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ACKER, ELLEN S. Federico Garcia Lorca and The House of Bernarda Alba. (1969) Directed by Dr. Herman Middleton.

pp. 175

The purpose of this thesis was to study the script, produce the play, and evaluate the production of Federico Garcia Lorca's, The House of Bernarda Alba.

The preliminary part includes the following: (1) historical and stylistic analyses of the play, (2) character descriptions and analyses, (3) a discussion of the function and mood of the set, and (4) justification for the director's choice of the script for production.

The second part includes the director's prompt book of the production, performed on April 15 and 16, 1969, in Taylor Theatre at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Types of notations included are: (1) movement, composition and picturization, (2) rhythm and tempo notes, and (3) stage business, and (4) sound notes. Floor plans and production photographs implement this record.

Part III contains the director's critical evaluation of her work with the production. Discussed in this chapter are: (1) goals and aims of interpretation, style and mood, (2) actor-director relationships during the rehearsal period, and (3) audience reaction to the production.

⚡ The appendix of this thesis includes a program as an actual record of the performances.

FEDERICO GARCIA LORCA AND THE HOUSE OF BERNARDA ALBA

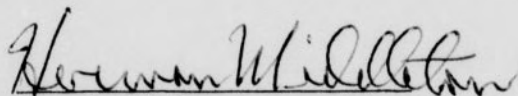
by

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APPROVAL SHEET

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PART I

THE PLAYWRIGHT AND THE PLAY

Pedro Garcia Lopez, the most famous of the contemporary Spanish playwrights, led a short but productive life. He was a poet, a dramatist, a novelist, a theorist, an artist, a journalist and a philosopher. Towards the end of his life he wrote a trilogy of plays: *El Hombre Nuevo*, *El Hombre Viejo* and *El Hombre de la Calle*. This latter play was published after his death.

PART I

The first section of this study deals with the author's contribution to the script. It includes an examination of the historical background of the play, the influence of the author's previous work on the play, the influence of the play on the author's subsequent work, and the influence of the play on the Spanish theatre of the 1930's. The study proceeds with an analysis of the play's structure, its characters and their relationships, its language and style, its themes and motifs, its symbolism, and its significance. The results of this analysis will be applied later to the thesis problem.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Pedro Garcia Lopez, born in Madrid in 1894, was the son of a...

PART I

THE PLAYWRIGHT AND THE PLAY

Federico Garcia Lorca, the most famous of the contemporary Spanish poets lived a short but productive life. He was a poet, a director of amateur theatricals, an artist, a musician and a dramatist. Towards the end of his life he wrote a trilogy of "village dramas"--Yerma, Blood Wedding and House of Bernarda Alba. This paper concerns itself with the last of the trilogy, written in 1936 and published after his death.

The first section of this paper deals with the external influences on the script. It includes an examination of the various influences upon the playwright as they specifically relate to the play. These influences derived from Lorca's upbringing and heritage and from the social and economic conditions of Spain in the 1930's. The play reflects Lorca's reactions to these conditions. The study proceeds with an internal analysis by discussing (1) theme, ideas, and style, (2) plot, (3) characters and their interrelationships, (4) the function and mood of the sets, costumes, and lighting. The results of this analysis will be applied later to the thesis production.

External Influences

Federico Garcia Lorca, born in Granada in 1898, was the son of a well-to-do farmer and an ex-school teacher. A childhood ailment,

which prevented him from speaking until he was three and from walking until he was four, placed him almost constantly in the company of women. His home life was a happy one, and his parents were eager to educate Federico to an early understanding of literature. He became familiar with Victor Hugo, Cervantes and later with Lope de Vega and Calderon, the most prominent playwrights of the Golden Age of the Spanish theatre. He started to study law in Granada but he was a mediocre student and eventually dropped out. Years later, for some unexplainable reason, he returned to school and received a law degree which he never used.

He served his apprenticeship in music and letters in Granada. It was there in that ancient city, once the Moorish capital of Spain, that he became intimate with the old cultures: the classic Roman and Greek, the Arab, Gypsy, and with the superb "language and imagery of the seventeenth century Spanish poets."¹

It was here too, that he learned to appreciate the nineteenth century nostalgia for lost loves and diminutive gardens. The sensual metaphor and the spicy idiom of Andalusian peasantry did not have to be excavated from a lost folk tradition; they were still as alive here in Granada as they had ever been since the Middle Ages.²

All this had a great influence on his later works, for he had the ability to

¹Edwin Honig, Garcia Lorca (Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions Books, 1947), p. 3.

²Ibid.

assimilate the traditions of the life and cultures around him.

He moved to Madrid in 1919 and returned to Granada once or twice a year to visit his friends and family. It was during one of these visits in 1936 that he was killed by Franco's Falangist forces during the Spanish Civil War. Much has been written about his death and some critics have tried to make him a political martyr; however, recent writings infer that he was in the wrong place at the wrong time and that he was a victim of circumstances.

Lorca was not a political but rather a popular poet and playwright. He wrote of and for the Spanish people as he saw them and his work was loved and acclaimed by the illiterate and sophisticated alike. The people of Spain identified with his characters and appreciated his knowledge of the folk world of Spain.

Poetic and dramatic both, his genius grew not out of advance-garde literary or political movements, but out of a richly functioning Spanish tradition barely surveyed by most present day criticism. To approach him as an artist at all, one must realize the extent of his integration with that tradition, and understand the kind of sensibility able to thrive so well within it.³

Any discussion of Garcia Lorca's dramatic works must therefore include a short examination of the literary traditions which emerged from the old cultures of Spain. His works are an expression of national genius for they reflect and transform the world of the Spanish people. His plays

³Ibid., p. iv.

are profoundly and revealingly Spanish and at the same time universally human.

The main aspects of the Spanish lyric tradition which finds a new culmination in Lorca's poetry are: the Medieval Arabic-Andalusian art of amorous poetry together with the rarely popular ballad; the Renaissance synthesis in Spain of the Greco-Latin poetic art, accomplished by the sophisticated 'conceptist' poetry of Gongora; and the bread body of Andalusian gypsy art known as canto jondo, 'deep song.'⁴

In the eleventh century, Arabic poets in Andalusia had perfected the style of the short lyric. These poems were noteworthy for their obsession with erotic love and a Platonic notion of chastity. Poets talked of a morbid desire always tempered by the moral idea of sexual purity.⁵

The ballad also became popular at this time and by its very nature developed a system of communicating with the people and with the intellectual elite. This characterizes not only the work of Lorca, in his later years, but also the work of every other major Spanish poet and playwright. Contained within this ballad tradition is an unusually rich amalgam of racial experience, and expression of the people's peculiar genius to retrieve the best elements from Spain's many cultural inundations. The tendency to assimilate whatever touches the country's essential spirit makes Spanish literature a highly adaptable organism invigorated by each

⁴Ibid., p. 20.

⁵Ibid., p. 21.

successive wave.⁶

Another cultural facet of the Spanish literary tradition is the contribution of the outcast Gypsy tribes. They brought to Spain the "deep song," an orgiastic lament based on repetition of certain phrases or notes and characterized by a guitar accompanying a high pitched nasal sensual voice. The Gypsy lament is heavy with the atmosphere of blood and death, and filled with the feelings of an outcast people.

Spain has not changed much since Medieval times. This most Catholic country of Europe is a barren land outside of the big cities. Peasant life for centuries has been simple and clear. The scene is bleak, and the climate is hot and dry. Passions erupt quickly and subside just as quickly. The necessities of existence reflect and are reflected in every aspect of life. There is no place for unproductive passion in the scheme of things; yet it is passion that underlies everything and eventually brings tragedy into the peasant's life. Spain has always been a land of feuds, for it is a land where a man's honor is all important. Warren Carrier has said:

The roots of life lie in productiveness, in the creative. When not in consonance with the necessities or the code of society, the forces that nourish the creative--erotic passion and the passion of pride--bring inevitable tragedy and death.⁷

⁶Ibid., p. 30.

⁷Warren Carrier, "Poetry in the Drama of Lorca," Drama Survey, III (February, 1963), p. 298.

Lorca's plays find their resources and vitality in the realities of Spanish life. He deals with the inner core of the reality of Spanish life in its physical and moral terms in a way that reminds one of the great Spanish dramatists of the Golden Age. Honor and appearances were very much the essence of the Golden Age of drama; and so were the problems of lust and mysticism. But where Calderon would illustrate an "act of faith" in dramatic terms, Lorca, who deals largely with peasant life, accepts for his characters the stoic, realistic faith of the Spanish church in the country, and discovers the more fundamental attitudes and the basis of life beneath it.

Stoicism is an important aspect of the village life of Spain. When Lorca's generation was growing up Spain was trying to recover from years of defeat, bitterness and unrest. The country had been plagued by famine, lack of industry, earthquakes and epidemics, floods and war. The people were imbued with centuries of Moorish Medieval Catholic breeding. Their moral code had not changed. Women were valued for their sons. A woman in Spain was either a mother or a prostitute; lust and family were on opposite ends of the spectrum. The appearance of honor was valued more highly than honor itself. Society was governed by tradition.

Internal Analysis

The House of Bernarda Alba is the last and most mature play written by Federico Garcia Lorca. The writer sub-titles his play A Drama About Women in the Villages of Spain and then states that "these three acts

are intended as a photographic statement." It is in fact the most realistic of Lorca's dramas both in structure and characterization. However, it is realism through the eyes of a poet. Symbolism is evident throughout the script and dictates the style of production.

Women in their Spanish essence are the characters; the white-walled home which is both a jail and a convent is the scene; and the action is the meeting of the irresistible force of erotic love and passion and the immovable object of maternal honor. Its honor is both that of the cult of virginity and that of class. The force of passion erupts against a code of society and erupts in tragedy. The terms are deepened and made more effective dramatically by personifying honor in the arbitrary tyrannical will of Bernarda, the protagonist of the play. The nature of the code is seen not only in terms of society but in terms of the indomitable will of Bernarda.

The dramatic tension is born out of this clash of wills--the domineering will of the mother, upheld by tradition, custom and social values against the deaf and invincible wills of the daughters, motivated by their thirst for living. Over all of this hangs the mood of a tragic sense of life against which nothing avails.

The over-all structure or plot of The House of Bernarda Alba is well defined. Exposition, complication, climax, and denouement are all set down in a clear cause and effect sequence. They are, as Honig says:

. . . dramatically self determined: determined, that is, by the

strict necessity of character and situation, and not by an auxiliary concern for the supernatural, pictorial, musical, or dance effects.⁹

The characters in the play are all women. It is set in the country house of Bernarda Alba, a caste-proud wealthy widow with five daughters. The play opens in the interior of this house with a scene between Poncia, the general household servant, and her assistant, a maid. The expository dialogue between the two reveals that Bernarda and her daughters are attending the funeral of the master of the house. The scene also reveals the feeling of hate that pervades this house, and the plight of the peasant-servant in Spain. Poncia is complaining about Bernarda:

Poncia. Thirty years washing her sheets. Thirty years eating her leftovers. Nights of watching when she had a cough. Whole days peeking through a crack in the shutters to spy on the neighbors and carry her the tale. Life without secrets from the other. But in spite of that curse her. May the 'pain of the piercing nail' strike her in the eyes.

Servant. Poncia!

Poncia. But I'm a good watchdog. I bark when I'm told and bite the beggars' heels when she sics me on 'em, but one of these days I'll have enough.

Servant. And then. . . ?

Poncia. Then I'll lock myself in a room with her and spit in her face-- a whole year. 'Bernarda, here's for this, that and the other.' Till I leave her just like a lizard the boys have squashed. For that's what she is--she and her whole family! Not that I envy her her life. Five girls are left her, five ugly daughters--not counting Angustias, the eldest, by her first husband who has money. . .

⁹Honig, Garcia Lorca, p. 220.

Servant. Well I'd like to have what they've got!

Poncia. All we have is our hands and a hole in God's earth.

Servant. And that's the only earth they'll ever leave to us--to us who have nothing!¹⁰

The servants' conversation is interrupted by the entrance of Bernarda, her daughters (Angustias, Magdalena, Martirio, Amelia and Adela), and the women who attended the funeral. Prayers are said quickly and Bernarda shouts after them as they leave:

Go back to your house and criticize everything you've seen! I hope it'll be years before you pass under the archway of my door again.¹¹

She promises to seal her daughters in the house for eight years of mourning while they embroider their hope-chest linens. Adela the youngest daughter enters and reports that Angustias, the eldest, has been watching the men in the courtyard through a crack in the door. Bernarda calls Angustias into the room and slaps her. Then she orders all the girls to leave the room so she can question Poncia as to what the men were saying. When Bernarda and Poncia leave the stage the daughters enter. Here, insight is gained into their characters. Pepe el Romano's courtship of Angustias is revealed. He is a young man of twenty-five who, though disposed toward Adela because of her youth, wants Angustias because of her money.

¹⁰Lorca, Three Tragedies of Federico Garcia Lorca, pp. 158-59.

¹¹Ibid., p. 164.

Adela enters and hears about the courtship and shouts her rebelliousness. The act closes with the wild entrance of Maria Josefa, Bernarda's half-crazed mother, who is kept locked up in the house. She has escaped from her room, and her final cry fixes the situation of the play firmly:

I don't want to see these single women, longing for marriage, turning their hearts to dust . . . I want to get away from here! Bernarda! To get married by the shore of the sea--by the shore of the sea.¹²

The second act opens in ominous silence. Bernarda's daughters and Poncia are sewing and embroidering. They speak in short, subdued, bitter phrases. Poncia warns Bernarda of impending grave danger and Bernarda ruthlessly assails her servant for this warning. Martirio's lust for Pepe is also revealed, for she has stolen a picture of Pepe from Angustias' dresser and has it hidden under her pillow. A great commotion is heard outside and everyone rushes out but Adela and Martirio. In a scene of uncontainable emotion, Adela admits to having received Pepe the night before, and Martirio vows to tear him out of her arms. Quickly, a servant enters to explain that an unmarried girl is being dragged through the streets, because she had a baby and then killed it. Bernarda heartily approves and shouts:

Yes--let them all come and kill her . . . Finish her before the guards

¹²Ibid., pp. 175-76.

come! Hot coals in the place where she sinned.¹³

At this, in pity and terror, Adela as the lights dim screams: "No! No!"¹⁴

In the final act, the suppressed restlessness that leads to the climax is introduced with Bernarda's solemn conversation with a neighbor, Prudencia. All the daughters are at the table but all are itching to leave. The stallion's hoot-beats are heard on the stable walls. Bernarda's stubborn pride shows itself as she chooses to ignore the conflict among her daughters. Pepe's wedding to Angustias is imminent, but he will not come visiting outside of Angustias' window tonight as he has on previous nights. With this news, Bernarda orders her daughters to bed. Soon after Bernarda retires, Adela appears in her petticoat, pretending to want a drink of water. As she goes out Maria Josefa appears again and in her madness, in a scene with Martirio, she illuminates with insight the situation in this house.

Pepe el Romano is a giant. All of you love him. But he is going to devour you because you're grains of wheat. No not grains of wheat, Frogs without tongues.¹⁵

She leaves and Martirio calls Adela in from outside. She enters and

¹³Ibid., p. 195.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 206.

admits that she has been with Pepe. Martirio in her anger and jealousy struggles with Adela and arouses the family as a whistle is heard outside the door. Bernarda enters with her gun and shoots at Pepe as Adela goes screaming from the room. Bernarda's aim is faulty. A thud is heard in Adela's room. Poncia breaks down the door and finds that Adela has killed herself. Solemnly, frantically, Bernarda takes the scene in hand, her family pride ruling once again:

My daughter died a virgin. Take her to another room and dress her as though she were a virgin! No one will say anything about this! She died a virgin. Tell them, so that at dawn, the bells will ring twice. . . Tears when you're alone. We'll drown ourselves in a sea of mourning. She, the youngest daughter of Bernarda Alba, died a virgin. Did you hear me? Silence, silence, I said. Silence!¹⁶

This is a fitting ending for a highly explosive, well-defined and structurally sound plot.

Bernarda is the symbol and the heroine of the play. More symbol than person she is a terrible creature who leads her daughters into total frustration. She is the repressor of the life force, but she is at the same time an admirable character in her steadfast honor, even though she has condemned her daughters to an unnatural life of restraint. It is the paradox of her character and the situation which gives the play its ultimate strength. Bernarda is the image of Spain itself, cloistering her-

¹⁶Ibid., p. 210.

self in sterility and frustration for the sake of practical honor and religious mysticism. Her house is a jail of localism, of narrow and traditional intolerance and the terms of this kind of life are impossible.

Bernarda is concerned less with the death of her daughter than with the appearance of honor. This attitude is underscored with Bernarda's control as the curtain closes at the end of the play--despite everything she has saved the family's honor.

