hombre on todas sus deformidades...y emplearlo como instrument de la Prodigencia para realiar ejemplos de provehosa ensenanz.

E. Adelardo Lopez de Ayala (1828 – 1879)

Lopez de Ayala, whose work resembles that of his intimate friend Tamayo y Baus, also inherited the style of Breton and Vega and refined it in his *alta comedia*. His artistic production consists of two distinct periods; he first wrote historical plays and then thesis plays. But even in his historical period he tried to develop “un pensamiento moral, profundo y consolador.” He made the assertion in the preface to his first historical piece, *Un hombre de estado* (1851), in which he concentrates on the responsibilities of leadership and the virtue of duty.

His thesis plays, written to criticize and yet improve the lives of his contemporaries, emphasize moral themes, at times to the loss of dramatic impact. Some compare him with Juan Ruiz de Alarcon because of his careful attention to detail and skillful juggling of language and effects. His first such play was *El tejado de vidrio* (1856). In the better-known *El tanto por ciento* (1861), an attack on materialism, Positivism, and greed. Lopez de Ayala preaches in favor of high public and private morals, insisting that true love is more important than money, a favorite concept of his. *Consuelo* (1878), his masterpiece presents his one good character study (not his strong point because of his emphasis on a thesis) in the portrait of a woman who chooses wealth over love, to her sorrow.

F. Jose Echegaray (1832 – 1916)

Echegaray, a crowd pleaser, made concessions to public taste and ruled as undisputed king of the stage from 1874 with appearance of his first play, *El libro talomario*, to the end of the century, when Benavete revolutionized dramatic literature Echegaraym unloved by twentieth-century critics, was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature, which he shared with the Provencal poet Mistral. The award aroused a storm of protest in Spain among the writers of the younger generation who rebelled against everything for which Echegaray stood.

An important physicist and mathematician as well as a politician and statesman and the founder of the Bank of Spain, Echegaray wrote his first play at age forty-two and thereafter turned out one or two “hits” a year, producing some seventy plays. Though the critics kept pointing out his shortcomings the public responded enthusiastically to his plays. Each premiere was received with noisy acclaim.

Though he is generally classified as a belated Romanticist, Echegaray attended the theater regularly in his student days in Madrid to see the Romantic works of Hartzenbusch and the realistic ones of Lopez de Ayala and Tamayo y Baus. These authors influenced his formation and development as a dramatist. His thesis plays, melodramatic and sensational, nonetheless depart from the usual Romantic technique by replacing the legendary and exotic with problems of the home and modern society. Echegaray also used the honor theme, placing his characters in agonizing situations in which they have to choose between duty and passion. About half of his plays were in verse, but he frequently used grandiloquent and sensational prose. He preferred to deal with strong emotions, and most of his plays end in tragedy and death. Although his plots were precisely engineered, Echegaray had little regard for logic or psychological verity, and he strained for effect in declamatory and exaggerated dialogue. His inflexible personages move about in a conventional world, harassed by passion or *idea fixe* that leads to their own death or to someone else's. Creatures of his imagination many of his characters border on the abnormal. His unyielding situations seem contrived and his plays exhibit an unusual patchwork of influences, among them Calderon, Romanticism, Naturalism, Ibsen, and social criticism.

The best of his day despite his faults, Echegaray had a lively imagination, a fecundity of invention, a keen sense of tragedy, and an unerring ability to portray the strong situation. His dramas created emotion and stirred audiences deeply, perhaps because he believed that “lo sublime del arte esta en el llanto en el dolor y la muerte.” Using honor, duty, and love, with a liberal sprinkling of adultery together with the time-worn fate motive filled his plays with feverish and exaggerated passions; but he also applied his art to the social problems and prejudices of his society.

Echegaray's two best-known plays are *O locura o santidad* (1877) and *el gran galeto* (1881), the latter regarded as his masterpiece. The first of these, a combination thesis and honor play, relates the story of a quixotic protagonist whose sense of duty inclines him to return his wealth to

its rightful owners. To forestall any such insanity, his own heirs commit him to an asylum. Typically, Echegaray insists upon the enforcement of honor even though the innocent will be hurt, and he exploits the dramatic situation skillfully. *El gran galeoto* deals with slander and frivolous gossip that destroy a marriage. Society as a whole is responsible, for as one of the victims says in the prologue "el gran galeoto" is "todo el mundo." Filled with passionate outbursts and characters writhing in melodramatic agony the play can only end in tragedy. Here again Echegaray combines an honor tragedy, social protest and Romantic passion.

Other important titles of Echegaray's production are *La esposa del vengador* (1874); *El puno de la espada* (1875); *el seno de la muerte* (1879); *La muerte en los labios* (1880); *el hijo de don Juan* (1892); *Mariana* (1892); *Mancha que limpia* (1895); and *A fuerza de arrastrarse* (1905).

#### G. Benito Perez Galdos (1843 – 1920)

Although he was Spain's foremost novelist after Cervantes, Galdos unsuccessfully attempted to write for the theater in his early twenties. His first mature play however was not performed until 1892. Possessor of a keen psychological insight and the ability to create powerful characters, he nonetheless lacked the dramatic technique and feeling needed to create the perfect play. Many of his plays dramatizations of his novels by necessity develop more succinctly and clearly social theses involving justice, truth, and individual liberty.

Despite his relative failure as a dramatist, the strength, deep emotion, and sharp insight into human nature that characterize his novels are visible in his plays. *Electra* (1901), his most successful drama, reiterates a favorite theme of the author, the conflict between obscurantism and progress. *El abuelo* (1904), a stage adaptation of his novel by the same name, attempts to show the leveling power of love and that nobility is not a matter of birth but of spirit and heart, another favorite theme. Other plays are *La loca de la casa* (1893) and *La de San Quintin* (1894).

#### H. Lesser Dramatist of the Nineteenth Century

1. *Gaspar Nunez de Arce* (1834 – 1903), better known as a lyric poet, wrote a number of dramas, among them his masterpiece *El haz de lena* (1872), recognized as the best historical play of the nineteenth century. The author, promoting religious tolerance, exhibits good psychological penetration and empathy in delineating the struggle between love and duty in the father (Felipell) of a rebellious son (Carlos). Other plays are *Deudas de la honra* (1863) and *Quien debe paga* (1867).

2. *Joaquin Dicenta* (1863 – 1917) unsuccessfully attempted to apply Echegaray's violent emotion to proletarian themes. Credited with initiating Naturalism on the Spanish stage, Dicenta preferred themes such as those of an honest workman made a criminal by brutal treatment (*Juan Jose*, 1895) and a convict regenerated by love (*El lobo*, 1913).

*Eugenio Selles* (1844-1926), with *El nudo gordiano* (1878), and *Leopoldo Cano* (1844-1934), author of *La opinion publica* (1878), could not equal Echegaray's lead. *Enrique Gaspar* (1842 – 1902), with his satire, Realism, and social consciousness, took a stride toward Benavente.

#### I. The *genero chico*

In the second half of the nineteenth century the *zarzuela*, in its modern version a one-act operetta with music, song, and sometimes dancing alternating with dialogue, became immensely popular in Spain. Whether satiric, popular, or *costumbrista*, *zarzuelas* frequently depict in a comical vein low-life character types of Madrid. One of the most successful composers of *zarzuelas* was Francisco Asenjo Barbieri. Among writers of books are Ricardo de la Vega, Carlos Arniches, Javier de Burgos, and Vital Aza. Musicians include Valverde, Chapi, and Tomas Breton. One of the best-loved *zarzuelas* is *La verbena de la paloma* by Ricardo de la Vega and Tomas Breton.

### TWENTIETH-CENTURY DRAMA

#### A. General Considerations

During the first thirty years or so of the twentieth century, Spanish drama took several directions, but the major innovators were Ramon del Valle-Inclan and Jacinto Grau. A number of writers contributed to a lesser degree. Despite the changes wrought by these dramatists many of the nineteenth-century tendencies of the Realistic theater continued. Perez Galdos wrote psychological dramas of the individual against society. Manuel Linares Rivas, theoretically a disciple of Benavente's, reflected more the nineteenth-century thesis play. Carlos Arniches, who began with the *genero chico* fused comic and tragic elements in full-length dramas, concentrating on the environment of Madrid and anticipating to a degree later experiments in the Theater of the Absurd.

The brothers Joaquin and Serafin Alvarez Quintero wrote about Andalusia, but their sentimental portraits, amiable reflections, and idealized pieces did little to advance the drama. Pedro Munoz Seca entertained with exaggerated plays featuring comic types and absurd situations. Modernists such as Francisco Villa-espasa and Eduardo Marquina, wrote poetic theater, partly in reaction to Benavente's drawing room comedies. Marquina, more successful than Villaespesa, composed heroic dramas that emphasized traditional Spanish virtues and Spain's successful past, as well as some meaningful rural dramas.

