

# Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

TCLC

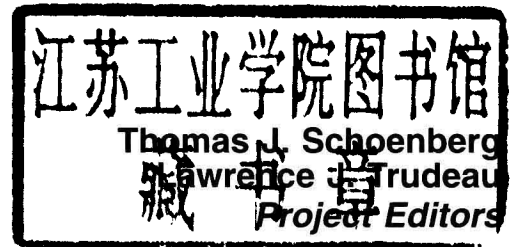
199



Volume 199

# Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**Criticism of the  
Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,  
Short Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers  
Who Lived between 1900 and 1999,  
from the First Published Critical  
Appraisals to Current Evaluations**



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Manufacturing: Cynde Bishop

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# Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism



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# Preface

Since its inception *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (TCLC) has been purchased and used by some 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. TCLC has covered more than 1000 authors, representing over 60 nationalities and nearly 50,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as TCLC. In the words of one reviewer, “there is nothing comparable available.” TCLC “is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many librarians would have difficulty assembling on their own.”

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TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1999 and to the most significant interpretations of these author’s works. Volumes published from 1978 through 1999 included authors who died between 1900 and 1960. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of the period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, TCLC helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in TCLC presents a comprehensive survey on an author’s career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of TCLC is devoted to literary topics. These topics widen the focus of the series from the individual authors to such broader subjects as literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

TCLC is designed as a companion series to Gale’s *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, (CLC) which reprints commentary on authors who died after 1999. Because of the different time periods under consideration, there is no duplication of material between CLC and TCLC.

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- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose

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- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism. Source citations in the Literary Criticism Series follow University of Chicago Press style, as outlined in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Gale.

## Indexes

A **Cumulative Author Index** lists all of the authors that appear in a wide variety of reference sources published by Gale, including *TCLC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

A **Cumulative Topic Index** lists the literary themes and topics treated in *TCLC* as well as other Literature Criticism series.

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An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *TCLC*. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of foreign titles and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, dramas, nonfiction books, and poetry, short story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale also produces a paperbound edition of the *TCLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

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When citing criticism reprinted in the Literary Criticism Series, students should provide complete bibliographic information so that the cited essay can be located in the original print or electronic source. Students who quote directly from reprinted criticism may use any accepted bibliographic format, such as University of Chicago Press style or Modern Language Association (MLA) style. Both the MLA and the University of Chicago formats are acceptable and recognized as being the current standards for citations. It is important, however, to choose one format for all citations; do not mix the two formats within a list of citations.



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Brossard, Nicole. "Poetic Politics." In *The Politics of Poetic Form: Poetry and Public Policy*, edited by Charles Bernstein, 73-82. New York: Roof Books, 1990. Reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. Vol. 127, edited by Janet Witlec, 3-8. Detroit: Gale, 2003.

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# Alejandro Casona

## 1903-1965

(Born Alejandro Rodríguez Álvarez) Spanish playwright, poet, screenwriter, translator, and essayist.

The following entry provides an overview of Casona's life and works. For additional information on his career, see *CLC*, Volume 49.

### INTRODUCTION

Although relatively unknown among English-speaking audiences, Alejandro Casona is generally regarded, in both Spain and Latin America, as one of the foremost Spanish dramatists of the twentieth century. Much of Casona's work, including his best-known plays *Prohibido suicidarse en primavera* (1937; *Suicide Prohibited in Springtime*), *La dama del alba* (1944; *Lady of the Dawn*), and *Los árboles mueren de pie* (1949), is recognizable for its use of archetypal characters and such traditional materials as legend, folklore, and local history. Casona's drama typically explores universal themes, including death, the nature of good and evil, and the conflict between reality and fantasy. The playwright infused his work with humor, irony, idealism, and poetic language, while conveying his belief that human beings must confront reality, despite its harshness, and find a balance between the external world and their own illusions. Some scholars have suggested that the traditional values and idealism reflected in Casona's work may have contributed to his relative obscurity among non-Spanish speaking audiences. María M. Delgado and David Price-Uden have argued that "although not as well known in English-speaking countries as he is in Spain and Latin America, it is impossible to deny the importance of Alejandro Casona to twentieth-century Spanish theater. Never achieving the critical success of his contemporaries García Lorca and Valle-Inclán, Casona should nevertheless be regarded as a prolific and innovative playwright who sought to challenge the dominance of the naturalistic play."

### BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Casona was born Alejandro Rodríguez Álvarez on March 23, 1903, in Besullo, a small village in Asturias, Spain. His father, Gabino Rodríguez, and mother, Faustina Álvarez, were both teachers. Casona's family moved fairly often during his childhood, living in vari-

ous Asturian towns where his father was posted as a teacher. As a result Casona became familiar with the landscape as well as the folklore of the region, both of which greatly influenced his development as a playwright. He enrolled in the University of Murcia in 1919 and then studied education at Escuela Superior del Magisterio in Madrid in 1922. He completed his studies in 1926 and began teaching elementary school in Madrid. Two years later Casona published his first book, a volume of poetry titled *El peregrino de la barba florida*

He continued to pursue a literary career in the late 1920s, completing two works of translation and his first full-length original play, *Otra vez el Diablo*, which was first staged in 1935. From 1928 to 1930 he served as an elementary school superintendent in Valle de Arán. Casona's first stage production, premiering in 1929, was *El crimen de Lord Arturo*, an adaptation of Oscar Wilde's *The Crime of Lord Arthur of Savile*. In 1930 he published another book of poetry, *La flauta del sapo*, which was his first work written under the pseudonym Casona. Between 1931 and 1936 he worked as director of the Teatro del Pueblo, a traveling company established by the government's Misiones Pedagógicas to bring theater and culture to Spain's rural population. While working with the company, he staged a few of his own adaptations and shorter plays. Casona did not receive national attention until 1933, however, when his second full-length play, *La sirena verada*, received the Lope de Vega Prize. Favorable reviews appeared after the play was produced in 1934, and Casona was labeled an important new voice in Spanish theater. His next play, *Nuestra Natacha* (1936), was also successful in both Barcelona and Madrid.

The Spanish Civil War began in 1936 and Casona was labeled unpatriotic by fascist factions within the country. Frightened by the murder of his friend and fellow dramatist, Federico García Lorca, Casona fled Spain in 1937, settling in Argentina. He served as the artistic director of the Díaz-Collado theater company in Buenos Aires and continued to write and produce plays, including *Suicide Prohibited in Springtime* and *Sinfonía inacabada* (1939). After a brief hiatus from the stage in the early 1940s, Casona produced one of his best-known plays, *Lady of the Dawn*, in 1944. He produced several more important works during this time, including *La barca sin pescador* (1945; *The Boat without a Fisherman*) and *Los árboles mueren de pie*, considered by some critics as one of his most accomplished plays.



During the 1950s Casona continued to live and write in Argentina, although he visited Spain from time to time. In 1962, after years of exile, he finally moved back to Spain, establishing a permanent residence in Madrid. After moving he was able to produce several plays from previous decades, which were extremely popular with audiences and garnered favorable critical attention, as well. In 1964 *El caballero de las espuelas de oro* was staged at Madrid's Teatro Bellas Artes, where it was performed over five hundred times. Casona died on September 17, 1965, as a result of complications following open-heart surgery. A month later, his final completed play, *La Celestina*, was produced at the Teatro Bellas Artes in Madrid.

## MAJOR WORKS

Like many of Casona's plays, *Suicide Prohibited in Springtime* explores the dynamic between fantasy and reality in human experience. J. Frank Toms has described the setting of the play as "subtle, poetical, and dreamlike." The action takes place in a sanitarium for suicidal individuals, founded by a philanthropist named Dr. Ariel. At first it appears that the home has been created to assist individuals in taking their own lives. As the play progresses, however, it becomes clear that the facility is really designed to help patients overcome their suicidal urges. As part of their treatment, the patients are constantly confronted with the beauty of nature, which gradually cures them and overcomes their fascination with death. Often during this process they must face the discrepancies between their own illusions and reality. In one case, a man believes that a well-known opera singer, Cora Yako, is infatuated with him, singing solely for him during her performances. Although she initially scorns him, refusing his gift of flowers after a performance, she eventually begins to pursue him when she arrives at the sanitarium. What was once purely a dream is now the truth, and the man must resolve the tension between the two. He ultimately decides that fantasy is more beautiful than reality and refuses to return her advances. Another patient, distraught by the loss of his daughter, adopts another patient as a surrogate. The fantasy sustains both individuals, and their needs are fulfilled even though they are not related. In another case, Fernando and Chole share a romantic relationship, which is tested when Fernando's brother, Juan, appears. Juan also loves Chole and finds his life meaningless because she does not return his affection. Feeling guilty, Chole pretends to love Juan, but Juan ultimately rejects this illusion of love. To varying degrees, characters in *Suicide Prohibited in Springtime* gradually discern the difference between fantasy and reality and consequently reject suicide as an acceptable option. According to Phyllis Zatlin Boring, the patients are "cured not through illusion but through an acceptance of reality, usually accompanied by a renewed interest in others."