The symbolism of the play is further extended in the case of the five daughters, for they are intended more as representatives of general feminine attitudes than as persons in a real family group. They become almost a collective character, but each retains her own idiosyncrasies. Martirio, twenty-four, as her name suggests has adopted a fatalistic attitude. A hunch-back, who hides behind her mask of ugliness, she wants men desperately but is afraid of them. Her one chance of love came and went when her mother stopped a suitor from visiting at her window because his father was a peasant. Her sex-drive, which has been kindled by the sight of Pepe el Romano and his daily visits to the windows of her sisters, is now driving her crazy. Hiding her hatred and longing under her mask of meek submission, she spies on Adela, catches her, and brings about the climax of the play.

Angustias--"anguish"--at thirty-nine is the oldest and ugliest of the five daughters. She is her mother without her mother's strength. Although she has money, she is a physical wreck. She knows life has

passed her by, but when suddenly it seems to deal her a winning hand she turns into a gushing girl of eighteen. She is absurd, but not comic. She knows Pepe loves her money, knows this marriage is wrong, but she must deny this knowledge if she is to have even a tiny corner of life. In the end she knows she is as dead as Adela, but she must go on living.

Magdalena is the least hopeful of all. She is the most bitter because her unhappiness has no direction. Maria Josefa calls her a hyena-face; the hyena feeds on the weak and the crippled. She finds sadistic pleasure in the unhappiness of the others. Having loved her father best of all she weeps bitterly for him, and resigns herself to eight years of mourning.

Amelia, the character Lorca forgot, and the least developed character in the play, at times seems infantile and vacuous. She is the least bitter of the girls but still is not untouched by this house of horrors she lives in.

Adela is simply youth with the courage to take what it wants without regard to consequences. She is proud of her body, refuses to let it wither away behind the white walls of Bernarda's prison. She is willing to fight for her right to love, but she must in the end destroy herself, for the moral code of life in Spain dictates this.

The only character in the play who is beyond the tyrannical will of Bernarda is Maria Josefa, a mad-woman. In her several scenes on stage her lunacy reveals the suppressed madness of all the women in the house.

She tries to escape the prison but cannot, and so she foretells what will happen in the end.

Poncia, the old family retainer is part servant, part peasant, and part beggarwoman. She brings a bit of vulgar gaiety and lustiness into the house of Bernarda Alba. She, wisest amongst them, warns Bernarda what her one-sidedness will bring about; however, it is to no avail. At once shrewd and bitter Poncia watches the situation develop in the play, but because of her station in life she can do nothing about it.

Pepe el Romano, the unseen man in the play is at least as important as all of the other characters. He is the catalyst of the action. He is the stallion kicking against the stable walls. Nothing happens to him; everything happens because of him. He is the sex symbol, the Spanish male.

As this director has stated before this is not a totally realistic play. Poetic imagery is apparent throughout the action. The characters became, with the exception of Poncia, highly symbolic in nature. The set therefore should fit the poetic nature of the play. The prison-like walls should be stark giving the viewer a feeling of oppressive heaviness, parched dryness and the sterility of the household. The feeling of confinement must be present although adequate stage space for an interesting flow of movement is essential. A feeling of height is also essential, for the sterile walls loom up and around the characters leaving them no escape.

The set should be sparsely furnished giving the viewer the feeling

that this is an uncomfortable house. Throughout the entire three acts only a table, chairs and four short stools should be used. Several levels should be provided to give the director an opportunity to create interesting tableaux. The lighting should give the feeling of the endlessly hot summer. Again the house should be uncomfortable and the lighting can help here.

The sets, and lights should reveal the tragic nature of this poetic tale. Against the black-robed gloom of an enforced eight years mourning period the spirit of youth is set, developing, within this unnatural environment, forbidden emotions. It is a dark tale, but it is narrated with such skill and it is so illuminated by the almost static figures that it assumes the beauty of ebony.

In conclusion, this chapter has dealt with both an internal and an external analysis of The House of Bernarda Alba by Federico Garcia Lorca. In part, this study should have justified this writer's choice of the play for intensive study and future production. It is an exciting script, complete with challenging acting and staging chores because of its symbolic nature.

Other factors which entered into the decision to produce this play are as follows: (1) the play has a cast of ten women, facilitating production on this campus, (2) it is a one-set play, (3) the talent is available to produce a sound production of this excellent script, (4) it is a short play which could be rehearsed adequately in a very limited rehearsal period, and (5) it is a challenge in stylistic consistency.

The interpretive, stylistic and mood elements have been analyzed.

What remains is an amalgamation of these elements on the stage to create a vehicle which represents the playwright's message.

PART II

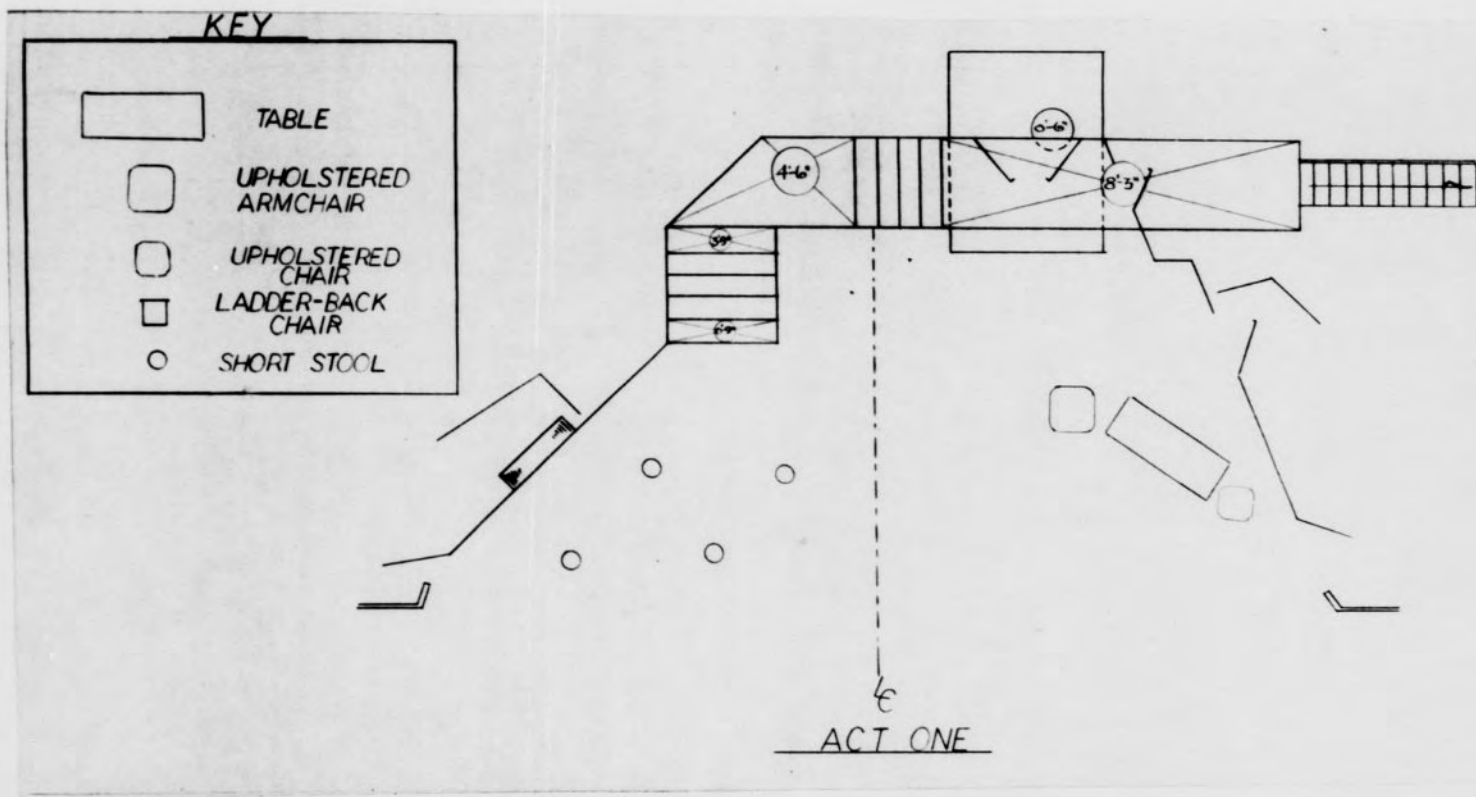


FIGURE 1

PART II

PROMPT BOOK

ACT ONE

(NOTE: THE DOOR ON THE UPPER LEVEL WILL BE CALLED BEDROOM DOOR. THE LARGE DOORS UP CENTER WILL BE CALLED THE DOUBLE DOORS. THE DOOR LEFT STAGE WILL BE CALLED KITCHEN DOOR. SEE FIGURE 1)

(BELLS START TO TOLL AT FIVE MINUTES BEFORE BEGINNING OF PLAY. NO CURTAIN IS USED.)

SERVANT

(ENTERS FROM THE BEDROOM DOOR ON THE UPPER LANDING AND CROSSES DOWN TO THE FIRST LANDING AND CLEANS THE WINDOW, FACING UP)
The tolling of those bells hits me right between the eyes.

PONCIA

(ENTERS THROUGH THE DOUBLE DOORS, CROSSES TO DRC, THROWS HER SHAWL ON THE UR STOOL OF GROUPING AND SITS ON THE STOOL IN THE DL CORNER OF GROUPING, FACING L) More than two hours of mumbo jumbo. Priests are here from all the towns. The church looks beautiful. At the first responsory for the dead, Magdalena fainted.

SERVANT

She's the one who's left most alone.

PONCIA

She's the only one who loved her father. (TAKES SAUSAGE AND BREAD FROM HER POCKET AND EATS) Ay! Thank God we're alone. I came over to eat.

SERVANT

(STARTS TO CROSS DOWN THE STAIRS AND CONTINUES UNTIL SHE STOPS
UR OF PONCIA) If Bernarda sees you. . .!

PONCIA

She's not eating today so she'd just as soon we'd all die of hunger!
Domineering old tyrant! But she'll be fooled! I opened the sausage crock.

SERVANT

Couldn't you give me some for my little girl Poncia?

(BELLS STOP)

PONCIA

Go ahead! And take a fistful of peas too. She won't know the difference
today.

MARIA JOSEFA

Bernarda! (THIS VOICE COMES FROM OFF STAGE RIGHT.)

(PONCIA TURNS HER HEAD SLIGHTLY BUT CONTINUES EATING. THE SERVANT
CROSSES R TO THE ARCH.)

PONCIA

There's the grandmother! Isn't she locked up tight?

SERVANT

Two turns of the key.

PONCIA

You'd better put the cross-bar up too. She's got the fingers of a lock picker!

MARIA JOSEFA

Bernarda! (VOICE COMES FROM THE SAME PLACE AS BEFORE)

PONCIA

She's coming! (SHOUTS THIS IMPATIENTLY AND THEN CROSSES OVER TO TABLE) Clean everything up good. If Bernarda doesn't find things shining she'll pull out the few hairs I have left. (SITS ON THE CHAIR R OF THE TABLE. THIS IS BERNARDA'S CHAIR. STARTS TO EAT AGAIN, THIS TIME LEANING ON THE TABLE)

SERVANT

What a woman! (DUSTING THE DR STOOL)

PONCIA

Tyrant over everything around her. She's perfectly capable of sitting on your heart a whole year and watching you die without turning off that cold little smile she wears on her wicked face. Scrub, scrub those dishes!

SERVANT

I've got blood on my hands from so much polishing of everything. (CROSSES TO DS END OF TABLE AND PICKS UP ONE OF THE PLATES PILED THERE. TAKES ANOTHER RAG FROM HER WAIST AND STARTS TO CLEAN THE PLATES)

PONCIA

She's the cleanest, she's the decentest, she's the highest everything! A good rest her poor husband's earned!

SERVANT

Did all the relatives come? (PICKS UP DISHES AND EXITS OUT KITCHEN DOOR)

PONCIA

Just hers. His people hate her. They came to see him dead and make the sign of the cross over him; that's all.

SERVANT

(ENTERS AND STOPS US OF THE TABLE AND LOOKS AROUND) Are there enough chairs?

PONCIA

More than enough. Let them sit on the floor. When Bernarda's father died people stopped coming under this roof. She doesn't want them to see her in her domain. (RISES AND PLACES HER US ARM ON THE BACK OF BERNARDA'S CHAIR AND REFERS TO THE CHAIR) Curse her!

SERVANT

She's been good to you.

PONCIA

(PROFILE TO THE CHAIR, FACING L AND LEANING ON THE CHAIR) Thirty years washing her sheets. Thirty years eating her leftovers. Nights of watching when she had a cough. Whole days peeking through a crack in the shutters to spy on the neighbors and carry her the tale. Life without secrets one from another. But in spite of that--curse her! (VERY SLOWLY FACES FULL FRONT) May the pain of the piercing nail strike her in the eyes.

SERVANT

(CROSSES HERSELF IN FEAR) Poncia!

PONCIA

(PACES A FEW STEPS R) But I'm a good watchdog! I bark when I'm told and bite beggars' heels when she sics me on 'em. My sons work in her

fields--both of them already married, but one of these days I'll have enough. (START TEMPO INCREASE)

SERVANT

And then . . . ?

PONCIA

(CROSSES TO BERNARDA'S CHAIR.) Then I'll lock myself up in a room with her and spit in her face--a whole year. (FACES THE CHAIR, FULL BACK TO THE AUDIENCE.) Bemarda, here's for this, that and the other! Till I leave her--just like a lizard the boys have squashed. (TURNS AND SITS IN THE CHAIR.) For that's what she is--she and her whole family! Not that I envy her her life. Five girls are left her, five ugly daughters--not counting Angustias the eldest, by her first husband, who has money--the rest of them, plenty of eyelets to embroider, plenty of linen petticoats, but bread and grapes when it comes to inheritance. (END TEMPO INCREASE)

SERVANT

Well I'd like to have what they've got!

PONCIA

(PICKS UP GLASS) All we have is our hands and a hole in God's earth.

SERVANT

And that's the only earth they'll ever leave to us--to us who have nothing!

PONCIA

(RAISES THE GLASS TO THE SERVANT) This glass has some specks.

SERVANT

Neither soap nor rag will take them off.

(BELLS TOLL)

PONCIA

(RISES, CROSSES TO STOOL WHERE SHAWL IS, PUTS ON THE SHAWL AND CROSSES UC) The last prayer! I'm going over and listen. I certainly like the way our priest sings. In the Pater Noster his voice went up, and up--like a pitcher filling with water little by little. Of course, at the end his voice cracked, but it's glorious to hear it. (STOPS AND TURNS FRONT THEN TAKES TWO STEPS DS) No, there never was anybody like old Sacristan-Tronchapinos. At my mother's Mass, may she rest in peace, he sang. The walls shook--and when he said "Amen," it was as if a wolf had come into the church. A-a-a-men! (STARTS COUGHING)

SERVANT

(CROSSES TO BACK OF BERNARDA'S CHAIR LAUGHING) Watch out--you'll strain your windpipe!

PONCIA

(LAUGHS, CROSSES UP TO DOUBLE DOORS) I'd rather strain something else! (LAUGHS, AND EXITS THROUGH DOUBLE DOORS)

(THE BELLS TOLL)

SERVANT

(IMITATING THE BELLS) Dong, dong, dong. Dong, dong, dong. May God forgive him! (EXITS THROUGH KITCHEN DOOR)

BEGGAR WOMAN

(ENTERS THROUGH DOUBLE DOORS AND TAKES A FEW STEPS DS. THE STAGE IS EMPTY.) Blessed by God!

SERVANT

(ENTERS AND DOES NOT PAY ATTENTION TO THE BEGGAR. SITS IN THE CHAIR DS OF THE TABLE) Forever and ever!

BEGGAR WOMAN

(TAKES TWO STEPS DS) I came for the scraps.

SERVANT

(STANDS AND CROSSES TO BERNARDA'S CHAIR) You can go right out the way you came in. Today's scraps are for me.

BEGGAR WOMAN

(COMING ANOTHER STEP CLOSER TO SERVANT) But you have somebody to take care of you--and I am all alone!

SERVANT

(TAKING PONCIA'S SCRAPS OFF OF THE TABLE) Dogs are alone too and they live.

BEGGAR WOMAN

They always give them to me.