Two members of the Generation of 1898, Unamuno and Azorin, wrote interesting dramatic works, the former dealing with problems of personality and Existential approximations of reality, the latter producing Surrealistic plays of the subconscious that anticipated certain aspects of Garcia Lorca's work. Ramon Gomez de la Serna also attempted Surrealism with greater emphasis on sexuality. Finally, Gregorio Martinez Sierra, almost forgotten today, praised family valued and good-Christian women.

Benavente's immensely popular drawing room comedies, urban works, and provincial plays, done in a witty ironic, though often superficial manner, undoubtedly made him a major figure. Yet though he gave the death blow to Echegaray's melo-dramas, he contributed little to dramatic intervention. Ramon del Valle-Inclan was more important from a developmental point of view. He wrote universal, timeless plays, involving various arche-types. In his *esperpentos*, in which caricature did not disguise social concerns, he provided artistic deformations of traditional reality, thereby exhibiting aspects of the Theater of the Absurd. Jacinto Grau, who rejected commercialism for experimentation, attempted to synthesize various forms in his dramas and treated universal, eternal, transcendental problems, essentially tragic in tone.

The two major dramatists of the 1930s were Garcia Lorca and Alejandro Casonam although a number of contributions were made by others, among them Rafael Alberti; Max Aub, who wrote before and after the thirties; Miguel Mihura, whose comic works were not performed until the 1950's; Jardiel Poncela, whose ironic parodies and self-mocking satires may be the most humorous of the century; and Miguel Hernandez and Pedro Salinas, who like Alberti, were more famous as poets.

In his theater, Garcia Lorca combined his lyrical genius with Andalusian folklore, music, and dance to create symbolic dramas of archetypes and elemental passions. Though he flirted with Surrealism, he is best known for his rural dramas, in which he emphasizes the tragedy of inhibited personal liberty and, through symbols like the moon, the inevitable death that stalks us all. Casona excelled at the interplay of reality and fantasy. He believed in confronting reality and life, however painful, and stressed the impossibility of escape through madness or evasion. Among his other themes are concepts of punishments, redemption and the power of true love.

A number of playwrights produced works in the 1940s and on into the 1950s and 1960s, extolling political, moral, or historical points of view in both serious and comic veins. Among these writers are Jose Maria Peman, who began producing plays in the 1930s; Joaquin Calvo Sotelo; Juan Ignacio Luca de Tena; Jose Lopez Rubio, whose major works appeared in the 1950s; and Victor Riu de Iriarte whose works are elegant and witty.

The two major figures from the 1950s on are Antonio Buero Vallejo and Alfonso Sastre. Buero's *Historia de una escalera* (1949) is one of the landmark dramatic productions of the twentieth century and Buero continued to write dramas in the 1980s on historical social, and moral themes and even in a fantastic and mythical vein. He uses a historical perspective to analyze current Spanish imperatives and believes in an open tragedy of hope. Buero is a

master of technique and uses darkness and light, other arts, and Brechtian distancing to produce plays that almost always show compassion for human sorrows.

Alfonso Sastre has produced a number of somewhat revolutionary plays. In contrast with Buero's concept of *posibilismo*, that is, writing plays that can be produced even in a dictatorial society. Sastre prefers leftist dramas, even though they may not be performed, that is, *imposibilismo*. Most of his plays, unlike Buero's present the audience with an Existentially closed situation. Though he is to an extent overly intellectual, Sastre supports the rights of individuals in a tragic, often inhumane worlds. He deals with moral responsibility, guilt, hate, love, and the pain of being part of humanity. Alfonso Paso, who was at first associated with Sastre's experimental theatrical group, wrote numerous dramas and popular tragicomedies, many of them in Mihura's ironic tradition.

Two other major playwrights of the 1960s, both of whom had to contend with the censorship of Franco's Spain, were Lauro Olmo and Carlos Muniz, although writers from previous generations continued to produce plays. Olmo concentrated on the reality of a hypocritical society and themes like emigration. Muniz wrote both Realistic and Expressionistic dramas that criticize the social situation, especially of the middle class.

Other writers one should mention include Jose Martin Recuerda, who began writing in the 1950s and was interested in both placid and revolutionary characters in an Andalusian setting; J.M. Rodriguez Mendez, who abandoned Realism to expose, through grotesque distortions, the reality of Spanish society; and Fernando Arrabal, who left Spain for Paris in the early 1950s and wrote most of his plays in French. Arrabal created a special Theater of Absurd, or Theater of Panic, to use his own term. Also, in the 1960s and 1970s a number of playwrights, because of censorship, wrote a kind of subterranean theater, often political allegories. The two-best known of these underground dramatists are Jose Ruibal and Eduardo Quiles.

In the 1970s more experimentation took place, frequently involving foreign models, and with Franco's death in 1975 an explosion of previously forbidden sexual and libertarian themes appeared.

The 1980s saw continuing activity in the theater, with a variety of themes from homosexuality to history combining reality and fantasy, exploring aspects of Surrealism and re-creating traditional literature. Buero Vallejo Alfonso Sastre, Lauro Olmo, Jaime Salom, Antonio Gala, Jose Luis Alonso de Santos, Francisco Nieva and many others continue to be active in Spanish theater.

## B. Jacinto Benavente y Martinez (1866 – 1954)

Benavente freed the drama from the moribund melodramatic tradition established by Echegaray. Among his 172 plays Benavente wrote psychological, satiric, rural, fantastic, sentimental, historical, and even Surrealistic dramas, though many of his theatrical works seem to have more narrative than dramatic force, and his characters talk much but do little. After *El nido ajeno* (1894), his first successful play, he produced an even more merciless satire, *Gente conocida* (1896), which helped establish his reputation. In these early works, Benavente presents a succession of types whose shortcomings he pitilessly eposes. Only occasionally in his early plays does one encounter a noble person. Although most of his characters are hollow, hypocritical, and vain, at times Benavente curiously reveals compassion for the weaknesses of human beings. He attacked the aristocracy because, he said, it was more charitable to laugh at those with advantages than at the disadvantaged. Most of these dramas are conversational or drawing room comedies.

Between 1901 and 1904 Benavente produced eighteen dramas in an often malicious, skeptical, or cynical vein that dissect the hypocrisy of Spanish society. He wrote in an elegant but natural language and managed to create a few credible characters. Among the more interesting of these works we find *Lo cursi* (1901), an attack on the excesses of Modernism; *la gobernadora* (1901), an expose of the corruption and lust for power in a provincial town; *la noche del sabado* (1903), a dissection of selfish ambition and a contrast between good and evil, a constant preoccupation of Benavente's; and *El dragon de fuego* (1904), a contrast between Oriental stoicism and Occidental materialism. One of Benavente's most incisive

satires *Los malhechores del bien* (1905), ridicules the abuses of false charity and religious hypocrisy.

Between 1907 and 1913, Benavente's twenty-five dramas revealed him as a more mature, confident and versatile writer. In many of these dramas one finds a moral and humanitarian tone that is absent in some of his earlier works, and he emphasizes the necessity for the well-being and happiness of children. His father, a pediatrician may have influenced some of his works, which reflect a deep knowledge of youngsters. Of this period, *Los intereses creados* (1907) is undoubtedly his best work, and it is considered by many to be his outstanding dramatic achievement. Benavente resorts to the grotesque masks of the Italian *commedia dell'arte* for his types. The ideas and sentiments, the vision of the world and life, differ little from his philosophy expressed elsewhere, but they have in this play a classic simplicity that is striking. Through their actions the puppets show us the hidden threads by which men are moved in life, the good and bad passions that inspire their actions. The rogue, Crispin, is the motivating force that sets off the various movements and puts them at the service of his master, Leandro. The contrasts that each man carries within himself are revealed, but the small and petty passions vanities, and ambitions are treated with a satire of generous and humanitarian overtones that insists upon the power of love in humans motivations, in spite of the creation of bonds of interest by Crispin for his idealistic master. Symbolically, Leandro represents the good, and Crispin, the wickedness of the human soul.

Two rural dramas complete the important work of this period: *Senora ama* (1908) and *La malquerida* (1913). The former attempts to define the Castilian spirit and soul. The latter reveals the consequences of the incestuous love of a father for his stepdaughter. Raimunda, the wife, struggles between hatred and pity for her husband because of this relationship and the murder stemming from it. In 1945 Benavente wrote a third, less successful, rural drama, *La Infanzona*.

Even though Benavente won the Nobel Prize in 1922, his plays after 1920 were largely unsuccessful. Probably the best of his works during his last thirty-four years were *Para el cielo y los altares* (1928), a prophetic work about approaching revolution; *La ciudad doliente* (1945), which in Pirandello fashion brings a novelist to the stage to discuss life with his own creations; and *Abdicacion* (1948), a contrast between old and modern Spain. These years reveal the almost pathetic dichotomy between Benavente's own political and idealistic beliefs.