Casona's study of reality and illusion is further developed in the play *Lady of the Dawn*, where a human life is sacrificed in order to perpetuate a lie that benefits others. The action of the play centers on the protagonist, Martín, and his supposedly dead wife, Angélica. The townspeople all presume that Angélica died four years ago by drowning in the river, though her body was never found. Angélica's pristine reputation of beauty and goodness, however, has survived throughout the town. Martín alone knows the truth about his wife: that she is in fact alive and living in the city with a lover. One day Martín rescues a young girl named Adela from the river and invites her to stay with his family. Because she is alone in the world, she accepts his invitation, gradually assuming the role left empty by Angélica. Eventually Adela and Martín fall in love. Meanwhile, Angélica, abandoned by her lover and left to fend for herself, returns home, broken by her experiences. Upon her return, however, she meets Death disguised as a pilgrim, who convinces her to drown herself, thus preserving both her own reputation and the happiness of Martín and Adela. When Angélica's body is found in the river, the townspeople marvel that it has been so well preserved. Her saintly reputation is perpetuated, and she eventually becomes part of local legend. In this case, illusion is given precedence over reality, and justice is served through a lie. In addition to examining the ambiguous nature of reality and human existence, Casona presents a nontraditional vision of death in the play. Personified in the figure of Peregrina, or the Pilgrim, death for Casona becomes a young woman who possesses human qualities, such as warmth and curiosity, and is capable of love. She initially appears in the play on the day that Adela is rescued, though she comes to claim Martín's life not Adela's. Peregrina falls asleep, however, and misses her appointment with Martín, thus sparing his life. Regarding this figure, Harold K. Moon has observed, "we have in her another example of Casona's impeccable equilibrium in blending the worlds of the natural and the supernatural."

Prominent themes explored in *Suicide Prohibited in Springtime* and *Lady of the Dawn* are revisited in *Los árboles mueren de pie*. Dr. Ariel returns in this play, having created yet another institution that uses unconventional methods to help people in trouble. In the opening scene of the play, Marta, a young suicidal woman, arrives at the institution at the same time as an older gentleman named Balboa. Both characters are disconcerted by the chaos and somewhat disturbing theatrics they encounter. After offering a satisfactory explanation for the chaotic state of affairs, Mauricio, the director of the institution, convinces Marta to join their organization, and he listens to Balboa's reason for seeking help. Balboa reveals that he has deceived his wife, the Abuela, concerning the behavior of their grandson, who is involved in criminal activities. Balboa has faked

letters from their grandson, filled with positive but false information, in order to spare his wife's feelings about the young man. Unfortunately, his plan backfires when a real letter arrives from the grandson, informing them that he is traveling home on a ship to visit them. The ship sinks during the voyage, and Balboa assumes that his grandson is dead. He asks Mauricio to play the role of his grandson for the Abuela, because he cannot bear to tell her the truth. Mauricio agrees, and Marta, assuming the name Isabel, plays the part of the grandson's new bride. Their ruse is successfully carried out until the real grandson, having traveled on a different ship, appears, demanding money in return for not revealing the truth to his grandmother. The Abuela, who has meanwhile learned the truth, realizes how despicable her grandson is; she refuses to give him money and sends him away. But she allows Mauricio and Marta to believe that they have successfully deceived her, and they leave happily thinking that they achieved their goal. Thus the Abuela, once the deceived, becomes the deceiver, although her deception is the successful one. Whether Casona intended to privilege truth over illusion in *Los árboles mueren de pie* has been the subject of several critical debates. Phyllis Zatlin Boring has argued that Casona's work generally reflects the idea that "we can achieve happiness, but only by standing up to reality and truth." Elizabeth S. Rogers, however, has noted that "by the use of self-conscious theatricality executed through the device of a play within a play," in *Los árboles mueren de pie*, Casona shows that "illusion, escape, fantasy as role-playing can have beneficial effects." For Rogers, the play "demonstrates that to reject reality totally and to live in a world of fantasy is equally disastrous as to reject fantasy and see only the harshness of existence. Fantasy is needed to appreciate and endure reality."