(SERVANT PUTS SCRAPS DOWN AGAIN ON US END OF TABLE)

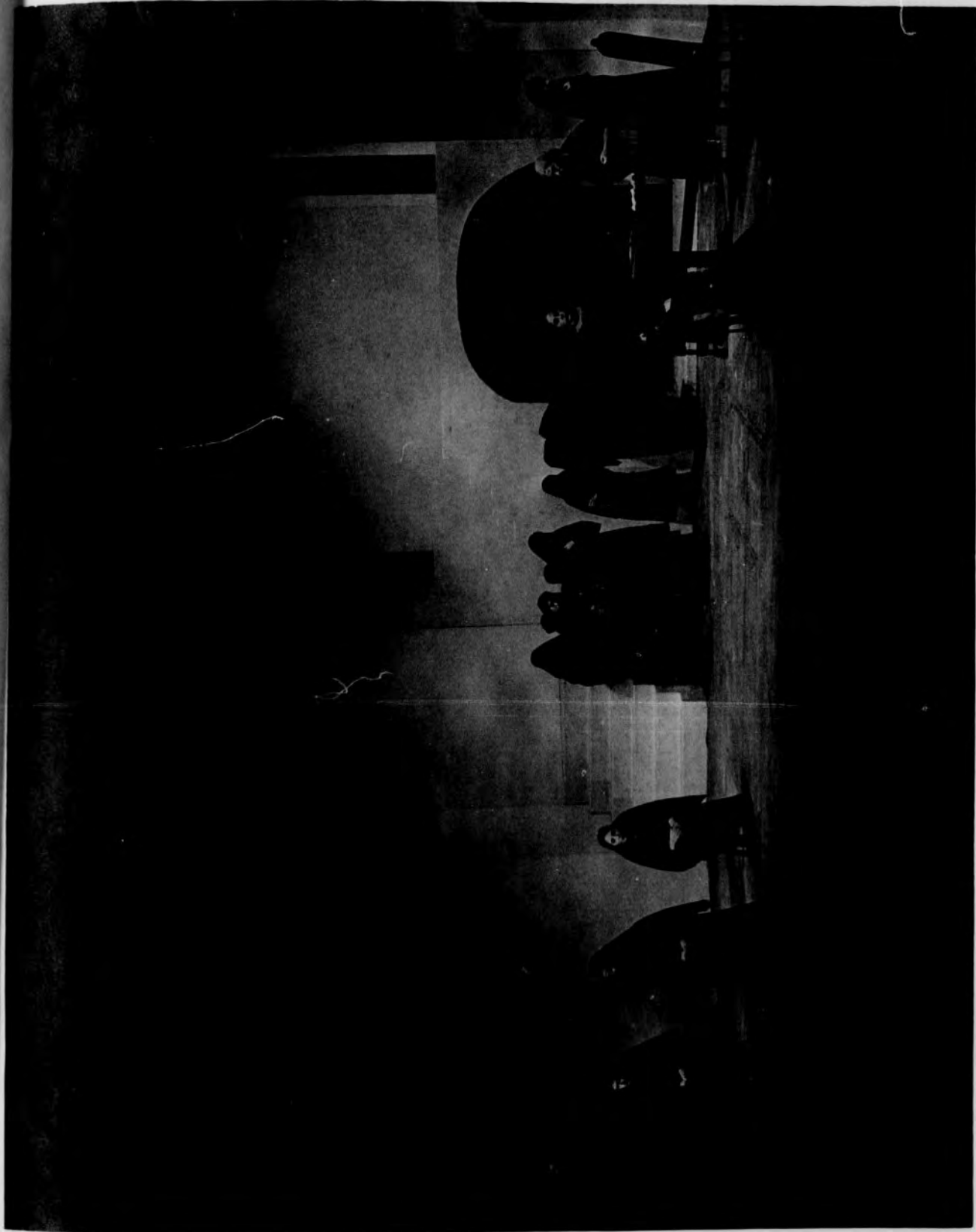
SERVANT

(BACKS THE BEGGAR OUT OF THE DOUBLE DOORS) Get out of here! Who let you in anyway? You've already tracked up the place. (SHUTS THE DOORS AND RETURNS TO THE US SIDE OF TABLE TO GET SCRAPS) Floors finished with oil, cupboards, pedestals, iron beds--but us servants live in mud huts with a plate and a spoon. I hope that someday not a one will be left to tell it. (EXITS TO KITCHEN)

(BELLS TOLL AGAIN)

SERVANT

(COMES OUT OF THE KITCHEN DOOR, MAKES A CURVED CROSS, TO UC THEN URC, THEN DC DURING SPEECH) Yes, yes--ring away. Let them



put you in a coffin with gold inlay and brocade to carry it on--you're no less dead than I'll be, so take what's coming to you, Antonio Maria Benavides--stiff in your broadcloth suit and your high boots--take what's coming to you! You'll never again lift my skirts behind the corral door.

(THE DOUBLE DOORS OPEN AND TWO MOURNERS ENTER, AND THEN TWO MORE, UNTIL 11 MOURNERS ENTER AND PLACE THEMSELVES IN A GROUP URC AND UR. ONE OF THE MOURNERS CROSSES UL. THE DAUGHTERS FOLLOW THE MOURNERS IN SINGLE FILE IN THE FOLLOWING ORDER: ANGUSTIAS, MARTIRIO, AMELIA, MAGDALENA, AND ADELA. ALL BUT ADELA CROSS TO THE STOOLS, ADELA CROSSES TO R ARCH. BERNARDA ENTERS AND CROSSES TO UR OF SERVANT. WHEN THE SERVANT SEES THE FIRST MOURNER ENTER SHE KNEELS ON THE FLOOR FACING UP AND PRE-TENDS TO CRY. SEE FIGURE 2.)

Oh, Antonio Maria Benavides, now you'll never see these walls, nor break bread in this house again! I'm the one who loved you most of all your servants. Must I live on after you've gone? Must I go on living?

BERNARDA

Silence!

SERVANT

(CRAWLING TO BERNARDA ON HER KNEES) Bernarda!

BERNARDA

Less shrieking and more work. (RUNS FINGER ACROSS THE TABLE TOP) You should have had this cleaner for the wake. Get out. This isn't your place. (THE SERVANT EXITS INTO KITCHEN) The poor are like animals--they seem to be made of different stuff. (BERNARDA CROSSES TO HER CHAIR US OF TABLE AND SITS IN IT VERY DELIBERATELY.)

MOURNER

The poor feel their sorrows too.

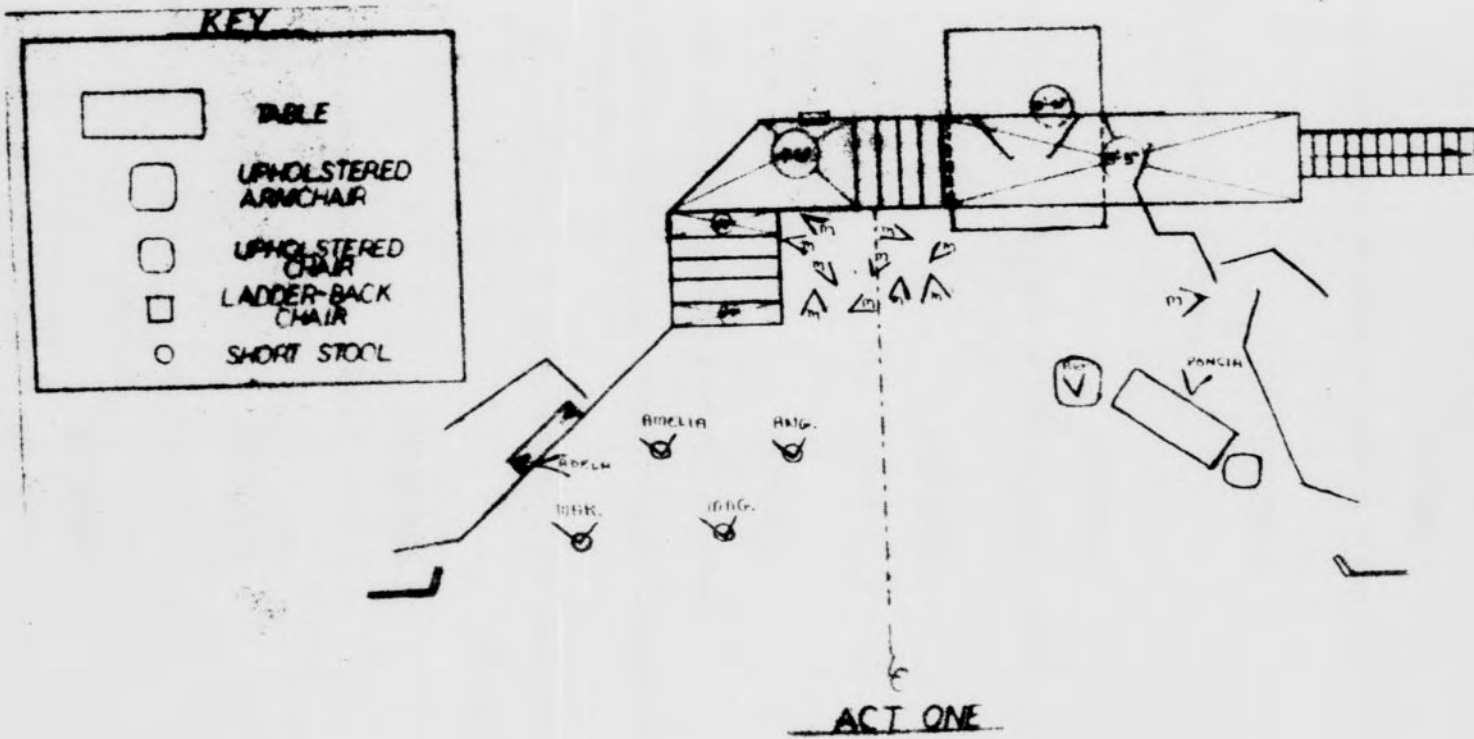


FIGURE 3

BERNARDA

But they forget them in front of a plateful of peas.

MOURNER

Eating is necessary for living.

BERNARDA

At your age one doesn't talk in front of older people.

MOURNER

Be quiet child.

BERNARDA

I've never taken lessons from anyone. Sit down.

(THE FOUR DAUGHTERS NEAR THE STOOLS SIT DOWN. MAGDALENA CRIES.
SEE FIGURE 3)

Magdalena, don't cry. If you want to cry, get under your bed. Do you hear me?

MOURNER

Have you started to work the fields?

BERNARDA

Yesterday.

MOURNER

The sun comes down like lead.

MOURNER

I haven't seen heat like this for years.

(PAUSE)

BERNARDA

Is the lemonade ready?

PONCIA

Yes Bernarda.

BERNARDA

Give the men some.

PONCIA

They're already drinking in the patio.

BERNARDA

Let them get out the way they came in. I don't want them walking through here.

MOURNER

Pepe el Romano was with the men at the funeral.

ANGUSTIAS

There he was.

BERNARDA

His mother was there. She saw his mother. Neither she nor I saw Pepe. . .

MOURNER

I thought. . .

BERNARDA

The one who was there was Darajali, the widower. Very close to your aunt. We all of us saw him.

MOURNER

Wicked, worse then wicked woman!

MOURNER

A tongue like a knife!

BERNARDA

Women in church shouldn't look at any man but the priest--and him only because he wears skirts. To turn your head is to be looking for the warmth of corduroy.

MOURNER

Sanctimonious old snake!

PONCIA

Itching for a man's warmth.

BERNARDA

(BEATS HER CANE ON THE FLOOR THREE TIMES) Blessed by God!

(DURING THE PRAYERS ALL THE PEOPLE ON THE STAGE PRAY AUTOMATICALLY. THEY SHOW NO FEELING FOR WHAT'S BEING SAID)

ALL

(CROSSING THEMSELVES) Forever blessed and praised.

(MAGDALENA STARTS TO CRY QUIETLY AND SHE WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO UNTIL BERNARDA GETS TO THE LATIN PART OF THE PRAYER. ONE OF THE MOURNERS CROSSES TO US OF THE FOUR STOOLS AND WATCHES MAGDALENA .)

BERNARDA

With the angel Saint Michael and his sword of justice.

ALL

Rest in peace!

BERNARDA

With the key that opens, and the hand that locks.

ALL

Rest in peace!

BERNARDA

With our holy charity, and all souls on land and sea.

ALL

Rest in peace!

BERNARDA

Grant rest to your servant Antonio Maria Benavides, and give him the crown of your blessed glory.

ALL

Amen.

BERNARDA

(MAGDALENA IS CRYING LOUDLY, AND BERNARDA STARTS THIS PRAYER OFF IN A LOUD VOICE TO WARN MAGDALENA TO BE QUIET. SHE RISES FOR THIS PRAYER.) Requiem aeternam donat eis domine.

ALL

(THE DAUGHTERS STAND. ALL CHANT IN AN OFF-KEY DISSONANT WAY) Et lux perpetua luce ab eis. (EVERYONE CROSSES HERSELF. THERE IS AN AWKWARD SILENCE. BERNARDA CROSSES UC TO THE ARCH, PONCIA FOLLOWS TO THE L SIDE OF HER. ANGUSTIAS CROSSES UP TO THE R SIDE OF THE SAME ARCH. THE MOURNERS START FILING OUT TWO BY TWO.)

MOURNER

(AT THE ARCH) May you have health to pray for his soul.

MOURNER

(AT THE ARCH) You won't lack loaves of bread.

(ANGUSTIAS AND PONCIA EXIT THROUGH DOUBLE DOORS. MAGDALENA STARTS CRYING AGAIN. ADELA TAKES A FEW STEPS RIGHT AS SHE NOTICES ANGUSTIAS HAS LEFT.)

MOURNER

(TO BERNARDA UC) Nor a roof for your daughters.

MOURNER

(TO BERNARDA UC) May you go on enjoying your wedding wheat.



FIGURE 4

BERNARDA

As though a herd of goats had passed through. Adela give me a fan.

ADELA

(CROSSES TO BERNARDA AND HANDS HER A FAN) Take this one.

BERNARDA

(RISES, LOOKS AT THE FAN, AND THROWS IT DOWN ON THE FLOOR.)
Is that the fan to give to a widow? Give me a black one and learn to respect your fathers memory.

(AS SHE DOES THIS ADELA CROSSES UR TO THE FOOT OF THE STAIRS AND FACES R.)

MARTIRIO

(RISES FROM HER STOOL AND CROSSES TO BERNARDA) Here take this one.
(HANDS BERNARDA A FAN)

BERNARDA

(SITS) And you? (A SHORT PAUSE AS THEY LOOK AT EACH OTHER)

MARTIRIO

I'm not hot. (CROSSES TO STEPS AND GOES UP TO THE FIFTH STEP. THEN TURNS LEFT)

BERNARDA

(FACES FRONT) Well, look for another, because you'll need it. For the eight years of mourning not a breath of air will get into this house from the street. We'll act as if we'd sealed up doors and windows with bricks. That's what happened in my father's house--and in my grandfather's house. Meantime, you can all start embroidering your hope-chest linens. I have twenty bolts of linen in the chest from which to cut sheets and coverlets. Magdalena can embroider them. (SEE FIGURE 4)

MAGDALENA

It's all the same to me.

ADELA

(CROSSES DR) If you don't want to embroider them--they can go without. That way yours will look better. (START BUILDING.)

MAGDALENA

Neither mine nor yours. I know I'm not going to marry. I'd rather carry sacks to the mill. Anything except sit down here day after day in this dark room.

BERNARDA

That's what a woman is for.

MAGDALENA

Cursed be all women! (TURNS HER BACK ON BERNARDA.)

(ADELA CROSSES TO US OF ARCH. END BUILD)

BERNARDA

In this house you'll do what I order. You can't run to your father any more. Needle and thread for women. Whiplash and mules for men. That's the way it has to be for people who have certain obligations.

(ADELA EXITS R ARCH)

MARIA JOSEFA

(FROM OFF RIGHT) Bernarda! Let me out!