Benavente introduced a drama into Spain that in spite of its sometimes-overlong conversations and discourses preaches the eternal truth that man cannot call himself free and happy unless he has dominion over his own soul. One might point to many characteristics he exhibits in his total works, such elegance of style, ingeniousness in ideas, cynicism, subtle irony skepticism, and tenderness. In his early criticism of society, he is less compassionate than he is later, but beneath his smile or irony we see a trace of kindness in all his works and an almost poetic and lyrical evaluation of life.

### C. Ramon del Valle-Inclan (1866 – 1936)

Francisco Ruiz Ramon believes that Valle-Inclan's dramas are among the most revolutionary in the history of the Spanish theater. This if true, may account for their lack of popularity until many years after the author's death. Among Valle-Inclan's plays are mythological works, farces, and *esperpentos*. He sought new paths constantly for theatrical expression and, while assimilating aspects of Symbolism and Expressionism, anticipated much of the Theater of the Absurd and produced a timeless and universal drama.

His first dramatic work, *Cenizas* (1899), is a reelaboration of *Femeninas* (1895), his first prose work. It treats the theme of adultery in a new manner and reflects the author's sensuality and the end-of-the-century perversity of some of his work. Most of Valle-Inclan's dramas are descriptive and project a narrative power, as, for example, in *El Marques de Bradomin* (1907), a theatrical version of his *Sonata de Otono* but with a different ending. In his *Comedias Barbaras*, a trilogy of plays – *Aguila de blason* (1907), *Romance de lobos* (1908), and *Cara de plata* (1922) – Valle-Inclan's interest in superstition and fascination with death continue. In these plays he reveals a masterful use of chiaroscuro. He uses archetypal and Freudian themes, at times with Nietzschean overtones, in his depiction of a protagonist, Juan Manuel de

Montenegro insatiably erotic, a Galician don Juan who lives in a disintegrating world of madness violent conflicts, sex, and death. Montenegro represents an expiring feudal nobility and, in spite of his proclivities, exhibits a conscience and sense of nobility not shared by his sinful sons. Perhaps the most moving of these plays is *Romance de lobos* which recounts the death of the protagonist. Among other plays, *El embrujado* (1913) again shows us a superstitious world ruled by fatality and death. *Divinas palabras* (1920) concerns a hydrocephalic dwarf, the focus of passion and death, and combining cruelty and compassion with grotesque elements, anticipates Valle-Inclan's *esperpento* phase.

In the same year, *Lucas de Bohemia*, his most famous *esperpento*, published in definitive form in 1924, appeared. The protagonist, Max Estrella, defined the new form as a concave carnival mirror in which the boundaries of the possible and the credible blur. Valle-Inclan attributed the invention of the *esperpento* to Goya and used the deforming mirror and its grotesque projections to come to grips with a more truthful and profound reality. The play deals with historical events between 1917 and 1920, and although highly stylized, it projects a painful Spanish reality. The author here anticipates the work of Beckett, Ionesco, and Adamov. Among Valle-Inclan's other *esperpentos* is *Los cuernos de Don Friolera* (1921), a grotesque, satiric humorous commentary on Calderonian *pundonor*. Through a puppet show we see the negative aspects of humanity and the futility of trusting the Church, the government, or the military. *Las galas del difunto* (1926), a deformation of the don Juan myth, and *La hijo del capitán* (1927), an attack on the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, are other *esperpentos*. Grotesque elements are found not only in the *esperpentos* but also in many of Valle-Inclan's plays. Other Valle-Inclan plays include *Cuento de abril* (1910), *Voces de gesta* (1911), *La marquesa Rosalinda* (1912), and *La rosa de papel* (1924).

#### D. Jacinto Grau Delgado (1877 – 1958)

Jacinto Grau, one of the great renovators of the Spanish drama, never achieved much popular success, but he attempted, through his symbolic, intellectual theater, to return to the drama a dignity the commercialization had largely removed. As sources, he used Biblical themes (*El hijo prodigo*, 1918), the *romancero* (*El Conde Alarcos*, 1917), and the Classical drama (*El burlador que no se burla*, 1930). In view of his insistence upon new attitudes toward the theater and his attacks on producers and impresarios, it is not surprising that his plays were often boycotted in Madrid, though they were warmly received in other countries.

Even in his earliest efforts he revealed a subtlety, poetic vision, and dynamic style, concentrating thematically on the power of human love. Among his many important dramas are the following: *Don Juan de Carillana* (1913), about an older don Juan who falls in love with a mysterious woman who turns out to be his own daughter; *El señor de Pigmalión* (1921), an allegory of human selfishness involving puppets with almost human abilities who rebel against their creator; *El burlador que no se burla* about a don Juan who knew all the secrets of a woman's heart but could not fathom those of death; and *La casa del diablo* (1933), quite similar to Sartre's *Les jeux sont faits* (1947), about people after death forced to suffer life again until they discover real love.

Grau, who exhibited a definite fondness for Existential themes, was a robust, virile, deep, human, and expressive writer. He promoted the view that true charity is love and all great love is charity. Having faith in humanity he tried for a better world through combating the laws of nature that rule man blindly. In his plays he talked of free will freedom through action, reality versus the ideal, the domination of women by men, the over-whelming power of sexual attraction, and salvation through love. Few dramatists in Spanish theatrical history are his equal in terms of maturity, ingenuity, philosophical depth, psychological analysis, character portrayal, and freshness in form, back-ground, and language.

#### E. Other Dramatists of the First Thirty Years

1. *Carlos Arniches* (1866 – 1943) wrote over sixty original dramas and collaborated on a great many others. He started his career with the *genero chico*, and his *sainetes*, together with his longer works, show that he was a comic genius with his linguistic experimentations.

Among his best *sainetes* are *Las estrellas* (1904) and *Los Milagros del journal* (1924). Among his longer plays, which he labeled "tragedias grotescas," *La señorita de Trevez* (1916) is his most famous. His work is a mixture of the comic and tragic, whatever the caricatures or grotesque situations may be, and it affords us a general social criticism of his country and time.

2. *Manuel Linares Rivas* (1867 – 1938) employs a satiric and moral tone in his examination of human weakness, often caused by laws or passing circumstances. His plays are quite similar to the thesis plays of the nineteenth century, and he concentrates on the prejudices and discriminations of his period. Almost forgotten today, his best drama is probably *la garra* (1914), about divorce and the need for tolerance.
3. *Serafin* (1871 – 1938) and *Joaquin* (1873 – 1944) *Alvarez Quintero* are responsible for important comic achievements set in Seville, where they grew up, and they fill their regional works with the sunshine and laughter of their native Andalusia. They wrote the first of their more than two hundred plays in 1888 but had to wait until 1897 for their first dramatic triumph. For the next forty years, almost every theatrical season in Madrid had at least one play by the Quinteros. Almost one half of their dramas are of one act, but all are light, enchanting, and warmly humorous. Of their many plays one can cite *Los Galeotes* (1900), more serious than most of their works, and *Las de Cain* (1908). The Quintero brothers, witty and graceful, believed in a popular, polished, amiable, and realistic prose drama, preferably spiritually uplifting and optimistic.
4. *Pedro Munoz Seca* (1881 – 1936) wrote a great number of *sainetes* in addition to longer dramatic works, but his major contribution was in the drama of intrigue, full of uncommon situations often verging on the ridiculous. He employs slang, puns, plays on words, caricature, parody, and dramatic tricks, producing a drama frequently labeled as *astracan*. He anticipates the grotesque in later Spanish dramas. Among his titles one can mention *La venganza de don Mendo* (1918).
5. *Gregorio Martinez Sierra* (1881 – 1947) learned much from Benavente, but he introduced a poetic note of idealism and love into his dramas. He portrays mainly the pleasant aspects of life in his search for beauty and demonstrates a faith in human nature. In his idealistic plays, virtue always triumphs, and good works achieve their reward. His wife, Maria de la O Lejarraga, an ardent feminist collaborated with him in many of his dramas. This may account for the emphasis on family living, Christian morality feminine values, and the sanctity of life. His plays include *el ama de la casa* (1910), about maternal love, and his masterpiece *La cancion de cuna* (1911) about the maternal love of nuns for founding abandoned at their convent.
6. *Miguel de Unamuno* (1864 – 1936), better known as an essayist, novelist, and poet, wrote a series of intellectual dramas with little action and sparse dialogue. As in his other works, in his drama he deals with man's essence, the problems of personality, the maternal instinct, and the classic themes of hate and envy. Among his better plays are *El otro* (1926) a work treating the Cain and Abel theme, and *El hermano Juan o el mundo es teatro* (1934), relating myth and reality in a new version of the don Juan theme.
7. *Jose Martinez Ruiz* (1873 – 1967), better known by his pen name, Azorin, wanted to change the nature and structure of Spanish drama, and in his attempt to create a Surrealistic theater, dealt with the temporal, the nature of illusion, and death. As in his better-known essays, he concentrates on the nature of time. Some of his experimental plays are *Old Spain* (1926), a mixture of fantasy and reality, tradition and progress; *Brandy, mucho brandy* (1927), about the power of illusion and dreams; and *Angelita* (1930), involving magic and Christian themes.
8. *Ramon Gomez de la Serna* (1888 – 1963), better known for his novels and gregurias, also wrote plays, many of them somewhat Surrealistic, that concentrate on the theme of sexuality. One may mention among his titles *El drama del palacio deshabitado* (1909).