## CRITICAL RECEPTION

During his twenty-five years of exile, Casona enjoyed critical and popular acclaim from audiences in Argentina and throughout Latin America. With his return to Spain in 1962, and the staging in Madrid of many of his earlier works for the first time, Casona finally won favorable attention in his homeland, and he became a leading figure of Spanish theater. Many critics lauded, in particular, his deft use of folklore and legend, as well as his creative depiction of archetypal characters, such as Death and the Devil, in his plays. Others praised Casona's work for its exploration of the interplay between illusion and reality. In his 1961 study, J. Frank Toms observed that while the themes and narratives of Casona's plays are relatively simple, "it is by the imaginative fusion of reality with fantasy that he creates his complex theatre, just as it is by the reality-fantasy technique that he insures his dramatic success." The question of Casona's supposed existentialist philosophy in

his writings also attracted critical attention. While some commentators found sympathies between the philosophy and his work, others suggested that his plays actually present ideas antithetical to the movement. In 1962, Charles H. Leighton discerned evidence in Casona's dramas of both stances, arguing that while "it seems manifestly absurd to associate him with an atheistic and amoral movement," such as existentialism, "he shares with the existentialists a feeling of revulsion for nineteenth-century rationalism." Leighton concluded that "Casona's theater as a whole illustrates the positive reaction to the existential crisis while existentialism represents the negative one."

Following the 1960s, support for Casona's work began to decline. His traditional views on the ultimate good of humankind were termed "antiquated" and "old-fashioned." In addition to labeling Casona's plays "escapist" and naïve, many critics complained that the playwright avoided the leading social and political topics of his day. Despite these literary trends, a few scholars continued to champion his work. In a 1970 study, Harold K. Moon lamented, "it is one of the accidents of our generation that a playwright of such accomplishment should be virtually unknown in the English-speaking world." Moon suggested that, in addition to challenges associated with translation, upheaval resulting from the Spanish Civil War may have contributed to the playwright's relative obscurity in the United States and elsewhere. In his 1985 book-length study, Moon added, "perhaps, in a distant utopia, when the clamor of the existential pharisees subsides, the world will return to the comfortable sanity of old fashioned ideals, and Casona, by dint of a dramatic technique that needs no defense, may 'rise again.'"

In recent scholarship of the playwright's work, many critics, while acknowledging Casona's tendency to rely too heavily on certain theatrical techniques, have nevertheless paid tribute to his importance to the development of Spanish theater. María M. Delgado and David Price-Uden have asserted that "despite a clumsy recourse to laborious dramatic techniques and an excessive reliance on narrative closure neatly resolving all loose ends, there is no denying Casona's status as a prominent liberal humanist playwright." The critics conclude that throughout his literary career "Casona demonstrated an astute ability to craft works that sought to restore to the Spanish stage the balance of *deleite* and *doctrina* that had proved such a cornerstone of the Golden Age writers he so admired."

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## PRINCIPAL WORKS

*El peregrino de la barba florida: Leyenda milagrosa en poesía* (poetry) 1928

*El crimen de Lord Arturo* [adaptor; from the play *The Crime of Lord Arthur of Savile* by Oscar Wilde] (play) 1929

*La flauta del sapo* (poetry) 1930

*Flor de leyendas* (legends) 1933

*La sirena verada* (play) 1933

*Sancho Panza en la ínsula* [adaptor; from the novel *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes] (play) 1934

*Otra vez el Diablo* (play) 1935

*Nuestra Natacha* (play) 1936

\**Nuestra Natacha* (screenplay) 1936

*Prohibido suicidarse en primavera* [*Suicide Prohibited in Springtime*] (play) 1937

*Romance en tres noches* (play) 1938

*Sinfonía inacabada* (play) 1939

*Viente años y una noche* (screenplay) 1940

*La maestra de los obreros* (screenplay) 1941

*Las tres perfectas casadas* [adaptor; from the novel *The Death of a Bachelor* by Arthur Schnitzler] (play) 1941