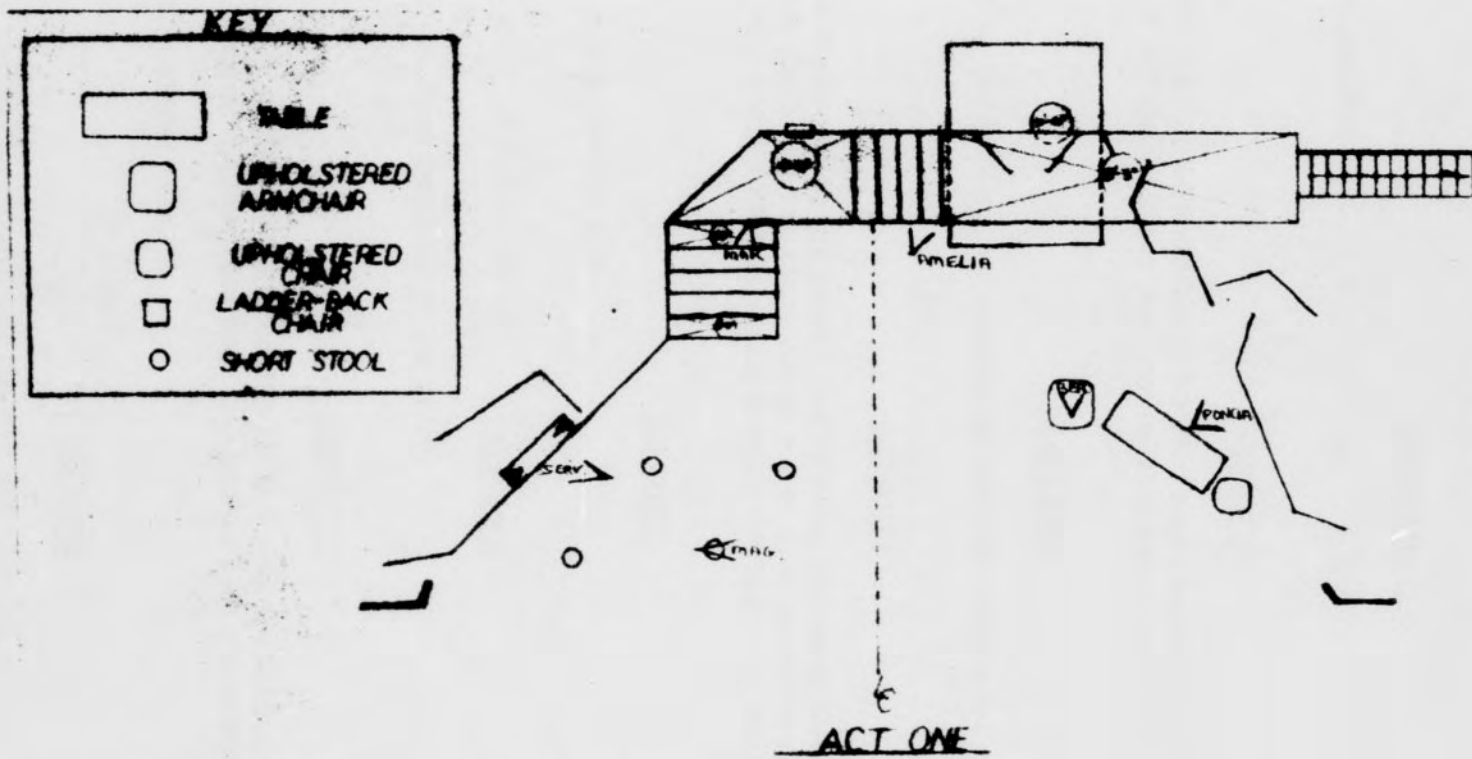


FIGURE 5

BERNARDA

Let her out now.

SERVANT

(ENTERS R ARCH AND CROSSES TO C) I had a hard time holding her. In spite of her eighty years your mother's as strong as an oak.

BERNARDA

It runs in the family. My grandfather was the same way.

SERVANT

Several times during the wake I had to cover her mouth with an empty sack because she wanted to shout out to you to give her dishwater to drink at least, and some dogmeat, which is what she says you feed her.

MARTIRIO

She's mean. (FACES UP)

BERNARDA

Let her get some fresh air in the patio.

SERVANT

(CROSSES R TO ARCH. SEE FIGURE 5) She took her rings and the amethyst earrings out of the box, put them on, and told me she wants to get married.

(THE DAUGHTERS LAUGH)

BERNARDA

Go with her and be careful she doesn't get near the well.

SERVANT

You don't need to be afraid she'll jump in. (EXITS R ARCH)

BERNARDA

It's not that--but the neighbors can see her there from their windows.

(MAGDALENA RISES AND STARTS TO CROSS UP THE STAIRS TO BEDROOMS.
FIRST MARTIRIO, THEN MAGDALENA, THEN AMELIA)

MARTIRIO

We'll go change our clothes.

BERNARDA

Yes, but don't take the kerchiefs from your heads.

(ADELA ENTERS FROM DOUBLE DOORS AND STOPS UC.)

And Angustias ?

ADELA

(STARTS TO CROSS R) I saw her looking out through the cracks of the
back door. The men had just gone.

BERNARDA

(RISES AND STOPS ADELA WITH HER VOICE) And you, what were you doing
at the door?

ADELA

(CROSSES UP TO FIRST LANDING AND LOOKS OUT OF THE WINDOW) I
went there to see if the hens had laid.

BERNARDA

(CROSSES RC) But the men had already gone!

ADELA

(CROSSES UP THE STAIRS) A group of them were still standing outside.
(EXITS INTO BEDROOM)

BERNARDA

(TURNS TOWARD DOUBLE DOORS) Angustias! Angustias!

ANGUSTIAS

(ENTERS AND STOP L OF CENTER ARCH) Did you want something.

BERNARDA

For what--and at whom--were you looking? (BUILD)

ANGUSTIAS

I. . . (SHE STARTS TO CROSS R, IN FRONT OF BERNARDA BUT IS STOPPED
BY BERNARDA'S CANE. FAST TEMPO)

BERNARDA

Yes you!

ANGUSTIAS

Nobody.

BERNARDA

Soft! Honeytongue! (BERNARDA HITS ANGUSTIAS ACROSS HER BACK WITH
THE CANE.)

(ANGUSTIAS BREAKS AWAY R TO THE FOOT OF THE STAIRS.)

PONCIA

(CROSSES A FEW STEPS TOWARD BERNARDA) Bernarda, calm down!

BERNARDA

Get out! (BERNARDA CROSSES TO HER CHAIR AND SITS. END BUILD)

(ANGUSTIAS EXITS INTO BEDROOM)

PONCIA

(CROSSES UP TO DOUBLE DOORS AND CLOSES THEM) She did it without realizing what she was doing --although it's bad of course. It really disgusted me to see her sneak along the patio. Then she stood at the window listening to the men's talk which, as usual was not the sort one should listen to.

BERNARDA

That's what they come to funerals for. (PAUSES AND THEN TURNS R)
What were they talking about?

PONCIA

(CROSSES DR AND GETS STOOL UL OF GROUPING WHICH SHE PLACES AT BERNARDA'S FEET TO THE R OF HER) They were talking about Paca la Roseta. Last night they tied her husband up in a stall, stuck her on a horse behind a saddle, and carried her away to the depths of the olive grove. (LAUGHS AND SITS IN THE STOOL)

BERNARDA

And what did she do?

PONCIA

She? She was just as happy--they say her breasts were exposed and Maximiliano held on to her as if he were playing a guitar. Terrible!

BERNARDA

And what happened?

PONCIA

What had to happen. They came back almost at daybreak. Paca la Roseta with her hair loose and a wreath of flowers on her head.

BERNARDA

She's the only bad woman we have in the village.

PONCIA

Because she's not from here. She's from far away. And those who went with her are the sons of outsiders too. The men from here aren't up to a thing like that.

BERNARDA

No, but they like to see it, and talk about it, and suck their fingers over it.

PONCIA

They were saying a lot more things. (LEANS TOWARDS BERNARDA)

BERNARDA

What things? (LEANS TOWARDS PONCIA)

PONCIA

I'm ashamed to talk about them. (TURNS AWAY R)

BERNARDA

And my daughter heard them?

PONCIA

Of course!

BERNARDA

That one takes after her aunts: white and mealy-mouthed and casting sheep's eyes at any little barbers' compliment. Oh, what one has to go through and put up with so people will be decent and not too wild!

PONCIA

It's just that your daughters are of an age that they ought to have husbands. Mighty little trouble they give you. Angustias must be much more than thirty now.

BERNARDA

Exactly thirty-nine.

PONCIA

(BAITING BERNARDA) Imagine. And she's never had a beau. . .

BERNARDA

(FURIOUSLY) None of them has ever had a beau and they've never needed one! They get along very well.

PONCIA

(RISES, PUTS STOOL UL, AND CROSSES L SIDE OF THE TABLE DL OF BERNARDA) I didn't mean to offend you.

BERNARDA

For a hundred miles around there's no one good enough to come near them. The men in this town are not of their class. Do you want me to turn them over to the first shepherd?

PONCIA

You should have moved to another town?

BERNARDA

That's it to sell them.

PONCIA

(CROSSES AROUND THE TABLE AND WINDS UP IN FRONT OF IT JUST DL OF BERNARDA) No Bernarda, to change. . . Of course any place else, they'd buy the poor ones.

BERNARDA

(RISES, FURIOUSLY) Hold your tormenting tongue.

PONCIA

(BACK DS A FEW STEPS) One can't even talk to you. Do we or do we not share secrets?

BERNARDA

(CROSSES C) We do not. You're a servant and I pay you. (TURNS FRONT) Nothing more.

PONCIA

But. . . (SHE IS INTERRUPTED BY THE SERVANT WHO ENTERS THROUGH THE DOUBLE DOORS. SHE AND PONCIA MEET IN BACK OF THE TABLE.)

SERVANT

Don Arturo's here. He's come to see about dividing the inheritance.

BERNARDA

(CROSSES UC, THEN TURNS AND SEES THE TWO MAIDS TALKING. POINTING TO THE SERVANT WITH HER CANE) You start white-washing the patio. (POINTING TO PONCIA WITH HER CANE) And you start putting all the dead man's clothes away in the chest.

PONCIA

We could give away some of the things.

BERNARDA

Nothing--not a button even! Not even the cloth we covered his face with.

(BERNARDA STARTS TO OPEN THE DOUBLE DOORS AND SEES THE TWO SERVANTS TALKING AGAIN. SHE TURNS ON THEM. PONCIA EXITS TO THE KITCHEN, THE SERVANT EXITS R, AND BERNARDA EXITS THROUGH DOUBLE DOORS.)

(BELLS TOLL)

(MARTIRIO ENTERS FROM BEDROOM DOOR AND CROSSES DOWN THE STEPS TO THE STOOL DR. THIS IS A SLOW CROSS. WHEN SHE IS SEATED, AMELIA ENTERS FROM THE SAME DOOR AND CROSSES DOWN THE STAIRS TO THE FIRST LANDING BEFORE SHE SPEAKS)

(BELLS STOP)

AMELIA

Did you take the medicine?

MARTIRIO

For all the good it will do me.

AMELIA

(SHE CROSSES DOWN THE STAIRS AND SITS ON THE STOOL L OF MARTIRIO)
But you took it?

MARTIRIO

I do things without any faith, but like clockwork.

AMELIA

Since the new doctor arrived you look livelier.

MARTIRIO

I feel the same.

AMELIA

(TRYING TO EXCITE INTEREST. SHE TURNS PROFILE TO MARTIRIO) Did you notice? Adelaida wasn't at the funeral.

MARTIRIO

I know. Her sweetheart doesn't let her go out even to the front doorstep. Before she was gay. Now, not even powder on her face.

AMELIA

These days a girl doesn't know whether to have a beau or not.

MARTIRIO

It's all the same.

AMELIA

The whole trouble is all these wagging tongues that won't let us live. Adelaida has probably had a terrible time.

MARTIRIO

(FACES FULL FRONT) She's afraid of our mother. Mother is the only one who knows the story of Adelaida's father and where he got his lands. Everytime she comes here, Mother twists the knife in the wound. Her father killed his first wife's husband in Cuba so he would marry her himself. Then he left her there and went off with another woman who already had one daughter, then he took up with this other girl, Adelaida's mother, and married her after his second wife died insane.

AMELIA

(FACES FULL FRONT) But why isn't a man like that put in jail?

MARTIRIO

Because men help each other cover up things like that and no one's able to tell on them.

AMELIA

But Adelaida's not to blame for any of that.

MARTIRIO

No, but history repeats itself. I can see that everything is a terrible repetition. And she'll have the same fate as her mother and grandmother-- both of them wife to the man who fathered her.

AMELIA

What an awful thing!

MARTIRIO

(BUILD) It's better never to look at a man. I've been afraid of them since I was a little girl. I'd see them in the yard, yoking the oxen and lifting grain sacks, shouting and stamping, and I was afraid to grow up for fear one of them would suddenly take me in his arms. God has made me weak and ugly and has definitely put such things away from me. (END BUILD)

AMELIA

(PUTS HER HAND ON MARTIRIO'S SHOULDER) Don't say that, Enrique Humanas was after you and he liked you.

MARTIRIO

(SHRUGS OFF AMELIA'S HAND) That was just people's ideas! One time I stood at my window until daybreak because he let me know through his shepherd's little girl that he was going to come, and he didn't. It was all just talk. Then he married someone else who had more money than I.

AMELIA

And ugly as the devil.

(MAGDALENA ENTERS FROM BEDROOM DOOR AND SLOWLY CROSSES DOWN TO THE WINDOW)

MARTIRIO

What do men care about ugliness? All they care about is lands, yokes of oxen, and a submissive bitch who will feed them.

AMELIA

Yes.

MAGDALENA

(FACES GIRLS AND THEN SLOWLY CROSSING DOWN THE STAIRS. SHE WILL CONTINUE HER CROSS THROUGH THE NEXT FEW LINES UNTIL SHE ENDS UP LC AT THE R SIDE OF THE TABLE, LEANING ON IT.) What are you doing?

MARTIRIO

Just here.

AMELIA

And you?

MAGDALENA

I've been going through all the rooms. Just to walk a little, and look at Grandmother's needlepoint pictures--a little woolen dog, and the black man wrestling with the lion--which we liked so much when we were children. Those were happier times. A wedding lasted ten days and evil tongues weren't in style. Today people are more refined. Brides wear white veils, just as in the cities and we drink bottled wine, but we rot inside because of what people might say.

MARTIRIO

Lord knows what went on then.

AMELIA

(TURNS AND FACES MAGDALENA) One of your shoelaces is untied. (FAST EXCHANGE)

MAGDALENA

What of it?

AMELIA

You'll step on it and fall.

MAGDALENA

(TIES SHOELACE) One less. (END FAST EXCHANGE)

MARTIRIO

And Adela?

MAGDALENA

(CROSSES C) Ah! She put on the green dress she made to wear for her birthday, went out to the yard and began shouting: "Chickens! Chickens! look at me!" I had to laugh.

AMELIA

(LEANS TOWARD MAGDALENA) If mother had only seen her.

(ANGUSTIAS COMES OUT OF BEDROOM AND CROSSES DOWN THE STAIRS AND LOOKS OUT THE WINDOW)

MAGDALENA

Poor little thing! She's the youngest one of us and still has her illusions. I'd give something to see her happy.

(MARTIRIO TURNS US)

ANGUSTIAS

What time is it?

MAGDALENA

It must be twelve.

ANGUSTIAS

(EXITS INTO BEDROOM) So late?

AMELIA

It's about to strike.

MAGDALENA

(CROSSES UP TO FIRST LANDING, STOPS, TURNS FRONT AND SPEAKS)
Do you know what?

AMELIA

No.

MAGDALENA

Come on!

MARTIRIO

I don't know what you're talking about! (START BUILD)

MAGDALENA

Both of you know better than I do, always with your heads together, like two little sheep, but not letting anyone else in on it. I mean about Pepe el Romano.

MARTIRIO

Ah!

MAGDALENA

(SITS ON SECOND STEP ABOVE LANDING) Ah! The whole town's talking

about it. Pepe el Romano is coming to marry Angustias.

(MARTIRIO TURNS FULL FRONT)

Last night he was walking around the house and I think he's going to send a declaration soon. (END BUILD)

MARTIRIO

I'm glad. He's a good man.

MAGDALENA

Neither of you is glad.

MARTIRIO

(TURNS L) Magdalena! What do you mean?

MAGDALENA

If he were coming because of Angustias' looks, for Angustias as a woman, I'd be glad to, but he's coming for her money. Even though Angustias is our sister, we're her family here and we know she's old and sickly, and always has been the least attractive one of us! Because if she looked like a dressed up stick at twenty, what can she look like now, now that she's forty.

MARTIRIO

Don't talk like that. Luck comes to the one who least expects it.

AMELIA

(RISES, CROSSES RC) But Magdalena's right after all! Angustias has all her father's money; she's the only rich one in the house and that's why, now that father's dead and the money will be divided, they're coming for her.