The poetic theater appeared toward the end of the first decade. The Machado brothers, Antonio (1875 – 1939) and Manuel (1874 – 1947), wrote seven plays in collaboration, five of them in verse. Their most successful was *La Lola se va a los puertos* (1929). Francisco Villaespesa (1877 – 1936), not too successful as a playwright, wrote *El alcazar de las perlas* (1911). The most important of the poetic playwrights was Eduardo Marquina (1879



– 1946), who wrote legendary and historical plays about a false and idealized Spanish past and some less successful rural dramas. His most famous are *Las hijas del Cid* (1908), a mixture of epic and lyric elements, and *En Flandes se ha puesto el sol* (1910), about the loyalty and self-sacrifice involved in the last days of the Spanish occupation of the Netherlands. In a second period he wrote *Teresa de Jesus* (1933) in which religious exaltation matches his earlier passionate nationalism.

#### F. Federico Garcia Lorca (1898 – 1936)

Federico Garcia Lorca, one of the truly great poetic dramatists of modern times, was born in Fuentevaqueros in Granada, a land where Moorish influences are everywhere present. He imbibed the spirit of the earth and Moorish climate in earliest childhood. These elements, combined with an uncanny ability to interpret popular traditions and folkways (but in unusual and daring imagery), were to persist throughout his entire work.

In 1919 Lorca wrote his first dramatic work, *El maleficio de la mariposa*, an allegorical and Symbolist play that was not well received at its first performance in 1920. In 1931 Lorca became the director of a student theater, La Barraca, which toured Spain and performed classics from Juan del Encina through Calderon. He wrote two farces *La zapatera prodigiosa* (1930), about the consequences of a marriage of an old man and a young woman and the meaning of honor; and *El amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín*, finished in 1928 but not performed until 1931. *Mariana Pineda* written in 1925 but not performed until 1927, is Lorca's only historical play. It is set during the reign of Fernando VII and tells of a heroine from Granada who sacrificed herself for independence and liberty. The Surrealistic *Así que pasen cinco años* (1931) is an allegory of lost time. *Dona Rosita la soltera o el lenguaje de las flores* (1935) is about frustration in a rigidly moral society and, like *Don Perlimplín*, about unattainable love. In 1933 Lorca also wrote *El público*, not published in a complete version until 1974, which in addition to its Surrealistic elements is an Expressionistic attack on the entire social order. Additionally, Lorca wrote puppet plays: *el retabillo de don Cristóbal* (1931) and two others published posthumously, *Titeres de Cachipossa*; *La tragicomedia de don Cristóbal y la sena Rosita* (1949) and *La niña que riega la albahaca y el príncipe preguntón* (1982).

Lorca's most important dramatic work is a rural trilogy *Bodas de sangre* (1933), *Yerma* (1934), and *La casa de Bernarda Alba* (1936). *Bodas de sangre* reflects Lorca's personal tragic view of a love triangle in which nature and human instincts are constrained by an unyielding social order. It concerns the abduction of a willing bride on her wedding day by Leonardo, her former sweetheart. The lovers are followed through the forest by the Bridegroom, aided by the Moon and Death, who describes the death of the two men. The *novia* looks for love and life but finds only death, and the family honor, a remnant of the sterile and artificial traditional Spanish code, can only result in tragedy. *Yerma* deals with sexuality, free will, and sterility relating the tragedy of a childless wife in a loveless marriage who kills her husband and thus condemns herself to a barren existence. Almost an archetypal figure, Yerma, through her tragic act, rebels against the traditional forces that have hemmed her in. *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, not performed until 1945, resembles a Greek tragedy and emphasizes Lorca's favorite theme of the interplay between authority and liberty. Against the background of an impregnable, intensely white house and walls, we see the sterile existence of five unwilling virgin daughters beneath the tyrannical rule of a fanatically and hypocritically honor-oriented mother. Alba, whose name means white, represents the repression of a narrow, traditional, intolerant Spain.

Lorca used symbols on many levels, but certain images recur throughout his work, among them the moon, the bull, and the horse. Sometimes these are not symbols, of tragedy, but for the most part they represent death or the dark servants of tragic fate. Death, accompanied by flowing blood, is served by a variety of pointed objects. In *Bodas de sangre*, the Moon asks for blood to warm herself. Tears and laughter combined with a symbolic overlay and a poetic prose form constitute basic elements of Lorca's dramas.

Lorca's principal roles are reserved for women and his heroines are tragic creations who suffer from frustrations of various kinds. Tragedy accompanies them. In *Yerma*, the woman who cannot give life gives death. In *Dona Rosita la soltera*, death comes to the soul as a result

of lost hope. In *Don Perlimplín*, death is the result of the realization of lost youth. In *Bodas de sangre* death is the only possible outcome, and in *La casa de Bernarda Alba* death follows quickly on the heels of sexual frustration and an overly rigid and artificial code of honor. In almost all these plays the heroine either gives death or receives it. Quite often the women symbolize abstractions: Mariana represents liberty; Rosita, desolation; Adela, virginity; Bernarda, dominion; and Yerma, maternity.

In addition to the elementary passions that he portrays, Lorca employs to good advantage his knowledge of art, music, and the ballet, and his musical language casts an almost magical spell. His favorite colors include white and the pastel shades. His sounds are delicate, and his voices are usually subdued, but the quietness is often shattered by a cry of sorrow or a shout of joy. He utilizes pantomime, the chorus, songs, dances, and musical instruments.

Religious sentiment abounds in some of the Lorca's plays, and his attitude ranges from tormented doubt to rebellion against traditional beliefs. Principally he writes about love and liberty, and he saw not only the tragedy of the women of Spain but also the tragedy of the disenfranchised everywhere. He pictured a society whose severe moral laws could lead only to tragic consequences, often for innocent, though frustrated, souls. Lorca witnessed the needs of those who hemmed in by a dark forest of conventions and fears, sought to escape through love. It is their tragedy, the tragedy of the unloved, that Lorca wrote.

#### G. Alejandro Casona (1903 – 1965)

Alejandro Casona is the pseudonym of Alejandro Rodríguez Álvarez. Casona began his writing with poems in a Modernist vein, but he soon turned to the drama, while maintaining his lyrical base. He founded a children's theater, El Pajaro Pinto, and from 1931 to 1936 he served as director of the Teatro del Pueblo and Teatro de las Misiones Pedagógicas. Forced to flee the country by Franco supporters, he lived in Buenos Aires from 1939 to 1962, when he returned to Spain.

Some of his dramas are *La sirena varada* (1934) which won the Lope de Vega Prize; *Otra vez el diablo* (1935); *Nuestra Natacha* (1936), one of his few dramas without fantastic elements, which is a plea for social reforms in a Spain suffering from intolerance; *Prohibido suicidarse en primavera* (1937); and *La dama del alba* (1944), his best-known play, first performed by Margarita Xirgu in Buenos Aires. Death, La Peregrina, is a protagonist, who herself is a victim of her own tragedy but who nevertheless offers the only solution. This play, filled with light and color Asturian folklore and legends, like almost all Casona's works mixes fantasy and reality with the theme of love and redemption. Still other plays are *La barca sin pescador* (1945); *Los árboles mueren de pie* (1949); and *El caballero de las Espuelas de oro* (1964), a historical play based on the life of Quevedo.

Casona's works contain fantastic characters whose principal duty is to bring beauty to normal lives but combined with this illusion is the constant preoccupation with truth and reality. In all his dramas he shows compassion for the weaknesses and difficulties of human sorrow. In some of his plays Casona seems preoccupied with the problem of suicide but the predominant force that accompanies this fascination is always love, a love that saves and heals. In other dramas older characters provide the driving force as people who have fought the battles of life and have evolved a wonderfully comforting philosophy of work and love. Often Casona's characters seek to escape the world of pain and sorrow, but only in their adaptation complete or partial, and a confrontation with reality can they find happiness. The sense of duty is strong in Casona, and ethical living and reality are synonymous for him. The infantina in *Otra vez el diablo sirena* and don Joaquín in *La sirena varada*, the Amante in *Prohibido, suicidarse en primavera*, and others weave a world of fantasy to defend themselves from the cruelty of the real one. Although they may escape temporarily through illusion, they can find true happiness only by facing up to their problems. Through sacrifice and duty and even suffering may come peace for Casona repeats in many different keys the basic fact that only through facing the truth, no matter how bitter, can one be saved. He does not argue that illusion is bad, but his conclusion seems to be that the worlds of reality and happiness are synonymous.