*En el viejo Buenos Aires* (screenplay) 1941

*Concierto de almas* (screenplay) 1942

*Cuando florezca el naranjo* (screenplay) 1943

*La dama del alba* [*Lady of the Dawn*] (play) 1944

*Le María Celeste* (screenplay) 1944

*La barca sin pescador* [*The Boat without a Fisherman*] (play) 1945

*Margarita la tornera* (play) 1946

*La molinera de Arcos* (play) 1947

*Los árboles mueren de pie* (play) 1949

*Retablo jovial* (plays) 1949

†*La dama del alba* (screenplay) 1950

*La llave en el desván* (play) 1951

*Pinocho y Blancaflor* (play) 1951

*Teatro* (plays) 1951

*Siete gritos en el mar* (play) 1952

*La tercera palabra* (play) 1953

*Obras completas* (plays, poetry, and prose) 1954

*Corona de amor y muerte* [*Death and a Crown*] (play) 1955

*La casa de los siete balcones* (play) 1957

*El anzuelo de Fenisa* [adaptor; from a play by Lope de Vega] (play) 1958

*El burlador de Sevilla* [adaptor; from a play by Tirso de Molina] (play) 1961

*Tres diamantes y una mujer* (play) 1961

*Peribañez y el Comendador de Ocaña* [adaptor; from a play by Lope de Vega] (play) 1962

*El caballero de las espuelas de oro* (play) 1964

*Don Rodrigo* (libretto) 1964

*La Celestina* [adaptor; from the novel *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* by Fernando de Rojas] (play) 1965

*Teatro selecto* (plays) 1966

*Fablilla del secreto bien guardado* (play) 1967

*Farsa del cornudo apaleado* [adaptor; from the novella collection *Decameron* by Giovanni Boccaccio] (play) 1970

*Farsa y justicia del corregidor* (play) 1970

*Retablo jovial* (plays) 1995

*World Theatre Favorites*. 3 vols. (plays) 2003

\*This work is a screenplay adaptation of the play by the same name.

†This work is a screenplay adaptation of the play by the same name.

### J. Frank Toms (essay date May 1961)

SOURCE: Toms, J. Frank. "The Reality-Fantasy Technique of Alejandro Casona." *Hispania* 44, no. 2 (May 1961): 218-21.

[In the following essay, Toms examines Casona's fusion of reality and fantasy as a dramatic technique designed "to amaze and astound" his audience.]

In all of the dramas of Alejandro Casona there is a blending of reality and fantasy. In each of the plays discussed here, Casona captivates the imagination and interest of his audience by creating on the stage a fantastic situation which is brought to a startling climax. This use of reality and fantasy as a dramatic device to amaze and astound the audience is examined in this paper.

The curtain rises on the first act of *Los árboles mueren de pie*. The setting appears to be a modern office, but upon closer inspection one sees an assortment of incongruous objects. Clerks talk of ominous events. All of the action and all of the characters are strange and weird. A young girl and an older man enter into this setting. They are expected, and ask to see the Director. They obviously have never been there before. As they wait, they are surprised and dismayed by what they see. They overhear snatches of conversations concerning kidnapped children and drugs. A man comes out dressed as a Norwegian sailor, but the girl recognizes him as a man she has recently seen dressed as a minister. As he leaves, a beggar enters and cheerfully places on a table a pearl necklace, watches, and wallets. He reports mission accomplished. A cry is heard; red lights blink; and from a secret door comes a hunter with a shotgun and two hunting dogs. He telephones asking for three dozen live rabbits and 50 hungry hunting dogs. He goes out, and the young girl and older man who have gradually become more and more panic stricken decide to escape from what they consider to be either a madhouse or a den of thieves. But the door is locked. As they search for the secret door, the chilling sound of howling dogs is heard. Isabel, terrified, shrieks: "The 50 hungry dogs", and pounds on the locked door begging for help. This is the climatic moment in the reality-fantasy technique of Casona. For Isabel's cry of terror is the cry of every-



one. An absolutely incongruous series of events complicated by a surrealistic use of props, stage effects, and dialogue has plunged the audience into a nightmare.

Immediately the secretary rushes in asking what is wrong. The Director follows, and gives a rational explanation for everything. After this the play continues in a normal fashion. The importance of the above scenes in insuring the dramatic success of the play cannot be underestimated.