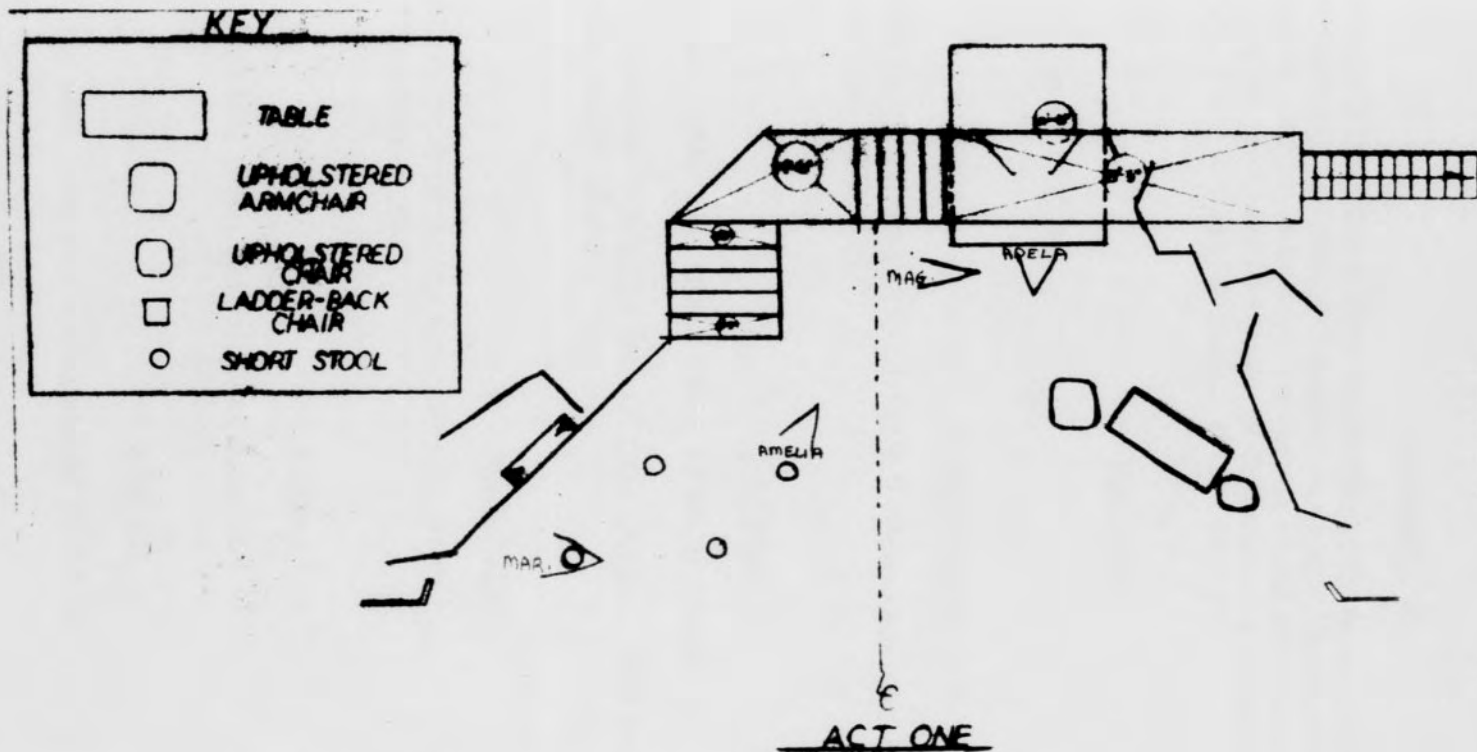


FIGURE 6

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MAGDALENA

(RISES AND CROSSES DOWN TO FIFTH STEP) Pepe el Romano is twenty-five years old and the best looking man around here. The natural thing would be for him to be after you Amelia or our Adela who's twenty--not looking for the least likely one in this house, a woman who, like her father, talks through her nose. (START BUILD)

MARTIRIO

Maybe he likes that!

MAGDALENA

(CROSSES DOWN TO FOOT OF STAIRS) I've never been able to bear your hypocrisy. (END BUILD)

MARTIRIO

Heavens! (THE TWO GIRLS STARE AT EACH OTHER)

(ADELA ENTERS THROUGH THE DOUBLE DOORS. SHE IS DRESSED IN A LOVELY GREEN DRESS.)

MAGDALENA

(CROSSES TO R OF ADELA WHO HAS STOPPED UC. SEE FIGURE 6) Did the chickens see you?

ADELA

(CROSSES LC) What did you want me to do?

AMELIA

If mother sees you, she'll drag you by your hair!

ADELA

(CROSSES C) I had a lot of illusions about this dress. I'd planned to put it on the day we were going to eat watermelons at the well. There wouldn't have been another like it.

MARTIRIO

(SARCASTICALLY) It's a lovely dress.

ADELA

And one that looks very good on me. It's the best thing Magdalena's ever cut.

MAGDALENA

And the chickens, what did they say to you?

ADELA

They presented me with a few fleas that riddled my legs.

(THEY ALL LAUGH)

MARTIRIO

What you can do is dye it black.

MAGDALENA

(CROSSES L OF ADELA) The best thing you can do is give it to Angustias for her wedding with Pepe el Romano. . .

ADELA

(CROSSES URC) But Pepe el Romano. . .

AMELIA

Haven't you heard about it? (START BUILD)

ADELA

No.

MAGDALENA

Well now you know. (CROSSES TO R SIDE TABLE L)

ADELA

But it can't be. (TURNS FRONT)

MAGDALENA

Money can do anything!

ADELA

Is that why she went out after the funeral and stood looking through the door. (PAUSE) And that man would. . .

MAGDALENA

Would do anything.

(PAUSE)

MARTIRIO

What are you thinking Adela?

ADELA

I'm thinking that this mourning has caught me at the worst moment of my life for me to bear it.

MAGDALENA

You'll get used to it.

ADELA

(CROSSES UP THE STAIRS, RUNNING AND STOPS AT THE WINDOW FACING UP) I will not get used to it! I can't be locked up. I don't want my skin's whiteness lost in these rooms. (TURNS FRONT) Tomorrow I'm going to put on my green dress and go walking in the streets. I want to go out! (END BUILD)

SERVANT

(ENTERS R ARCH AND MAKES A CONTINUOUS CROSS TO DOUBLE DOORS. SHE EXITS AFTER HER LINE.) The poor thing, how she misses her father. . .

MARTIRIO

Hush!

AMELIA

What happens to one will happen to all of us.

MAGDALENA

(CROSSES TO FOOT OF STAIRS) The servant almost heard you.

SERVANT

(ENTERS DOUBLE DOORS AND STANDS IN UC ARCH) Pepe el Romano is coming along at the end of the street.

MAGDALENA

(CROSSES UC) Let's go see him.

(MAGDALENA, MARTIRIO, AND AMELIA EXIT THROUGH DOUBLE DOORS IN THAT ORDER)

SERVANT

(CROSSES TO FOOT OF STAIRS) Aren't you going?

ADELA

(CROSSES DOWN TO FOURTH STEP) It's nothing to me.

SERVANT

(CROSSES TO R ARCH) Since he has to turn the corner, you'll see him better from the window of your room. (EXITS)

(ADELA IS LEFT ON THE STAGE STANDING ON THE STEPS DOUBTFULLY. AFTER A MOMENT SHE RUNS UP THE STAIRS AND EXITS INTO THE BEDROOM. BERNARDA AND PONCIA ENTER THROUGH DOUBLE DOORS.)

BERNARDA

(CROSSES TO HER CHAIR AND SITS) Damned portions and shares.

PONCIA

(CROSSES ULC BEHIND BERNARDA) What a lot of money is left Angustias.

BERNARDA

Yes.

PONCIA

(CROSSES BEHIND TABLE L) And for the others considerably less.

(ANGUSTIAS ENTERS FROM THE BEDROOM AND CROSSES DOWN THE STAIRS SLOWLY. HER FACE IS HEAVILY MADE UP.)

BERNARDA

You've told me that already, when you know I don't want it mentioned. Considerably less; a lot less! Don't remind me any more. (ANGUSTIAS IS URC BY NOW. BERNARDA TURNS AND SEES HER) Angustias! (SHE RISES)

ANGUSTIAS

(SHE STOPS) Mother.

BERNARDA

(CROSSES UP TO ANGUSTIAS, L OF HER) Have you dared to powder your face? Have you dared to wash your face on the day of your father's death?

ANGUSTIAS

(FACING BERNARDA) He wasn't my father. Mine died a long time ago. Have you forgotten that already?

BERNARDA

You owe more to this man, father of your sisters, then to your own. Thanks to him, your fortune is intact.

ANGUSTIAS

(TRIES TO GET PAST BERNARDA) We'll have to see about that.

BERNARDA

(GRABS ANGUSTIAS BY THE ARM) Even out of decency! Out of respect!

ANGUSTIAS

Let me go out mother!

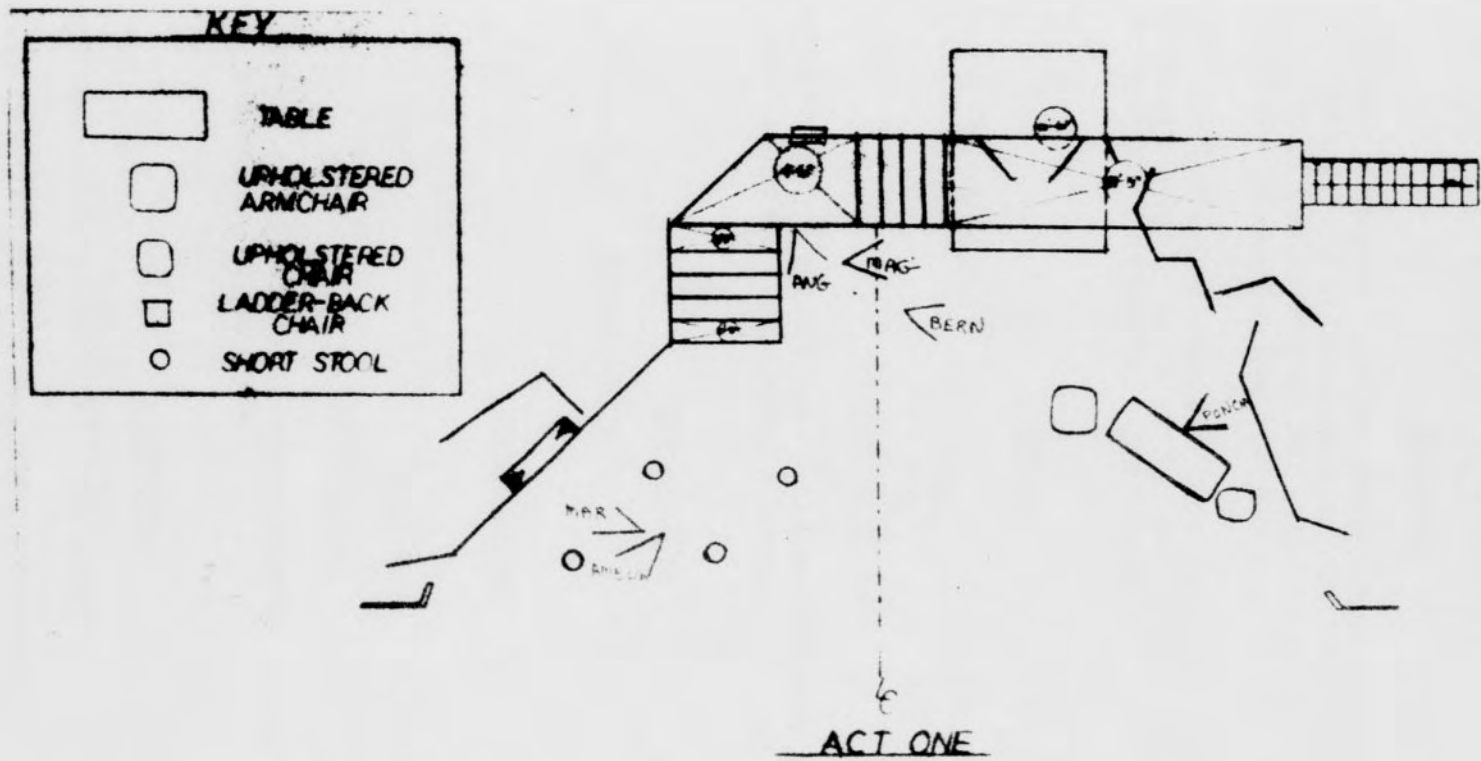


FIGURE 7

BERNARDA

Let you go out? After I've taken that powder off your face I will. Spineless! Painted hussy! Just like your aunts. (SHE REMOVES THE POWDER VIOLENTLY, WITH A HANKERCHIEF SHE GETS OUT OF HER POCKET. THEN SHE PUSHES ANGUSTIAS UR) Now, get out!

(MARTIRIO, AMELIA AND MAGDALENA ENTER THROUGH DOUBLE DOORS AND ANGUSTIAS CROSSES UR. MARTIRIO AND AMELIA CROSS DR. MAGDALENA CROSSES UR TO ANGUSTIAS. SEE FIGURE 7)

PONCIA

Bernarda don't be so hateful!

BERNARDA

(CROSSES BACK TO HER CHAIR) Even though my mother is crazy I still have my five senses and I know what I'm doing..

MAGDALENA

What's going on here. (START BUILD)

BERNARDA

Nothing's going on here.

MAGDALENA

(TO ANGUSTIAS) If you're fighting over the inheritance, you're the richest one and can hang on to it all.

ANGUSTIAS

Keep your tongue in your pocketbook! (END BUILD)

(MAGDALENA CROSSES DR WITH THE REST OF THE GIRLS.)

BERNARDA

Don't fool yourselves into thinking you can sway me. Until I go out of this house feet first I'll give the orders for myself and for you.

(VOICES ARE HEARD OFF R AND THEN MARIA JOSEFA ENTERS FROM R ARCH, FOLLOWED BY THE SERVANT. MARIA JOSEFA CROSSES TO C. THE SERVANT STOPS URC.)

MARIA JOSEFA

Bernarda, where's my mantilla? Nothing, nothing of what I own will be for any of you. Not my rings nor my black moire dress. Because not a one of you is going to marry--not a one. Bernarda, give me my necklace of pearls.

BERNARDA

(TO SERVANT) Why did you let her get in here.

SERVANT

(FRIGHTENED) She got away from me!

MARIA JOSEFA

I ran away because I want to marry--I want to get married to a beautiful manly man from the shore of the sea. Because here the men run from women.

BERNARDA

Hush, hush, Mother! (STARTS BUILDING TO A FAST, LOUD, CLIMAX.)

MARIA JOSEFA

No, no--I won't hush. I don't want to see these single women, longing for marriage, turning their hearts to dust; and I want to go to my home town. Bernarda, I want a man to get married to and be happy with.

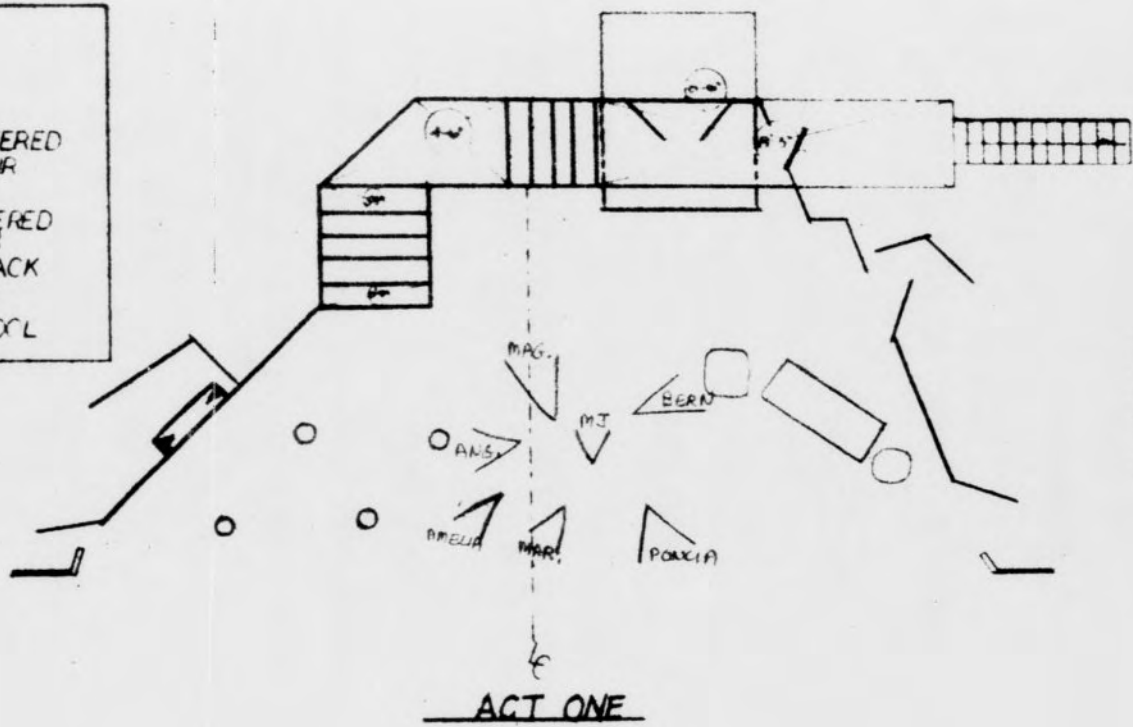
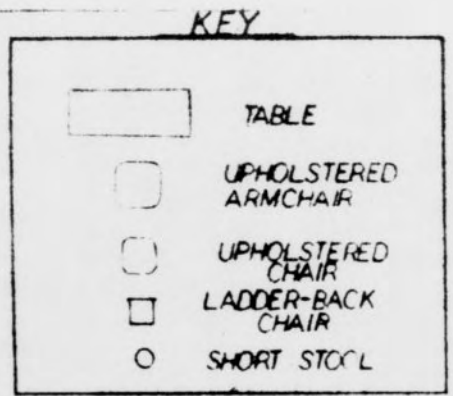


FIGURE 8

BERNARDA

Lock her up!