His plays deal with Christian love, with individual moral values in a somewhat dehumanized world, with spiritual crises, with human warmth, with faith and optimism, and with social

problems. But Casona also evokes the Asturian countryside, its people and their folklore and legends, in plays filled with a poetic mixture of dreams, mystery, and reality.

#### H. Other Dramatists of the Thirties and Forties

Many of the playwrights who published during the 1940s produced their best work in the 1950s and will be treated below, though an arbitrary decision is difficult to make.

1. *Pedro Salinas* (1891 – 1951) wrote fourteen theatrical pieces, two in three acts and the rest on one act. In his plays we see some of the same emphasis on love and beauty that is so much a part of his poetry, for which he is more renowned. Using an imaginative interplay of illusion and reality which the poet himself called “realidad fabulada,” Salinas deals with the transfiguration of reality. Among his short plays are *La Fuente del Arcángel* and *Los santos*, about Falangist cruelty and the meaning of innocence, sacrifice, and guilt. His two longer plays, *Judit y el tirano* and *El director*, stress the importance of being human and the problem of achieving happiness. His plays written between 1936 and 1951, were published in his *Teatro completo* (1957).
2. *Enrique Jardiel Poncela* (1901-1952), also a novelist and short story writer, produced over a hundred works. He may well be the greatest Spanish humorist of the twentieth century. His somewhat grotesque theater involves ironic parodies and complex and self-mocking satires. One finds in his plays hunger, death, magic, ghosts, mystery, infidelities, madness, and both sexual and spiritual love. Jardiel Poncela sometimes employed cinematic techniques in his intricate and intellectual farces, which mix reality with fantasy, absurdities and caricatures with the sublime. His bizarre plots are filled with sudden appearances and disappearances. His plays after 1927 include *Angelina o el honor de un brigadier* (1934), a verse parody of the concept of honor; *Un marido de ida y Vuelta* (1939); and *Eloisa está debajo de un almendro* (1940).
3. *Rafael Alberti* (b. 1902), who made his mark as a poet, wrote about a dozen plays, including an interesting adaptation of Cervantes’ *Numancia*, which he condensed and tried to make relevant for contemporary audiences. *El hombre deshabitado*, performed in 1931, borrows elements from Calderon’s theater and is an Expressionistic and stylized modern allegory of paradise lost.  
Man, the protagonist, journeys through life, which he finds meaningless, and realizes that paradise is not for him. Though somewhat prolix, the work involves an avant-garde dance of the senses. Alberti’s historical plays, *De un momento a otro* (1939) and *Noche de gurrá en el Museo del Prado* (1956), deal with the Civil War. The first play tells the story of a family divided by ideological passion; the second deals with Goya, his paintings, and the interrelationships of the two war periods. *El adefesio* (1944), the second of a popular trilogy reveals the influences of the esperpento and, some would say of *La casa de Bernadette Alba*. The grotesque characters help Alberti focus on the bigotry, intolerance, and repression of his unhappy country.
4. *Max Aub* (1903 – 1972), who was born in France and died in Mexico, is better known as a novelist, but he may well be a major dramatist who deserves more recognition than he has hitherto achieved. The author of dozens of plays in a variety of styles, ranging from one to six acts, he may have influenced Lorca and Casona. In his early avant-garde period, his plays are, in varying degrees, erotic, Expressionistic, Existential, and Surrealistic, but whatever his intellectual abstractions, he always displays a social conscience. Aub constantly expresses his concern for human dignity, man’s inability to communicate, and man’s loneliness. His first work, *Crimen*, not produced until 1956 though written as early as 1923, concerns the relationship between subjective and objective truth. *Narciso* (1927) is a modern version of the myth of Narcissus.

His second period produced some Civil War dramas in defense of the Republican cause, the best of which is the somewhat allegorical *Pedro López García* (1936). Aub also wrote plays dealing with World War II, involving historical, political, and social preoccupations and such themes as individual dignity, human values, and the perils of living in a police state. In some plays he deals with the plight of Jewish refugees, and the play some consider to be his masterpiece, *San Juan* (1943), treats the tragedy of Jewish

victims unwanted by any country and unable to disembark from their refugee ship. Although he uses reality and fantasy to good effect, his later plays show a more bitter reality. *Morir por cerrar los ojos* (1944), in six interesting acts, recounts the defects of French character in France's surrender to Germany in 1940. In 1950 he wrote one of his best psychological dramas, *Deseada*, called by the author "Fedra Vuelta al revés." Aub continued writing plays throughout the sixties, including one about the Vietnam War, *Retrato de un general* (1969).

5. *Miguel Hernandez* (1910 -1942), a great poet who was less successful as a dramatist, wrote a kind of *auto sacramental*, *Quien te ha visto y quien t eve y sombra de lo que eras* (1934), about innocence, guilt, grace, and redemption. Hernandez then turned to social drama, abandoning the verse of his *auto* for prose. *Los hijos de la Piedra* (1935) is about an uprising of miners. Returning to verse, Hernandez wrote another proletarian drama, *El Labrador de mas aire* (1937), and *Pastor de la muerte* (1937), about a popular hero and the defense of Madrid. In 1937 he published *Teatro de Guerra*, consisting of four prose scenes, revolutionary in nature.

#### I. Antonio Buero Vallejo (b.1916)

Antonio Buero Vallejo, who may be judged by future generations as the best dramatist of the second half of the twentieth century, served with the Republicans during the Spanish Civil War as a medical aide. Imprisoned until 1945, he came to public notice when he won two important prizes, the Lope de Vega Prize for *Historia de una escalera* (1949) and the Amigos de los Quinteros Prize for his one-act play *Las palabras en la arena* (1949), which treats the theme of adultery. It soon became apparent the Buero wanted to be both a witness and interpreter of the despair of modern man, and in his pursuit, he reformed the concept of Spanish tragedy with his social conscience and his concept of tragic hope in a confrontation with tragedy. In his early dramas he showed the influence of Ibsen, but later, following Brecht, he tried, while involving the audience, to keep the spectator at a distance in the hope that he might later exhibit his own social awareness in promoting social justice and political and personal freedom.

*Historia de una escalera* shows us the interwoven drama of four families of modest means in 1919, 1929, and 1949. The three generations use as a focus for all their actions the stairway leading to their apartments, which reminds them constantly of their hopes and failures. Through a simple exposition of their daily pettiness and tragedy. Buero shows us people who manage to find only disillusion disappointment, and death. In the end the son repeats the words of his unsuccessful father almost verbatim to paint a rosy future that the audience assumes will never occur.

Nonetheless, in this drama as in others, Buero sees hope in spite of apparent pessimism and defeat on the part of his protagonists. For him tragedy is a positive catharsis rather than a purification; it involves a sublimation of the human condition with moral and ethical implications, as hope helps revitalize faith and spiritual development. Although the message is clearer in other spiritual development. Although the message is clearer in other plays, in *Historia de una escalera*, in spite of the frustration, abulia, and lack of self-determination, man, responsible for his own development, can change through effort, and the younger generation can provide new vision and new hope.

*En la ardiente oscuridad* (1950) utilizes two of Buero's favorite themes, the inability of man to see reality as it is and the need to shed light on a socially repressive world. The plot concerns an Institute for the Blind whose optimistic inmates are forced to see life as it is. Buero explores the meaning of truth and freedom, the individual's need for authenticity, and the relationship of physical, and spiritual blindness. Some see political overtones in the play but Buero protested that this drama has no thesis but simply explores what really motivates human beings. He again treated these themes in *El concierto de San Ovidio* (1962), about a group of grotesque would-be musicians, the destruction of their dream, and their rejection of tyranny. We see again a somewhat similar theme in *Dialogo secreto* (1984), about a color-blind art critic,

Many of Buero's plays explore the relationship between truth and fiction and in varying degrees employ myth, legend, and fable. Among these are *La tejedora de sueños* (1952), based on the Greek legend of Penelope and Ulysses; *La senal que se espera* (1952), about a

musician's lost inspiration: *Casi un cuento de hadas* (1953), about the love of a beautiful princess for an ugly prince; and *Irene o el tesoro* (1954), about illusion and madness. In *El tragaluz* (1967), a play with a science fiction framework of time travelers from the twenty-third century who reflect on the tragedies of the Spanish Civil War, Buero, through a family's personal tragedy, pleads for the individual liberty and dignity.