The same type of situation appears in *Prohibido suicidarse en primavera* except that the setting is more subtle, poetical, and dreamlike. We find out from a conversation between the Doctor and Hans, his aid, that the many patients are all there in order to commit suicide. There is available for them all the possible methods, but all have been romanticized by the suggestive moods which pervade the atmosphere. Even the paintings are suggestive. The audience is soon convinced that this must really be a "House of Suicides," and, while the idea is grotesque, it also has a horrible charm. Then, a young girl rushes from the Gallery of Silence crying hysterically: "I don't want to die! I don't want to die!" And again we have the climatic moment. She sobs her story to the Doctor. Hungry and desolate, with no one to turn to, she came to the "House of Suicides," but when she saw the hanging trees, heard the invisible music, and felt the terror of the Black Gallery, she suddenly wanted to live, and ran screaming to escape.

Again, all the elements lead one into a fantastic dream world, but then Casona leads us right back to reality as the Doctor later explains the true purpose of the "House of Suicides." The final two acts of the drama are concerned with the problems of these people and how they are solved. So once more Casona has used a reality-fantasy technique to heighten the dramatic appeal of the play.

*La sirena varada* does not have the shocking power of the two which we have just discussed. But the effect is just as powerful. The setting appears normal except for some red and green lights which add a touch of fantasy to the scene. There are incongruous elements which appear early in the act, but they are man-made rather than seeming supernatural manifestations. The protagonist is Ricardo, a dreamer, who is trying to escape from a boring mechanical life by establishing an "Asilo" populated by imaginative irrational people. The element of fantasy enters with the arrival of a supernatural being, a siren. Or is she really a siren?

A young girl comes through the window. She speaks poetically. She tells Ricardo that she is a siren come from the sea to be his beloved. Ricardo, caught in an inward struggle between reason and imagination, asks her to sing a song of the sirens to prove that she really

is one. So she sings a beautiful song from the Songs of Solomon. As she sings, she momentarily makes Ricardo forget his doubts. She draws him to her like the siren of antiquity. And the song of the siren seems to cast a spell on the audience as it is magically drawn into the world of fantasy. Once again we later discover the truth, but the climatic moment of the reality-fantasy technique is the song of the siren.

In each of the three plays so far discussed, the dramatic fusion of reality and fantasy has occurred in the first act. In *Siete gritos en el mar* it happens in the last scenes of the third act.

The opening action of the play takes place on an old ocean liner on Christmas Eve. Eight passengers have been invited to dine with the captain in his stateroom. One of the guests, Juan de Santillana, a newspaperman, sleeps in an armchair out of sight of the captain and steward who are preparing the table for the Christmas Eve dinner. The sound of an accordion playing Christmas ballads is heard in the distance. Juan has been reading a manuscript written by the old captain of which the last page is missing. He awakens while the captain and steward talk of ominous events which are to happen, and here begins an action which the spectator thinks is real but is actually fantasy. The guests arrive, and the old captain tells them terrifying news. They must die that night. There is no escape. War has just been declared and the orders are to continue on into enemy waters and act as a decoy for submarines in order to permit a convoy of ships to escape. The guests react in a desperate fashion. Each bares his soul. Finally, the moment that everyone is dreading arrives. A terrible explosion is heard, and the lights go black. Nothing. Then suddenly, the lights go back on and we see the opening scene. Juan awakens and is visibly shocked. Is he dreaming or has he dreamed? And at this moment the spectator is just as confused. Which is reality and which is fantasy?

Of course, we find that Juan has dreamed it all. He had been reading the manuscript of the former captain, had fallen asleep, and the audience had seen his dream. This occurs late in the final act, and while suspense is maintained until the very end when Juan tries to see whether he has dreamed the truth, the drama lacks the impact of the other three. This is due to two reasons. The fantasy, while it is a dream and contains stark drama, is not really fantasy visually. Also, the climatic moment of the reality-fantasy technique happens late and not early in the drama. But it is effective.

The next three dramas differ in one important respect from those thus far discussed. In the latter there is what first appears to be fantasy explained rationally later. In the former the setting and beginning are thoroughly realistic, and the element of fantasy enters in the form of a supernatural being, such as the Devil or Death.