(SERVANT CROSSES R OF MARIA JOSEFA AND HOLDS HER ARM)

MARIA JOSEFA

Let me go out Bernarda!

BERNARDA

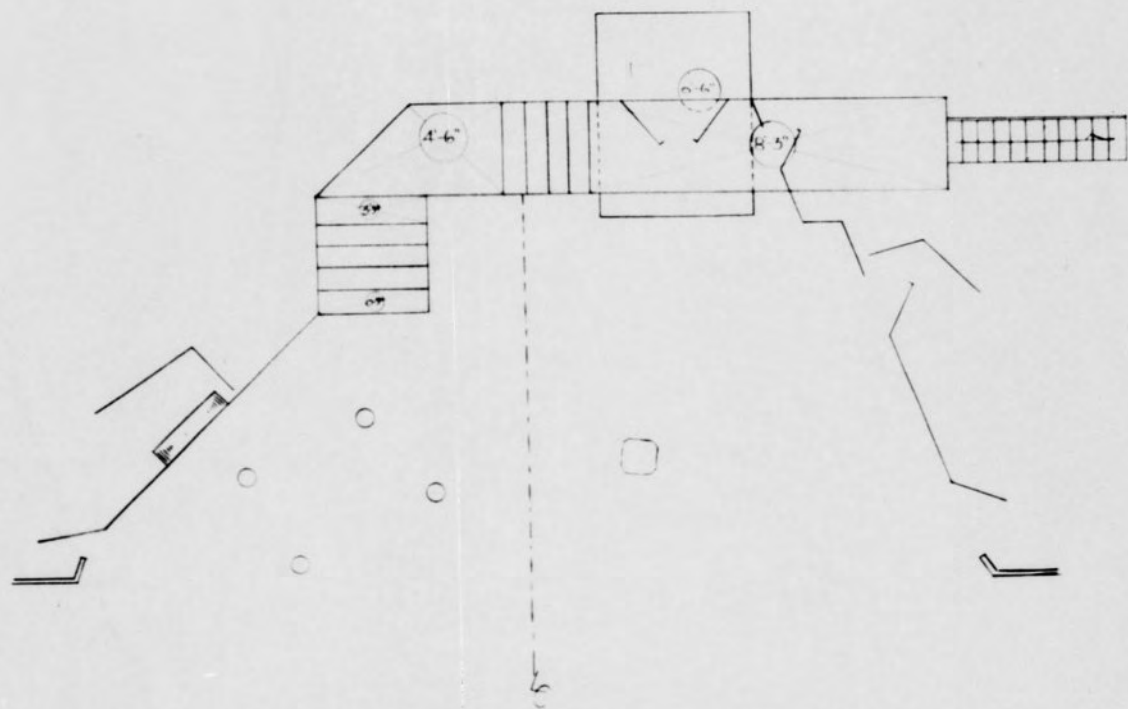
Help her. All of you!

(ALL OF THE GIRLS AND PONCIA CROSS TO CENTER AROUND MARIA JOSEFA AND THE LIGHTS TAKE A FAST FADE OUT. SEE FIGURE 8.)

MARIA JOSEFA

I want to get away from here! Bernarda! (END BUILD)

(BY THE END OF THIS LINE THE STAGE IS BLACKED OUT AND EVERYONE EXITS QUIETLY IN THE BLACKOUT.)



ACT TWO

FIGURE 9

ACT II

(LIGHTS COME UP ON THE GIRLS SEWING SHEETS. THERE ARE FOUR STOOLS ON STAGE RIGHT. A CHAIR IS IN CENTER. PONCIA IS SEATED ON THE US STOOL FACING FRONT. MARTIRIO IS ON THE R STOOL FACING L. AMELIA IS ON THE DS STOOL FACING R. MAGDALENA IS ON THE L STOOL FACING UP. ANGUSTIAS IS STANDING L OF MAGDALENA.)

ANGUSTIAS

I've cut the third sheet. (HANDS A SHEET TO MAGDALENA)

MARTIRIO

That one goes to Amelia.

(MAGDALENA HANDS THE SHEET TO AMELIA.)

MAGDALENA

(SHOWS ANGUSTIAS A SHEET) Angustias, shall I put Pepe's initials here too?

ANGUSTIAS

(CROSSES TO CHAIR C AND SITS) No.

MAGDALENA

(CROSSES URC AND YELLS UP TO THE BEDROOM) Adela, aren't you coming?

AMELIA

She's probably stretched out on the bed.

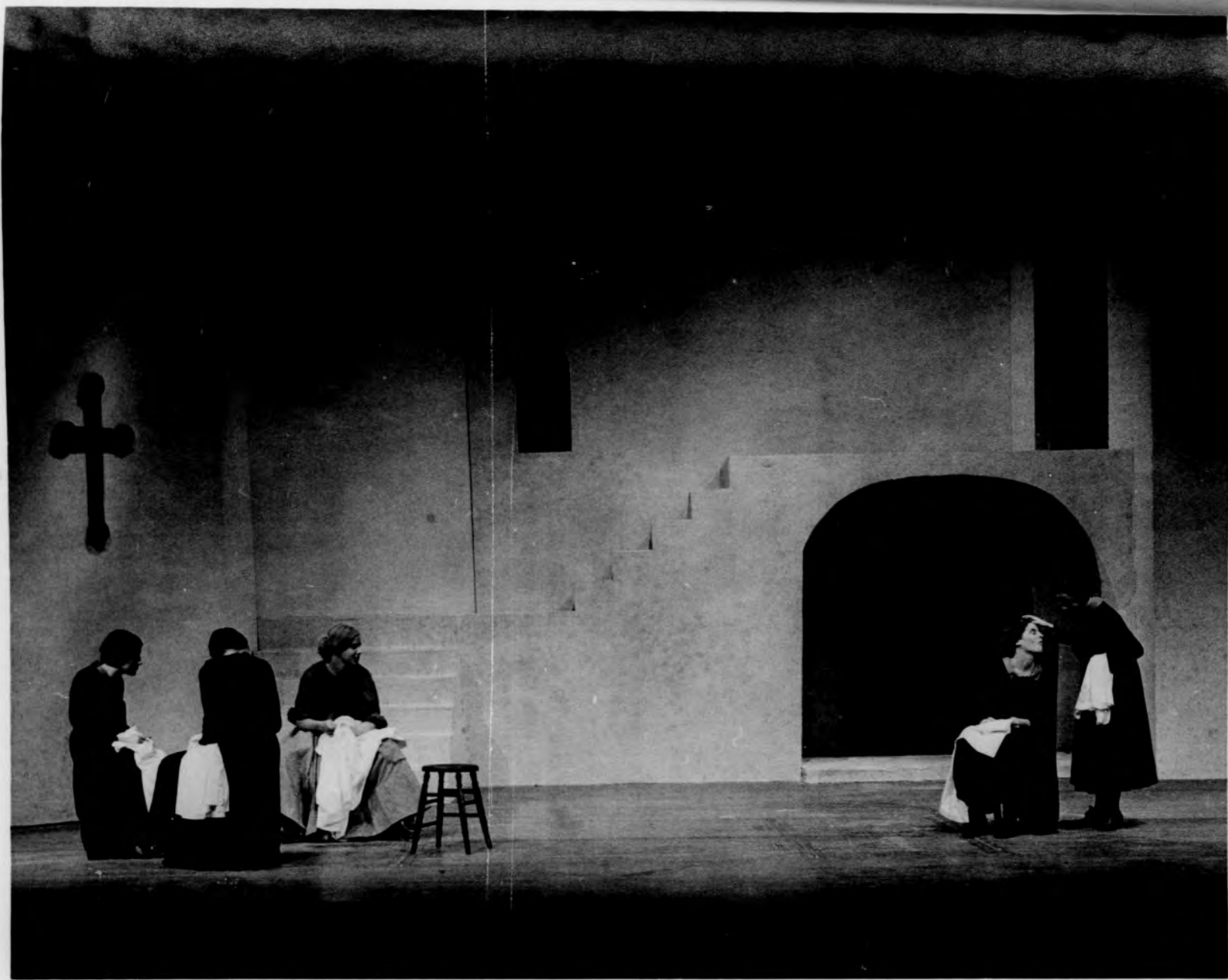


FIGURE 10

PONCIA

(MYSTERIOUSLY) Something's wrong with that one. I find her restless, trembling, frightened--as if a lizard were between her breasts.

MARTIRIO

There's nothing more or less wrong with her than there is with all of us.

MAGDALENA

(CROSSES TO R OF ANGUSTIAS AND PINCHES HER CHEEK) All of us except Angustias.

ANGUSTIAS

I feel fine, and anybody who doesn't like it can just pop.

MAGDALENA

(CROSSES IN BACK OF ANGUSTIAS TO L OF CHAIR) We all have to admit that the nicest things about you are your figure and your tact. (SEE FIGURE 10)

ANGUSTIAS

Fortunately, we'll soon be out of this hell! (FAST)

MAGDALENA

(CROSSES BACK TO HER STOOL) Maybe you won't get out! (STARTING A FIGHT)

MARTIRIO

Stop this talk!

ANGUSTIAS

(CALMS DOWN) Besides a good dowry is better than dark eyes in one's face!

MAGDALENA

All you say just goes in one ear and out the other. (ENDS FIGHT)

AMELIA

(TO PONCIA) Open the patio door and see if we can get a bit of a breeze.

(PONCIA CROSSES UP AND OPENS THE DOUBLE DOORS.)

MARTIRIO

Last night I couldn't sleep because of the heat.

AMELIA

Neither could I.

MAGDALENA

I got up for a bit of air. There was a black storm cloud and a few drops even fell.

PONCIA

(CROSSES DOWN A FEW STEPS) It was one in the morning and the earth seemed to give off fire. I got up too. Angustias was still at the window with Pepe.

MAGDALENA

That late? What time did he leave?

ANGUSTIAS

Why do you ask if you saw him?

AMELIA

He must have left about one-thirty.

ANGUSTIAS

Yes, How did you know?

AMELIA

I heard him cough and heard his mares hoofbeats.

PONCIA

But I heard him leave around four.

ANGUSTIAS

(SNAPPING AT PONCIA) It must have been someone else!

PONCIA

No, I'm sure of it.

AMELIA

That's what it seemed to me.

MAGDALENA

That's very strange.

(PAUSE)

PONCIA

(CROSSES TO R SIDE OF ANGUSTIAS, C) Listen Angustias, what did he say to you the first time he came by your window?

ANGUSTIAS

Nothing. What should he say. Just talked.

MARTIRIO

(CROSSES TO MAGDALENA ON THE L STOOL) It's certainly strange that two people who never knew each other should suddenly meet at a window and be engaged.

ANGUSTIAS

Well I didn't mind.

AMELIA

I'd have felt very strange about it.

ANGUSTIAS

No, because when a man comes to a window he knows, from all the busy-bodies who come and go and fetch and carry, that he's going to be told "yes."

MARTIRIO

All right, but he'd have to ask you.

ANGUSTIAS

Of course!

AMELIA

And how did he ask you?

ANGUSTIAS

Why, no way - "You know I'm after you. I need a good, well brought up woman and that's you--if it's agreeable."

AMELIA

These things embarrass me!

ANGUSTIAS

They embarrass me too, but one has to go through it!

PONCIA

And did he say anything more?

ANGUSTIAS

Yes, he did all the talking.

MARTIRIO

And you?

ANGUSTIAS

I couldn't have said a thing. My heart was almost coming out of my mouth. It was the first time I'd ever been alone at night with a man.

MAGDALENA

(SARCASTICALLY) And such a handsome man!

ANGUSTIAS

(ANGERED NOW) He's not bad looking!

PONCIA

(CROSSES RC) Those things happen among people who have an idea how to do things, who talk and say and move their hand. The first time my husband, Evaristo the Short-tailed came to my window. . . (SHE LAUGHS.)

AMELIA

What happened?

(PONCIA CROSSES R TO THE US STOOL AND SITS. AS SHE PASSES MARTIRIO, MAGDALENA AND AMELIA SIT ON THE FLOOR AND GROUP AROUND HER. ANGUSTIAS GETS OFF HER CHAIR AND SLOWLY CROSSES RC AS THE STORY PROGRESSES.)

PONCIA

It was very dark. I saw him coming along and as he went by he said, "Good evening." "Good evening," I said. Then we were both silent for more than half an hour. The sweat poured down my body. Then Evaristo got nearer and nearer as if he wanted to squeeze in through the bars and said in a very low voice--"Come here and let me feel you!"

(THEY ALL LAUGH. AMELIA GETS UP AND CROSSES TO R ARCH LISTENING.)

AMELIA

I thought mother was coming!

MAGDALENA

What she'd have done to us!

(THEY ALL LAUGH AGAIN. THIS TIME LOUDER)

AMELIA

Sh-h-h! She'll hear us.

PONCIA

Then he acted very decently. Instead of getting some other idea, he went to raising birds, until he died. You aren't married but it's good for you to know, anyway, that two weeks after the wedding a man gives up the bed for the table, then the table for the tavern, and the woman who doesn't like it can just rot, weeping in a corner.

(ANGUSTIAS CROSSES SLOWLY BACK TO HER CHAIR C AND SITS.)

AMELIA

You liked it.

PONCIA

I learned how to handle him!

MARTIRIO

Is it true that you sometimes hit him?

PONCIA

(PROUDLY) Yes, and once I almost poked out one of his eyes!

MAGDALENA

All women ought to be like that!

PONCIA

I'm one of your mothers school. One time I don't know what he said to me, and then I killed all his birds--with the pestle!

(THEY ALL LAUGH.)

MAGDALENA

(LOOKS US) Adela child! Don't miss this.

AMELIA

(LOOKS US) Adela!

(PAUSE)

MAGDALENA

I'll go see. (RISES AND CROSSES UP THE STAIRS, INTO THE BEDROOM)

PONCIA

That child is sick!

MARTIRIO

Of course. She hardly sleeps!

PONCIA

(LEANS OVER TO MARTIRIO AND TOUCHES HER) What does she do then?
(BUILD IN TEMPO AND INTENSITY)

MARTIRIO

(BREAKS AWAY FROM PONCIA AND CROSSES UC TO THE ARCH) How do I
know what she does. (KEEP BUILDING)

PONCIA

(FASTER) You probably know better than we do, since you sleep with just
a wall between you.

ANGUSTIAS

(FASTER AND BITTERLY) Envy gnaws on people.

AMELIA

(CROSSES BACK TO HER STOOL, DS OF STOOL GROUP, AND SITS) Don't exaggerate.

ANGUSTIAS

I can tell it in her eyes. She's getting the look of a crazy woman.

MARTIRIO

Don't talk about crazy women. This is one place where you're not allowed to say that word. (END OF BUILD)

(MAGDALENA ENTERS FROM THE BEDROOM PULLING ADELA BY THE ARM AFTER HER. AS THEY ARE COMING DOWN THE STAIRS, MARTIRIO SITS ON THE L STOOL OF THE GROUPING.)

MAGDALENA

Didn't you say she was asleep? (PUSHES ADELA INTO THE MIDDLE OF THE STOOL GROUPING. SHE STANDS US OF GROUPING.)

ADELA

(IN THE CENTER OF THE STOOL GROUPING) My body aches!

MARTIRIO

Didn't you sleep well last night?

ADELA

Yes.

MARTIRIO

Then?

ADELA

(BREAKS OUT OF GROUP AND CROSSES URC FURIOUSLY) Leave me alone. Awake or asleep, it's no affair of yours. I'll do whatever I want with my body.

MARTIRIO

I was just concerned about you!

SERVANT

(ENTERS THROUGH DOUBLE DOORS AND STOPS IN ARCHWAY UC) Bernarda is calling you. The man with the laces is here.

(SERVANT EXITS THROUGH DOUBLE DOORS, THEN AMELIA, MAGDALENA, AND ANGUSTIAS EXIT THROUGH DOUBLE DOORS. MARTIRIO CROSSES TO THE RIGHT OF ADELA AND STARES AT HER. ADELA STARES BACK AND THEN SHE CROSSES CENTER TO CHAIR.)

ADELA

(AT C) Don't look at me like that! If you want I'll give you my eyes for they're younger, and my back to improve that hump you have, but look the other way when I go by.

(MARTIRIO STARES AT HER ANOTHER FEW SECONDS AND THEN LEAVES THROUGH THE DOUBLE DOORS.)