Buero stressed the theme of human suffering in *Hoy es fiesta* (1956), a collective tragedy involving the illusions, despair, and dreams of Madrid's lower classes. *Las cartas boca abajo* (1957) is a psychological play about human frustration. In *Aventura en lo gris* (1963), Buero deals with war refugees and the struggle between good and evil. In several plays Buero writes about historical figures who also struggled for individual expression and against repression and tyranny. In *Un sonador para un pueblo* (1958), he depicts the eighteenth-century Esquilache, his dreams and his failure. In *Las meninas* (1960), he reflects his own artistic talent and interest in painting as he reinterprets historical truth and the life of Velazquez. He reiterates this interest in *El sueño de la razón* (1970), about Goya, his paintings, and the period in which he lived, a play that, according to some, reflects the intolerance and absolutism suffered under Franco. In *La detonación* (1977), he examines and reinterprets the life and times of Mariano Jose de Larra. Buero interprets his own prison experience in *La Fundación* (1974). In *La doble historia del Doctor Valmy* (1976), he explores the use of torture as a political instrument and the themes of truth and ethical responsibility. In *Los jueces en la noche* (1979), he looks at terrorism, and in *Lazro en el laberinto* (1986), he displays a kind of Freudian psychology.

Buero's total production won for him in 1986 the Cervantes Prize, Spain's most prestigious award. He was the first playwright so honored. Buero is a master of ironic devices, Brechtian distancing, chiaroscuro, and stage technique, but he achieved success because he showed a compassion for human sorrow realized the difficulty of self-realization and saw the possibility of spiritual development through suffering. Most of his plays had to be produced during the censorship of the Franco years, and so he had to practice what he called *posibilismo*, hoping his audience would interpret correctly the symbolic message underlying his dramatic works. Buero, in short, concentrates on the tragic aspects of modern man, the question of good and evil, the need for love and understanding in the contemporary anguished world, and hope as a vital part of faith and metaphysical justification of the world.

#### J. Alfonso Sastre (b. 1926)

By his birth date he belongs to a later generation, but as early as 1945 Sastre had already formed an experimental theater group for which he wrote short dramas. He protested against the conventions of the time and employed a variety of experimental techniques. His work, unfortunately, as in the case of Max, Aub, has not been fully appreciated by Spanish critics. Part of this may be due to his insistence on *imposibilismo* as opposed to Buero's *posibilismo*, for he insisted on truthful dramas, even if that meant he could not have his works performed.

Critics often divide Sastre's production into three periods, the experimental plays between 1945 and 1950, the plays of the 1950s, and the epic theater after 1960. Many consider Sastre to be a revolutionary writer, and others find him too intellectual. He himself has labeled much of what he has written "theater of social agitation," as he stresses the rights of individuals in a static modern world; but he also rejects the label of a revolutionary with specific political ideologies in his attempt to portray the complexities and confusions of the twentieth century.

Sastre views tragedy as a kind of social sin an artistic mechanism that tortures the spectator, who willingly accepts the distress as a means of catharsis. There are few happy endings in Sastre's closed Existential dramas filled with disillusioned characters, and he acknowledges that revolution may very well become reactionary; but his dramas also contain universal lessons and are not totally devoid of hope.

*Escuadra hacia la muerte* (1953), a kind of universal plea against war, shows us a frustrated and despairing humanity that has abandoned God and been abandoned by Him. A group of criminals sent to defend a strategic post murder their corporal and must then affirm or deny their individual responsibility. Other well-known works are *La mordaza* (1954), about tyranny and oppression, a criminal father, and his family; *Tierra roja* (1954), describing the revolt of unjustly treated miners; *Guillermo Tell tiene los ojos tristes* (1955), concerning a father's anguish and the price exacted for a people's freedom; *La sangre de Dios* (1955), dealing with faith and a professor who believes that God demands the sacrifices of his son; *El pan*

*de todos* (1957), telling of an idealistic Communist who sacrifices his own mother and discovers too late that his Utopia is nonexistent; *Ana Kleiber* (1957), treating of a woman's need for and inability to accept love; *El Cuervo* (1957), involving terror and mystery; *La cornada* (1959), about injustice, insensitivity, a bullfighter, and the loss of personal liberty; and *Asalto nocturno* (1959), his first experiment in epic theater, containing a murder, tyranny and the consequences of repression.

Among Sastre's plays of the 1960s one finds *Muerte en el barrio* (1961), about the execution of a socially irresponsible doctor, and *En la red* (1961), about Algerian freedom fighters caught in a police net. Between 1965 and 1972, he published six plays, many of which contain narrative elements and which the author labeled "tragedias complejas," Sastre tried unsuccessfully to write a new kind of theater, rejecting Brecht, avant-garde movements, the *esperpento*, and Aristotelian tragedy, but involving elements of all of them. He shows a greater versatility in his dramatic structure and in his attempt to involve the audience in his revolutionary process. Among these works are *El banquete* (1965), whose theme of man's exploitation of man Sastre associates with *La cornada* and *La taberna fantástica* (1966), a kind of *esperpento* involving itinerant peddlers and society's relationship to the "outsider," not performed until 1985. Other titles of the 1960s are *Oficio de tinieblas* (1962); *La sangre y la ceniza* (1965), about Miguel Servet and the forces of repression, not performed until 1976, the year after Franco's death; and *Cronicas romanas* (1968), finally performed in 1982 which draws parallels between Numancia, Vietnam, and the contemporary world. In addition to perceptive essays, novels and numerous adaptations of the works of a variety of dramatists including O'Casey, Brecht, and Lope, Sastre also has written some children's theater. His works of the 1970s include *Ejercicios de terror* (1970), finally performed in 1981; *El camarada oscuro* (1972); and *Ahola no es de leil*, written in 1974 but not performed until 1979.

At first glance, Sastre's closed situation seems the opposite of Buero's, but even Sastre admits that at times tragedy may have a happy ending because absolute pessimism leads to deformity in the interrelationships between private anguish and public action. In spite of their emphasis on a social conscience Sastre's dramas are incarnations of social problems of protagonists who live in an absurd world of false values and as he deals with the universe of pain, poverty, and hunger, at times with black humor, he tries to maintain a delicate balance between a difficult social message and the metaphysical in plays that are boldly experimental.

#### K. Minor Dramatists of the Fifties

Although many of these minor dramatists wrote works in previous decades, they produced their best plays, for the most part in the 1950s.

1. *Jose Maria Peman* (1898 – 1981) produced his first play, *Isoldina y Polion*, in 1928 and continued writing dramas into the 1970s, but his most successful plays date from the 1950s. He wrote plays Classical in tone such as *Antigona* (1946), *Electra* (1949), and *Julio Cesar* (1955). His historical verse dramas, such as, for example, *El divino impaciente* (1933), about a sixteenth century Jesuit, are reminiscent of Marquina's work. He also produced political dramas exemplified by *El viento sobre la tierra* (1957) and a series of moralistic, religious dramas, among them *Callados como los Muertos* (1952) and *En las manos del hijo* (1953). Peman's best talent appears in his light, humorous pieces that he labeled "farsas castias," the most successful of which was *Las tres etceteras de Don Simon* (1958), a humorous, mysterious play set in Napoleonic times.
2. *Jose Lopez Rubio* (b. 1903), a master of irony, satire, and sparkling dialogue, wrote humorous and often tender dramas about love, reality, illusion, and fantasy. The author of a play in 1930, he did not write for the theater again until *Alberto* (1949), about an imaginary character and repressed ambition. The 1950s gave us his best-known works; *Celos del aire* (1950) about jealousy and forgiveness; *Una madeja de lana azul celeste* (1951); *La venda en los ojos* (1954), which together with his masterpiece, *La otra orilla* (1954), about passion, selfishness, and love as seen from "the other shore," most resemble Casona's mixtures of the real and make-believe world; *La novia del espacio* (1955); *Un trono para Christy* (1956); and *Las manos son inocentes* (1958), about crime and remorse. Later plays are *Diana esta comunicando* (1960); *El corazon en la mano* (1972); and *La Puerta del Angel* (1986), begun fifteen years earlier.
3. *Miguel Mihura* (1905 – 1977), unlike Jardiel Poncela, Spain's other great comic genius, was more interested in human nature than in bizarre effects. Although he wrote for the

entertainment of the majority and relied heavily on the incongruous suspense and comic situations, he also criticized the hypocrisy and false values of society and the price exacted from his characters by modern civilization. His first play *Tres sombreros de copa*, written in 1932 but not performed until 1952, is still considered his masterpiece. Concerning the escape into illusion and a return to the everyday world, this satire on bourgeois materialism reveals an understanding of human weakness and the need for individual choices. *Sublime decision* (1955) attacks male chauvinism and promotes women's rights in a late nineteenth century setting. *Mi adorado Juan* (1956) describes a compromise between bohemian freedom and middle-class respectability. *Carlota* (1957) is about a woman victimized by her own deceit. *Melocoton en almibar* (1959) treats of a nun's triumph over would-be robbers. *Maribel y la extrana familia* (1959) stresses the positive role of love in a prostitute's redemption. Other successful plays are *Las entretenidas* (1962), *La bella Dorotea* (1963), and *Ninette y un señor de Murcia* (1964).

4. *Joaquin Calvo Sotelo* (b. 1905) began his dramatic production in 1932 and has since written over three dozen plays. He succeeded in the 1940s with *Cuando llegue la noche* (1943), *Plaza de Oriente* (1947), and *La visita que no toco el timbre* (1949). Most of his works, whether farce, comedy, or the promotion of a thesis deal with everyday problems of contemporary Spain. He has written about politics, social classes, international relations, and crisis of conscience. Among his sometimes melodramatic works in the 1950s are *criminal de Guerra* (1951), dealing with the United States' occupation of Germany and moral responsibility; *Maria Antonieta* (1952); *El jefe* (1953), regarding the nature of dictatorship; *Milagro en la Plaza del Progreso* (1953); *La muralla* (1954) his masterpiece, telling of a man tortured by his conscience prejudice, and redemption through faith; *Historia de un resentido* (1956), regarding revenge and the struggle between good and evil; the Pirandellian *La ciudad sin Dios* (1957); and *La herencia* (1957), concerning the effects of the Spanish Civil War on the survivors. In the 1960s, Calvo Sotelo continued his prolific pace with many plays, among them *El proceso del arzobispo Carranza* (1964) and *El inocente* (1968). He began the 1970s with *El alfil* (1970).
5. *Victor Ruiz Irujo* (1912 – 1982) continued the tradition of the *teatro de evasión*, exhibiting grace, tenderness, and humor in his sometimes-sentimental plays involving reality and poetic illusion. He flows Casona in his management of weird and fantastic backgrounds. Although he wrote several dozen plays beginning with *Un día en la gloria* (1943), he achieved his first real success with *El lando de seis caballos* (1950), about a poetic world where time can be frozen, and illusion and love enjoyed forever. *El gran minue* (1950), called a “farsa ballet” by one critic, satirizes a European court of the eighteenth century, as the author discusses truth morality and philosophy, *Juego de niños* (1952), about a woman's effort to win back a faithless husband; *La guerra empieza en Cuba* (1955), a tender story of twins; *Una investigación privada* (1958); and *Esta noche es la víspera* (1958) are other plays of this decade. Some of his many plays of the 1960s are *El carrusel* (1964), *Un paraguas bajo la lluvia* (1965), and *Historia de un adulterio* (1958).
6. *Juan Ignacio Luca de Tena* (b. 1897) wrote over forty plays from 1918 through the 1960s. Most of his plays are light comedies, but he also has some historical dramas. Significant are *El condor sin alas* (1951) about relationships among social classes; *Pepe y Pepita* (1952); *Donde vas Alfonso XII?* (1957); and *Donde vas triste de ti?* (1959).
7. *Edgar Neville* (1899 – 1968) began writing in 1917, but with the exception of an early work in 1934 he did not write seriously for the stage until about 1950. In 1952 his play *El baile* had an astonishing success. Among other plays are *Veinte años* (1954), *Adelita* (1955), *Prohibido en etono* (1957), *Alta fidelidad* (1957), and *La extrna noche de boda* (1963).
8. *Alfonso Paso* (1926 – 1978) worked closely with his friend Alfonso Sastre in promoting experimental theater. He himself wrote over a hundred plays mostly light comedies, at times with black humor, and also police dramas and what he called “social theater.” He had a special talent for complicated plots. Given his extravagant drama, he inherited the mantle of Jardiel Pócela, but he could also create poignant scenes of people who suffered, loved and dreamed. Some of his noteworthy plays are *Catalina o es formal* (1956), *El cielo dentro de casa* (1957), *Los pobrecitos* (1957), *Juicio contra un sinvergüena* (1958), *Cosas*

*de papa y mama* (1960) and *Persuasion de los cristianos por el emperador Neron, segun la idea y concepto que hecho tiene el autor espanol Alfonso Paso* (1969).

#### L. *La Generacion Realista*

A group of dramatists who followed the social concerns of Nuero Vallejo and Sastre, in reaction against the *teatro de evasion* of Lopez Rubio and others, have been loosely categorized, not to everyone's satisfaction as belonging to the *generacion realista*, sometimes also called the *generacion Perdida* or *generacion del silencio*. Among its members are Lauro Olmo, Jose Maria Rodriguez Buded. Antonio Gala, somewhat younger, also follows this generation's tendencies. The term *Realist* in no way implies a negation of illusion and fantasy in their inventive theater. Jaime Salom, who follows Alfonso Paso; Jose Ruibal the leader of what was "underground theater"; and Fernando Arrabal, all important contemporary playwrights, do not belong to this generation.

1. *Lauro Olmo* (b. 1922), a master of popular language, treated social, ethical, and political problems, perhaps too forcefully. Many of his plays were censored by the Franco regime. Olmo has always held that the theater should deal with human beings and life, as evidenced by his masterpiece, *La camisa* (1962), to this day the play with which he is associated. The play deals with the problems of emigration because of poor economic circumstances in Spain. Olmo juxtaposes illusion and reality though he is unrelentingly realistic in his depiction of the impoverished classes living in shacks and the inability of the characters to escape their tragic circumstances. Juan the protagonist, through his torn shirt, symbolizes a future hope, because for him leaving implies defeat. *La pechuga de la sardina* (1963), shown on television in 1982, depicts sexually frustrated women victimized by social hypocrisy and by the economy. Once more Olmo deals with the lower classes. *El cuerpo* (1966) calls for a sound mind in a sound body but is an ironic view of *machismo*. *English Spoken* (1968) (the title was written in English) shows us Spaniards returning home from abroad and the consequences. Among his other plays are *El cuarto poder* (1964), a kaleidoscopic, tragicomic play (to use his own description) about points of view never performed; *Mare Nostrum* (1966) republished as *Mare nostrum* in 1982 about tourism and its effects; *La condecoracion*, written in 1964 and finally performed unsuccessfully, in 1977 as an outdated political denunciation; and *Pablo Iglesias* (1986), set in 1910 and concerning the first Socialist deputy. In the 1980s, aside from additional plays Olmo wrote adaptations of *sainetes* by Arniches and others for television.
2. *Carlos Muniz* (b.1927) wrote first Realistic and then Expressionistic works involving social commentary about authoritarianism revolt against the system loneliness and the demythification of history. His first play *Telarnas* (1955), was unsuccessful. *El grillo* (1957), revealing Muniz' compassion for the have-nots and concern over the lack of human progress, deals with the financial dilemma and dreams of an office worker, a frustrated victim of an unjust society. The play is loaded with symbolic sound imagery. *El precio de los sueños*, written before 1960 but not performed until 1966, deals with the force of middle-class opinion attempts to escape reality, and the meaning of guilt. Muniz' masterpiece, *El tintero* (1961), indicts the Spanish bureaucracy. Crock, the protagonist, scorned and deceived, an antihero victimized by a dehumanized world, must choose the consequences of freedom, an expression of individuality that ends in his death. In spite of the satire and the subject matter, it is quite poetic. *Las viejas dificiles* (1966) is an Expressionistic examination of society's persecution of victims and an implicit denunciation of hypocrites who would claim exclusive authority over what constitutes Christian morality. Muniz has also written a number of one-act plays, among them *Un solo de saxofono* (1965), a kind of *esperpento* about racial discrimination. Aside from *El tintero*, his best work is *Tragicomedia del serenesimo principe don Carlos*, written in 1972, published in 1974, and first performed in 1980. A demythification of Spanish history, the play recalls the works of Quevedo and Goya in its use of grotesque elements. Muniz analyzes King Felipe II in a new way and describes him as a religious fanatic and hypocrite whose professed Catholicism led him to destroy his son.