PONCIA

Adela, she's your sister and the one who loves you most besides.

ADELA

(SITS IN THE CHAIR C) She follows me everywhere. Sometimes she looks

in my room to see if I'm sleeping. She won't let me breathe, and always, "Too bad about that face!" "Too bad about that body! It's going to waste!" But I won't let that happen. My body will be for whomever I choose.

PONCIA

(CROSSES TO ADELA C; STANDS BEHIND CHAIR AND RUBS THE BACK OF ADELA'S NECK) For Pepe el Romano, no?

ADELA

What do you mean? (FAST)

PONCIA

What I said Adela! (FAST)

ADELA

(RISES, BREAKS PONCIA'S HOLD ON HER NECK AND TAKES STEP) Shut up!
(FASTER)

PONCIA

Don't you think I've noticed? (SLOWER)

ADELA

(GRABS PONCIA'S ARM) Lower your voice.

PONCIA

(BREAKS ADELA'S HOLD AND SITS IN CHAIR C) Then forget what you're thinking about!

ADELA

What do you know?

PONCIA

We old ones can see through walls. Where do you go when you get up at night?

ADELA

I wish you were blind! (TAKES A STEP LEFT AND PONCIA GRABS HER ARM BEFORE SHE CAN GET AWAY FROM HER)

PONCIA

(TWISTS ADELA AROUND UNTIL THEY ARE FACING ONE ANOTHER. ADELA IS SLIGHTLY DL OF PONCIA.) But my head and hands are full of eyes where something like this is concerned. I couldn't possibly guess your intentions. (STARTS TO FORCE ADELA TO HER KNEES AND WILL SUCCEED IN DOING SO BY THE END OF THE SPEECH) Why did you sit almost naked at your window, and with the light on and the window open, when Pepe passed by the second night he came to talk with your sister?

ADELA

(TRYS TO PULL AWAY) That's not true.

PONCIA

(PULLS HER TOWARD HER, HOLDS TIGHTLY TO BOTH ARMS) Don't be a child! Leave your sister alone. And if you like Pepe el Romano keep it to yourself! (CALMS DOWN A LITTLE FOR THE NEXT FEW LINES BUT GRADUALLY BUILDS TO THE END OF THE SPEECH) Besides, who says you can't marry him? Your sister Angustias is sickly. She'll die with her first child. Narrow waisted, old--and out of my experience I can tell you she'll die. Then Pepe will do what all widowers do in these parts: he'll marry the youngest and the most beautiful, and that's you. Live on that hope, forget him, anything; but don't go against God's law. (SHE PUSHES ADELA ALL THE WAY DOWN TO THE FLOOR.)

ADELA

(RISES TO HER KNEES) Hush! (START BUILD)

PONCIA

I won't hush!

ADELA

(BREAKS HOLD, BUT STAYS ON KNEES) Mind your own business, snooper, traitor!

PONCIA

(PLACES HANDS ON ADELA SHOULDERS) I'm going to stick to you like a shadow!

ADELA

Instead of cleaning the house and then going to bed and praying for the dead, you root around like an old sow about goings on between man and women--so you can drool over them. (MAKES A GESTURE AT MOUTH)

PONCIA

I keep watch; so people won't spit when they pass our door.

ADELA

(BREAKS PONCIA'S HOLD ON HER SHOULDERS) What a tremendous affection you've suddenly conceived for my sister.

PONCIA

(LIVID) I don't have any affection for any of you. I want to live in a decent house. I don't want to be dirtied in my old age.

ADELA

(TRIUMPHANTLY STANDS) Save your advice. It's already too late. For I'd leap not over you, just a servant, but over my mother to put out this

fire I feel in my legs and my mouth. What can you possibly say about me? That I lock myself in my room and will not open the door? That I don't sleep? I'm smarter than you. (SLAPS PONCIA AND RUNS UC IN FRONT OF ARCH) See if you can catch the hare with your hands.

PONCIA

(HOLDS FACE AND TWISTS IN CHAIR TO FACE ADELA) Don't defy me Adela, don't defy me! Because I can shout, light lamps, and make bells ring.

ADELA

(TOPS PONCIA'S VOLUME) Bring four thousand yellow flares and set them about the walls of the yard. No one can stop what has to happen. (END BUILD)

PONCIA

(CALMS DOWN) You like him that much?

ADELA

That much! Looking into his eyes I seem to drink his blood in slowly.

PONCIA

(TURN AWAY) I won't listen to you.

ADELA

Well, you'll have to! I've been afraid of you. But now I'm stronger than you.

(ANGUSTIAS ENTERS THROUGH DOUBLE DOORS. ADELA CROSSES URC. MAGDALENA ENTERS WITH ANGUSTIAS AND CROSSES TO R ARCHWAY.)

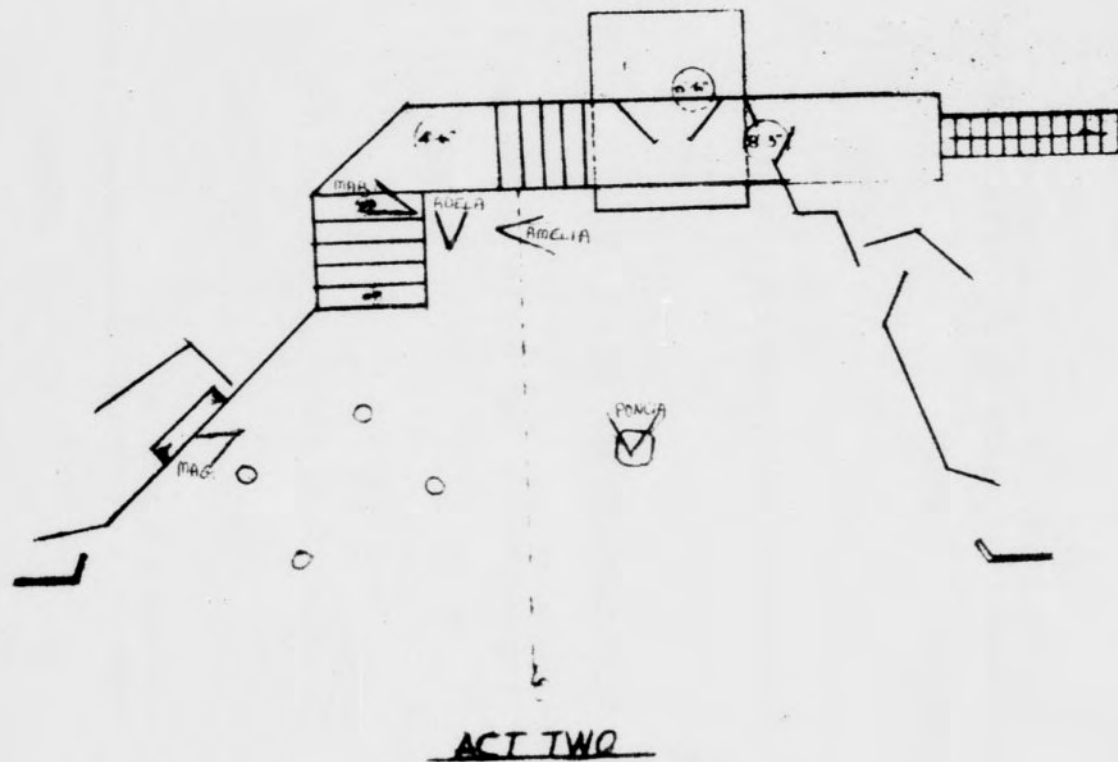


FIGURE 11

(STOPS ON FIFTH STEP, TURNS TO ADELA. SEE FIGURE II) Did you see
the faces?

MARTIRIO

(MARTIRIO AND AMELIA ENTER. MARTIRIO CROSSES UP THE STAIRS TO
FIFTH STEP. AMELIA STOPS I. OF ADELA.)

We'll see!

PONCIA

And be quiet! (SAID UNDER HER BREATH)

ADELA

(ANGUSTIAS EXITS INTO BEDROOM)

The most expensive one. And the face powder. I put them on the table
in your room.

PONCIA

(ON THE STAIRS BY NOW, ABOUT TO EXIT) Did you buy me the bottle of
perfume?

ANGUSTIAS

Certainly. She insists that in all this heat I have to go bring her I don't
know what from the store.

PONCIA

(CROSSES UP STAIRS) Always arguing!

ANGUSTIAS

AMELIA

Angustias' for her wedding sheets are beautiful.

ADELA

(TAKING SOME LACES FROM MARTIRIO'S ARM) And these?

MARTIRIO

They're for me for a nightgown.

ADELA

(CROSSES LC) One needs a sense of humor around here!

MARTIRIO

(CROSSES UP TO WINDOW) But only for me to look at. I don't have to exhibit myself before anybody.

PONCIA

No one ever sees us in our nightgowns.

MARTIRIO

(LOOKING AT ADELA) Sometimes they don't! But I love nice underwear. If I were rich, I'd have it made of Holland Cloth. It's one of the few tastes I have left.

PONCIA

(CROSSES LC TO ADELA AND TAKES LACES FROM HER. SHE HOLDS THEM UP TO ADELA'S FACE.) These laces are beautiful for babies caps and christening gowns. I could never afford them for my own. Now let's see if Angustias will use them for hers. Once she starts having children, they'll keep her running night and day.

MAGDALENA

I don't intend to sew a stitch on them.

AMELIA

And much less bring up some stranger's children. Look how our neighbors across the road are making sacrifices for four brats.

PONCIA

They're better off than you are. There at least they laugh and you can hear them fight.

MARTIRIO

(CROSSES DOWN THE STEPS TO FIRST STEP) Well, you go work for them, then.

PONCIA

No, fate has sent me to this nunnery!

(TINY BELLS ARE HEARD
FROM OFF RIGHT)

(WHEN THE BELLS ARE HEARD ON STAGE, MAGDALENA CROSSES UP TO L OF WINDOW. AMELIA FOLLOWS HER TO R OF THE WINDOW. MARTIRIO CROSSES AND SITS IN THE DS STOOL OF THE GROUPING.)

MAGDALENA

(LOOKING OUT OF WINDOW) It's the men going back to work.

PONCIA

It was three o'clock a minute ago.

MARTIRIO

With this sun!

ADELA

(CROSSES TO CHAIR C) If only we could go out in the fields too! (SITS IN THE CHAIR C)

MAGDALENA

(FACING FRONT, LEANS AGAINST WINDOW) Each class does what it has to do!

AMELIA

(SITS ON THE FIRST STEP OF UPPER STAIRS) Yes!

PONCIA

(CROSSES TO DOUBLE DOORS EXCITED) There's no happiness like that in the fields right at this time of year. Yesterday morning the reapers arrived. Forty or fifty handsome young men.

MAGDALENA

Where are they from this year?

PONCIA

(CROSSES TO RC) From far, far away. They came from the mountains! Happy! Like weathered trees! Shouting and throwing stones! Last night a woman who dresses in sequins and dances, with an accordion, arrived, and fifteen of them made a deal with her to take her to the olive grove. I saw them from far away. The one who talked with her was a boy with green eyes--tight knit as a sheaf of wheat.

AMELIA

Really?

ADELA

Are you sure?

AMELIA

To be born a woman is the worst possible punishment.

(THE REAPERS SONG IS
HEARD FROM OFF STAGE
R.)

MAGDALENA

Even our eyes aren't our own.

(THE REAPERS SONG
GETS LOUDER.)

PONCIA

(CROSSES TO DOUBLE DOORS C, AND OPENS THE L ONE) There they are. They have a beautiful song!

AMELIA

They're going out to reap now.

REAPERS CHORUS

(THIS VERSE IS AUDIBLE TO THE AUDIENCE. ALL ACTION STOPS ON STAGE WHILE THE GIRLS LISTEN.)

The reapers have set out
Looking for ripe wheat;
They'll carry off the hearts
Of any girls they meet.

AMELIA

(FACING THE WINDOW) And they don't mind the sun! (START BUILD)

MARTIRIO

They reap through flames.

ADELA

How I'd like to be a reaper so I could come and go as I pleased. Then we could forget what's eating us all.

MARTIRIO

What do you have to forget?

ADELA

Each of us has something.

MARTIRIO

(BITTERLY) Each one!

PONCIA

(OPENS THE DOOR EVEN WIDER) Quiet! Quiet! (END BUILD)

CHORUS OF REAPERS

(EVERYONE REMAINS STILL ON THE STAGE FOR THIS VERSE.)

Throw wide your doors and windows,
 You girls who live in the town
 The reaper asks you for roses
 With which to deck his crown.

(THE SINGING GRADUALLY
DIES DOWN AS IF REAPERS
ARE GOING OFF STAGE L.)

PONCIA

What a song!

MARTIRIO

(WITH NOSTALGIA)
Throw wide your doors and windows,
You girls who live in the town.

ADELA

(PASSIONATELY)
The reaper asks you for roses
With which to deck his crown.

PONCIA

(STILL LOOKING OUT OF DOUBLE DOORS) Now they're turning the corner.

ADELA

Let's watch them from the window of my room.

(ADELA AND MAGDALENA EXIT BEDROOM DOOR.)

PONCIA

(SHOUTING AFTER THEM) Be careful not to open the shutters too much
because they're likely to give them a push to see who's looking. (SHE
EXITS TO KITCHEN.)

(AMELIA AND MARTIRIO ARE LEFT ON THE STAGE. AMELIA IS SITTING ON
THE FIRST STEP OF THE SECOND SET OF SETPS. MARTIRIO IS SITTING ON
THE DS STOOL OF THE GROUPING.)

AMELIA

What's wrong with you?

MARTIRIO

The heat makes me feel ill.

AMELIA

And it's no more than that?

MARTIRIO

I was wishing it were November, the rainy days, the frost--anything except this unending summertime.

AMELIA

It'll pass and come again.

MARTIRIO

Naturally.

(PAUSE)

What time did you go to sleep last night?

AMELIA

(CROSSES DOWN THE STEPS. PICKS UP STOOL ON L SIDE OF GROUPING AND PULLS IT CLOSE TO MARTIRIO, L OF HER, AND SITS) I don't know. I sleep like a log. Why?

MARTIRIO

Nothing. Only I thought I heard someone in the yard.

AMELIA

Yes?

MARTIRIO

Very late.

AMELIA

And weren't you afraid?

MARTIRIO

No. I've heard it other nights.

AMELIA

We'd better watch out! Couldn't it have been the shepherd?

MARTIRIO

The shepherd come at six.

AMELIA

Maybe a young unbroken mule.

MARTIRIO

That's it. That's it. An unbroken little mule. (FACE FRONT)

AMELIA

We'll have to set a watch.

MARTIRIO

No. No. Don't say anything. It may be I've just imagined it.

AMELIA

(CROSSES TO FIRST STEP) Maybe.

(PAUSE)

MARTIRIO

Amelia!

AMELIA

What?

(PAUSE)

MARTIRIO

Nothing.

AMELIA

Why did you call me?

(PAUSE)

MARTIRIO

It just came out. I didn't mean to.

(PAUSE)

AMELIA

Lie down for a little.

ANGUSTIAS

(COMES IN FROM THE BEDROOM DOOR, FURIOUSLY) Where's the picture of Pepe I had under my pillow. Which one of you has it? (CROSSES TO C)

(AMELIA CROSSES DR., WHILE PONCIA ENTERS FROM KITCHEN AND STANDS UL.)

MARTIRIO

No one.

(MAGDALENA AND ADELA ENTER. ADELA CROSSES TO FIRST LANDING AND STOPS. MAGDALENA CROSSES DOWN THREE STEPS.)

AMELIA

(CROSSES L TO MARTIRIO AND PUTS HER HAND ON HER SHOULDER)
You'd think he was a silver St. Bartholomew.

ANGUSTIAS

Where's the picture?

ADELA

What picture?

ANGUSTIAS

One of you has hidden it on me.

MAGDALENA

Do you have the effrontery to say that? (CROSSES TO FIRST LANDING)



FIGURE 12

ANGUSTIAS

I had it in my room and now it isn't there.

MARTIRIO

But couldn't it have jumped out into the yard at midnight? Pepe likes to walk around in the moonlight.

ANGUSTIAS

Don't joke with me! When he comes, I'll tell him.

PONCIA

(LOOKING AT ADELA) Don't do that because it'll turn up.

ANGUSTIAS

(CROSSES UR) I'd like to know which one of you has it.

ADELA

(CROSSES TO R) Somebody has it. (PAUSE, AS SHE LOOKS AT MARTIRIO)
But not me.

MARTIRIO

(FURIOUSLY) Of course not you!

BERNARDA

(ENTERS VERY SLOWLY AND DELIBERATELY THROUGH THE DOUBLE DOORS AND CROSSES TO C. SEE FIGURE 12) And what scandal is this in my house in the heat's heavy silence? The neighbors must have their ears glued to the walls.