3. *Jose Martin Recuerda* (b. 1922), like Lorca a native of Granada, deals with history and cruelty and the hypocrisy of society. He believes in the moral fight against injustice and the reality of charity. He examines the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath, conformists and nonconformists alike, the uses of power and its victims. He also decries the sexual repression he finds in his country. His plays are quite often Baroque, and he is fond of using the chorus as an added element. He is the only playwright to have won the Lope de Vega Prize twice, once for *El teatrillo de don Ramon* (1959), about destroyed hopes and illusions, and again for *El enganao* (1981), a depiction of the life of San Juan de Dios, the sixteenth-century humanitarian whose views that the church should return to a more primitive Christianity and practice charity clashed with the policies of Charles V and Church authorities. *Las salvajes en Puente San Gil* (1963) portrays a dona Rosita type, reminiscent of Garcia Lorca's, and a group of defiant chorus girls who refuse to conform to the bigoted attitudes of the Church and narrow-minded, hypocritical conservatives. The author implies that the latter are the real savages. *Como las secas canas del camino* (1965) has some grotesque elements. The author describes the passion of an old schoolteacher for a student in a sterile town that serves as the demythifying symbol of an idealized rural life. *Las arrecogias del Beaterio de Santa Maria Egipcíaca* (1977) re-creates a Mariana Pineda more historical than Lorca's. The convent, ostensibly turned into a prison for prostitutes, really holds political prisoners. Some of the female victim held for trial are almost mad. Victimized by the tyranny of Ferdinand VII, Mariana uses her body in the case of liberty. Among other plays, *Caballos desbocas*, published in 1978, concerns the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War and the carnival aspects of the transition from dictatorship to democracy. *Las conversions* (1983), one of Martin Recuerda's few plays not set in Andalusia, deals with the reign of Enrique IV his possible homosexuality Juana la Beltraneja, and above all a youthful Celestina as she might have been.
4. *Jose Maria Rodriguez Mendez* (b. 1925) writes about alienation and isolation, especially of the poor. His first play, *Vagones de madera* (1958), about the Moroccan War, deplors the indifference of society to the soldier's hardships and especially to his death. *La batalla de Verdun* (1961) portrays workers from the south of Spain who see in vain for a better life in the north; they recall Olmo's individuals oppressed by circumstances. Rodriguez Mendez wrote many plays in the 1960s, among them *Los inocentes de la Moncloa* (1961), about alienated students; *El circulo de tiza de Cartagena* (1963), concerning the separatist movement during the first Spanish Republic; *La mano negra* (1965), a grotesque distortion of reality; *El vano ayer* (1966), about an unsuccessful revolt; and *Los quinquis de Madriz* (1967), according to the author a "reportaje dramático." It deals with the execution of a man for a crime he did not commit. In the 1970s his plays include *Flor de otoño* (1973), about drugs, homosexuality and subverted values; and *Historia de unos cuantos* (1975), describing ten historical moments in Spanish history from 1890 to 1940 as seen by Mari Pepa, a street tobacco peddler. The inspiration of the *genero chico* in this play is obvious. At times Rodriguez Mendez follows Valle-Inclan's experimentation with the grotesque; at others he is Existential; but he is always concerned for Spain's tragic history.
5. *Antonio Gala* (b. 1936) has worked in television and the movies. For some critics his plays may be a metaphor for Spanish society. The author can be poetic, humorous, or tender in turn in his portrayals of love, free will, duty, man's imperfections, and above all redemption. His works lend themselves to ambivalent visions and endings.

In his first play, *Los verdes campos de Eden* (1963), some alienated characters dwell in a cemetery crypt, and the author attempts to make a symbolic statement about redemption. *El sol en el hormiguero* (1966), a political, social, intellectual satire of a monarchy parodies *Gulliver's Travels*. *Noviembre y un poco de hierba* (1967), depicting a Republican soldier in hiding and his death, is one of the best works dealing with the consequences of the Spanish Civil War, *Los Buenos días perdidos* (1972) is about a strange family that takes refuge in a church. *Por que corres Ulises?* (1975) may symbolize Spain's need to face life's choices and reality because it is out of step with the world. Ulysses has to abandon his self-created heroic myth and face reality. Other plays of the 1970s are *El carcel en el Espejo* not performed but published in 1970 which in Surrealistic manner treats of the possibility of new beginnings, human frustration and love's changing

perspectives; *Anillos para una dama* (1973), about Jimena, the Cid's wife; and *Las cítaras colgadas de los árboles* (1974), about purity and Christian-Judiac relationships in the second half of the sixteenth century. Among his plays in the 1980s, *Petra Regalada* (1980) is his best known. The story concerns an eighteenth-century convent that became a brothel and a woman of flesh and blood who symbolizes not only personal truth and liberty but also the will of the people. Petra, rebelling against authority, is betrayed by a false redeemer and liberator but receives another chance for redemption when a feeble-minded admirer kills the tyrant. Still other plays include *La veja señorita del Paraíso* (1980); *El cementerio de los pájaros* (1982), about the paradoxical nature of liberty and the price it exacts; *Samarkanda* (1986); and *Seneca, o el beneficio de la duda* (1987).

Gala's social conscience impels him to write social criticism, but in addition to his analysis of the abuse of power, his themes include the lack of spiritual values, the demythification of history and a kind of Existential hope reminiscent of the theories of Buero Vallejo.

#### M. Other Contemporary Dramatists

1. *Jaime Salom* (b. 1925) who writes in the vein of Alfonso Paso rather than under the inspiration of the *generación realista*, nonetheless gives testimony from time to time about contemporary Spain. In his quite moralistic early period, he wrote a number of murder mysteries. Later he became more interested in Biblical and religious themes, and finally in the woes of humanity. Among Salom's works (he began writing earlier but became known in the 1960s), mostly light comedies, are *Verde Esmeralda* (1960), *Viaje de un trapezista* (1960), *La gran aventura* (1961), and *Culpables* (1961). His first real success was *El baul de los disfraces* (1964), dealing with romance and lost illusion and the inevitability of old age. A poetic fancy, it reveals the amorous adventures of an old man relived during one magical night. Another of Salom's successes in the 1960s was *La casa de las Chivas* (1968), which in somewhat blunt language shows us people thrown together by war, the problem of sexual promiscuity, and a moral conversion. *La playa vacía* (1965), an allegorical *auto*, examines the possibility of facing life, pleasure, death, and God. In the 1970s Salom wrote many plays, among them *Tiempo de espadas* (1972), a modern version of the Christ story involving the disciples and the Last Supper and promoting the idea that one cannot separate Him from the problems of modern civilization; *La noche de los cien pájaros* (1972), concerning frustrated intellectual aspirations; *La piel de limón* (1976), about nudity, adjusting to different sociological, political, psychological, and sexual mores, and a plea in favor of divorce; and *Historias íntimas del Paraíso* (1978). Depicting Adam and Lilith, as equals in the Garden of Eden. The 1980s brought other successes: *El corto vuelo de gallo* (1980), about Franco's father, who disapproved of his son's ideology; *Un hombre en la Puerta* (1984), defining the need to face an ever-changing truth and choose one's future; and *Las Casas una hoguera en el amanecer* (1986), recounting Bartolomé de las Casas' life in the years 1502 to 1515.
2. *Jose Ruibal* (b. 1925), master of the so-called underground theater, fills his works with complicated meanings, animal symbolism, and depictions of the use of power, disrespect for the animal world, and the dehumanization of man. He uses humor and irony to good effect, but he believes that in the 1950s, and his one-act play *Los mendigos* (1957) is a satiric view of an imaginary country peopled by beggars who are subject to a repressive authority. In the 1960s he wrote, among other works, *El asno* (1962), about American imperialism and economic exploitation; *Su majestad la sota* (1965), in which the four kings of a Spanish deck of cards debate forms of government and the author makes known his views on oppressive power and the evils of totalitarianism; and *La máquina de pedir* (1969). His best-known work and the one that has evoked the most commentary is *El hombre y la mosca*, written in 1968 but not performed until 1983. This play has been compared with *Waiting for Godot*. A political parable, the play examines the psychology of dictatorship, the alienation and freedom of man, the universal versus the temporal, and the demythification of Spain. The play contains supernatural elements. Ruibal examines the ego of a dictator, his relationship to his double, and the petrification of a human being.

Other plays include *Curriculum vitae* (1970) and *Controles* (1976) an abstract, symbolic play that makes a metaphoric use of animals.

3. *Fernando Arrabal* (b. 1932) is not universally accepted as belonging to Spanish literature, since most of his work has been written in French. Although fairly unsuccessful in his native country, he has achieved a worldwide reputation. He began writing a kind of Theater of the Absurd and initiated in 1962 what he called "Panic" theater, filled with confusion chance, and Surrealistic elements. He wanted to cause psychic trauma in the spectator through his combination of chaos and the erotic in his dramas. His plays became psychodramas and a kind of cathartic ceremony. Later in the 1960s he became more political. Most of his plays have not been performed in Spain, but when his masterpiece, *El arquitecto y el emperador de Asira* (1967), was translated into Spanish and presented in 1977, it was not well received, perhaps for the perceived attack on the Church, God, and motherhood. The play is a poetic exploration of the problems of the human spirit and the mythical relationship of two symbolic personages. Other plays by Arrabal performed in Spain, including some from the 1950s, were *Los dos verdugos* (1958), *El cementerio de automoviles* (1959) and *Los hombres del triciclo* (1961), all translated from French and performed years later. His favorite play, *Y pondran esposas a las flores* (1969) was published in Spanish in 1983 and two collections of his plays, *Teatro bufo* (1983) and *Teatro panico* (1986), helped circulate his works in Spanish. Arrabal deals with suspended history, circular time and illogical dialogues, and he utilizes themes like masochism, transvestism, and matricide. In spite of the grotesque elements involved in his plays, it is easy to see that Arrabal is preoccupied by the perils of what he perceives as a dehumanized technical world in which man's freedom and liberty are threatened by a mythical middle-class morality and responsibility. Among other playwrights are Francisco Nieva (b. 1927), Andres Ruiz (b. 1928), Luis Matilla (b. 1939), Eduardo Quiles (b. 1940), and Jeronimo Lopez Mozo (b. 1942).

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