ANGUSTIAS

(CROSSES TO R OF BERNARDA) They've stolen my sweetheart's picture.

BERNARDA

(SHAKES ANGUSTIAS BY THE SHOULDERS) Who? Who?

ANGUSTIAS

(FRANTICALLY GESTURES TO SISTERS) They have!

BERNARDA

(CROSSES DR TO MARTIRIO) Which one of you? (PAUSE) Answer me!
(PAUSE AND THEN BERNARDA CROSSES UC NEAR PONCIA.) Search their rooms! Look in their beds. This comes of not tying you up with shorter leashes. But I'll teach you now!

(PONCIA CROSSES BEHIND BERNARDA UP THE STAIRS AND EXITS INTO THE BEDROOMS.)

(BERNARDA TAKES A FEW STEPS DOWN, AND SPEAKS TO ANGUSTIAS.) Are you sure?

ANGUSTIAS

Yes.

BERNARDA

Did you look everywhere?

ANGUSTIAS

Yes mother.

BERNARDA

(CROSSES TO CHAIR C) At the end of my life--to make me drink the bitterest poison a mother knows.

(PONCIA ENTERS AND STOPS ON FIRST LANDING.)

(BERNARDA SPEAKS TO PONCIA.) Did you find it?

PONCIA

Here it is.

BERNARDA

Where did you find it?

PONCIA

It was. . .

BERNARDA

Say it! Don't be afraid.

PONCIA

Between the sheets in Martirio's bed.

BERNARDA

(CROSSES QUICKLY DR TO MARTIRIO) Is that true?

MARTIRIO

It's true.

BERNARDA

(HITS MARTIRIO ACROSS THE BACK WITH HER CANE FURIOUSLY) You'll come to a bad end yet you hypocrite! Trouble maker! (START BUILD)

(AMELIA CROSSES R TO ARCH COWERING.)

MARTIRIO

(RISES AND CROSSES C) Don't hit me mother!

BERNARDA

(CROSSES TO MARTIRIO C AND GRABS HER ARM) All I want to!

MARTIRIO

(BREAKS BERNARDA'S HOLD ON HER) If I let you! (BACKS SEVERAL STEPS TO DLC) You hear me? Get back!

PONCIA

(CROSSES C) Don't be disrespectful to your mother.

ANGUSTIAS

(CROSSES TO R OF BERNARDA) Don't hit her, please! (END BUILD)

BERNARDA

(CROSSES ONE STEP LEFT) Not even tears in your eyes.

(ANGUSTIAS BACKS R AND SITS ON STOOL L OF GROUPING.)

MARTIRIO

I'm not going to cry just to please you.

BERNARDA

Why did you take the picture?

MARTIRIO

(CROSSES DL) Can't I play a joke on my sister?

ADELA

(CROSSES DL BEHIND MARTIRIO AND WINDS UP L OF MARTIRIO) It wasn't a joke! You never liked to play jokes. It was something else bursting in her breast--trying to come out. Admit it openly now.

MARTIRIO

(TURNS TO HER) Hush and don't make me speak; for if I should speak the walls would close together one against the other with shame.

ADELA

(TAKES STEP L) An evil tongue never stops inventing lies.

BERNARDA

(FURIOUSLY) Adela!

MAGDALENA

You're crazy!

AMELIA

And you stone us all with your evil suspicions.

MARTIRIO

(TURNS FRONT) But some others do things more wicked!

ADELA

(CROSSES BACK TO MARTIRIO) Until all at once they stand forth stark naked and the river carries them along.

BERNARDA

Spiteful!

ANGUSTIAS

It's not my fault Pepe el Romano chose me.

ADELA

(CROSSES DRC IN FRONT OF MARTIRIO) For your money!

ANGUSTIAS

(STANDS AND CROSSES ONE STEP L) Mother!

BERNARDA

(TURNS FRONT) Silence!

MARTIRIO

(CROSSES RC ABOVE ADELA. SHE WINDS UP SLIGHTLY UR OF ADELA.)
For your fields and your orchards!

MAGDALENA

That's only fair.

BERNARDA

Silence, I say! I saw the storm coming but I didn't know it would burst so soon. Oh, what an avalanche of hate you've thrown on my heart! But

I'm not old yet--I have five chains for you, and this house my father built, so not even the weeds will know of my desolation. Out of here!

(ANGUSTIAS EXITS INTO THE BEDROOM AND GETS THE PICTURE FROM PONCIA AS SHE PASSES HER. MARTIRIO EXITS TO THE KITCHEN. AMELIA EXITS R ARCH. ADELA AND MAGDALENA EXIT THROUGH THE DOUBLE DOORS. BERNARDA SLOWLY CROSSES TO CHAIR C AND SITS. PONCIA CROSSES UR.)

I'll have to let them feel the weight of my hand! Bernarda, remember your duty!

PONCIA

May I speak?

BERNARDA

Speak. I'm sorry you heard. A stranger is always out of place in a family.

PONCIA

(CROSSES RC) What I've seen, I've seen.

BERNARDA

Angustias must get married right away.

PONCIA

Certainly. We'll have to get her away from here.

BERNARDA

Not her, him!

PONCIA

(TAKES TWO STEPS TO BERNARDA) Of course. He's the one to get away from here. You've thought it all out.

BERNARDA

I'm not thinking. There are things that shouldn't and can't be thought out. I give orders.

PONCIA

(CROSSES TO R OF BERNARDA) And you think he'll be satisfied to go away?

BERNARDA

(RISES AND CROSSES R TO STOOL L OF THE STOOL GROUPING) What are you imagining now?

PONCIA

He will of course marry Angustias.

BERNARDA

(TURNS AND FACES PONCIA) Speak up! I know you well enough to see that your knife's out for me.

PONCIA

(CROSSES TWO STEPS DOWN) I never knew a warning could be called murder.

BERNARDA

Have you some "warning" for me?

PONCIA

(CROSSES TWO STEPS R TO BERNARDA) I'm not making any accusation, Bernarda. I'm only telling you to open your eyes and you'll see.

BERNARDA

See what?

PONCIA

(CROSSES BEHIND BERNARDA AND SITS IN THE STOOL L OF THE GROUP-ING) You've always been smart Bernarda. You've seen other people's sins a hundred miles away. Many times I've thought you could read minds. But your children are your children and now you're blind.

BERNARDA

Are you talking about Martirio. . .

PONCIA

Well, yes about Martirio. (FACES FRONT) I wonder why she stole the picture? (START BUILD)

BERNARDA

(TURNS TO PONCIA) After all, she says it was a joke. What else could it be?

PONCIA

(RISES) Do you believe that?

BERNARDA

(CROSSES R TO PONCIA) I don't merely believe it. It's so!

PONCIA

(CROSSES DLC) Enough of this. We're talking about your family. But if we were talking about your neighbor's family across the way, what would it be? (END BUILD)

BERNARDA

Now you're beginning to pull the point of the knife out.

PONCIA

(CROSSES TO C, LEANS ON CHAIR) No Bernarda. Something very grave is happening here. I don't want to put the blame on your shoulders, but you've never given your daughters any freedom. Martirio is lovesick, I don't care what you say. Why didn't you let her marry Enrique Humanas? Why on the very day he was coming to her window did you send him a message not to come?

BERNARDA

(FACES HER) I'd do it a thousand times over! My blood won't mingle with the Humanas' while I live. His father was a shepherd.

PONCIA

And you see what's happening to you with these airs!

BERNARDA

(CROSSES CENTER TO PONCIA) I have them because I can afford to. And you don't have them because you know where you came from!

PONCIA

(CROSSES UL) Don't remind me! I'm old now. I've always been grateful for your protection.

BERNARDA

(FACES FRONT) You don't seem so.

PONCIA

(CROSSES ULC) Martirio will forget this.

BERNARDA

(CROSSES TO R OF PONCIA) And if she doesn't--the worse for her. I don't believe this is that "very grave thing" that's happening here. Nothing's happening here. It's just that you wish it would. And if it should happen one day, you can be sure it won't go beyond these walls.

PONCIA

I'm not so sure of that! There are people in town who can also read hidden thoughts, from afar.

BERNARDA

How you'd like to see me and my daughters on our way to a whore-house.

PONCIA

No one knows her own destiny!

BERNARDA

I know my destiny! And my daughters! The whorehouse was for a certain woman, already dead. . .

PONCIA

Bernarda, respect the memory of my mother!

BERNARDA

Then don't plague me with your evil thoughts.

PONCIA

(CROSSES TO KITCHEN DOOR AND OPENS IT BUT DOESN'T LEAVE) I'd better stay out of everything.

BERNARDA

(CROSSES TO CHAIR C AND SITS) That's what you ought to do. Work and keep your mouth shut. The duty of all who work for a living.

PONCIA

(TURNS TO BERNARDA AND CLOSSES KITCHEN DOOR) But we can't do that. Don't you think it'd be better for Pepe to marry Martirio or . . . yes. . . Adela?

BERNARDA

No, I don't think so.

PONCIA

(CROSSES TO C AND STANDS BEHIND BERNARDA, LEANING OVER HER) Adela! She's Romano's real sweetheart!

BERNARDA

Things are never the way we want them!

PONCIA

But it's hard work to turn them from their destined course. For Pepe to be with Angustias seems wrong to me--and to other people--and even to the wind. Who knows if they'll get what they want?

BERNARDA

There you go again! Sneaking up on me--giving me bad dreams. But I won't listen to you, because if all you say should come to pass--I'd scratch your face.

PONCIA

(CROSSES TO LEFT STOOL OF THE GROUPING AT R) Frighten someone else with that.

BERNARDA

(RISES) Fortunately, my daughters respect me and have never gone against my will!

PONCIA

(FACES BERNARDA) That's right! But, as soon as they break loose they'll fly to the rooftops!

BERNARDA

And I'll bring them down with stones.

PONCIA

(SITS IN STOOL) Oh, yes! You were always the bravest one!

BERNARDA

(FACES FRONT) I've always enjoyed a good fight!

PONCIA

(CROSSES TWO STEPS L TO BERNARDA) But aren't people strange. You should see Angustias' enthusiasm for her lover, at her age! And he seems very smitten too. Yesterday my oldest son told me that when he passed by with the oxen at four-thirty in the morning they were still talking.

BERNARDA

At four thirty?

ANGUSTIAS

(ENTERS FROM THE BEDROOM AREA AND CROSSES DOWN STAIRS TO BOTTOM STEP) That's a lie.

(AMELIA ENTERS WITH HER AND CROSSES TO FIRST LANDING.)

PONCIA

CROSSES BACK TO STOOL L OF GROUPING R) That's what he told me.

BERNARDA

(CROSSES TO ANGUSTIAS) Speak up!

ANGUSTIAS

For more than a week now Pepe has been leaving at one. May God strike me dead if I'm lying.

MARTIRIO

(ENTERING FROM KITCHEN DOOR) I heard him leave at four too.

(MAGDALENA ENTERS THROUGH DOUBLE DOORS AND STAYS UC.)

BERNARDA

(TWO STEPS TO MARTIRIO) But did you see him with your own eyes?

MARTIRIO

(CROSSES R) I didn't want to look out. Don't you talk now through the side window?

ANGUSTIAS

(CROSSES TO US STOOL OF THE GROUPING R) We talk through my bedroom window.

(ADELA COMES IN THROUGH DOUBLE DOORS AND STANDS UC.)

BERNARDA

What's going on here.

PONCIA

If you're not careful, you'll find out! At least Pepe was at one of your windows--and at four in the morning too!

BERNARDA

Are you sure of that?

PONCIA

You can't be sure of anything in this life.

ADELA

(CROSSES DOWN TO BERNARDA) Mother don't listen to someone who wants us to lose everything we have.

BERNARDA

(CONFIDENTLY) I can take care of myself! If the townspeople want to come bearing false witness against me, they'll run into a stone wall! Don't any of you talk about this! Sometimes other people try to stir up a wave of filth to drown us.

MARTIRIO

I don't like to lie.

PONCIA

So there must be something.

BERNARDA

(CROSSES DC) There won't be anything. I was born to have my eyes always open. Now I'll watch without closing them 'til I die.

ANGUSTIAS

(TWO STEPS TOWARD BERNARDA) But I have a right to know.

BERNARDA

You don't have any right except to obey. No one's going to fetch and carry for me. (TO PONCIA) And don't meddle in our affairs. No one will take a step without my knowing it.

SERVANT

(ENTERS THROUGH DOUBLE DOORS AND STAYS UC. SHE IS VERY EXCITED.) There's a big crowd at the top of the street, and all the neighbors are at their doors! (EXITS THROUGH DOUBLE DOORS)

BERNARDA

(TO PONCIA) Run, see what's happening.

(PONCIA EXITS THROUGH DOUBLE DOORS AND THE GIRLS ALL TURN US AND ARE ABOUT TO FOLLOW HER. THEY STOP AT THE SOUND OF BERNARDA'S VOICE.)

Where are you going? I always knew you for window-watching women and breakers of your mourning. All of you to the kitchen.

(THEY EXIT TO THE KITCHEN AFTER BERNARDA. ADELA AND MARTIRIO REMAIN ON STAGE. ADELA CROSSES TO DC. MARTIRIO IS L. THE SCENE THAT FOLLOWS IS VERY INTENSE AND BITTER.)

MARTIRIO

You can be thankful I didn't open my mouth.

ADELA

I would have spoken too.

MARTIRIO

(CROSSES TO ADELA) And what were you going to say? Wanting isn't doing.

ADELA

(FACES MARTIRIO) I do what I can and what happens to suit me. You've wanted to but haven't been able.

MARTIRIO

You won't go on very long.

ADELA

I'll have everything!

MARTIRIO

(CROSSES DLC) I'll tear you out of his arms.

ADELA

(CROSSES DRC) Martirio, let me be!

MARTIRIO

None of us will have him!

ADELA

He wants me for his house!

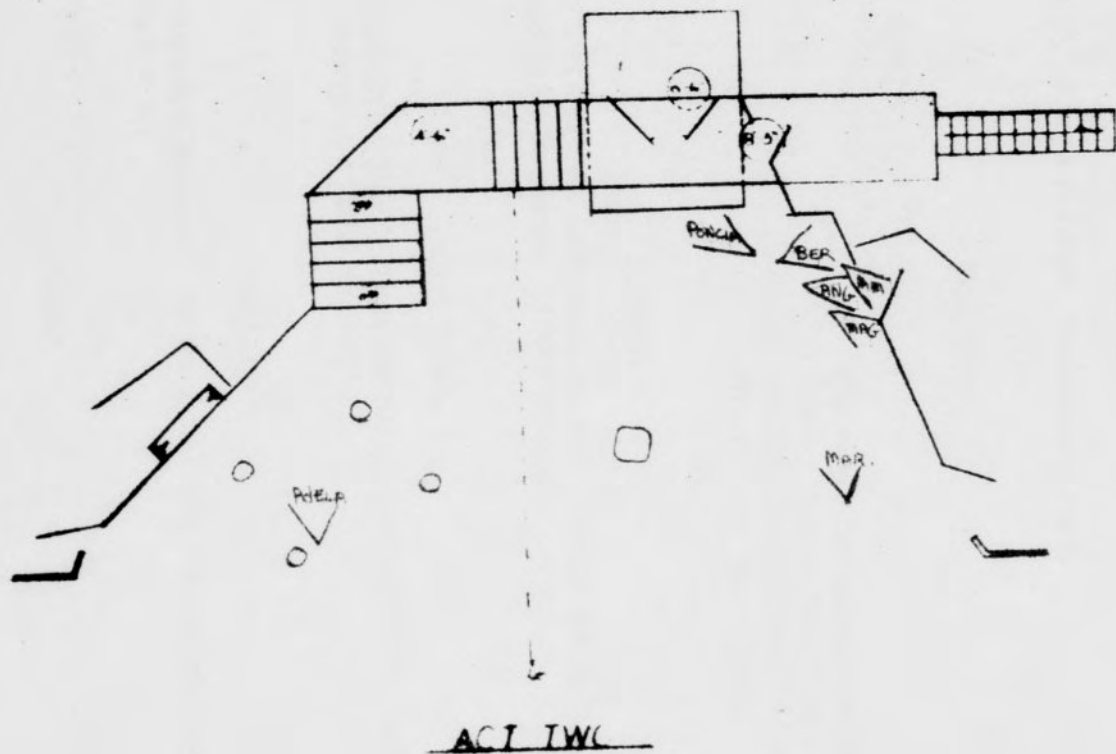


FIGURE 13

MARTIRIO

I saw how he embraced you.

ADELA

I didn't want him to. It's as if I were dragged by a rope.

MARTIRIO

I'll see you dead first!

(CROWD NOISES START FROM
OFF UR AND INCREASE IN
VOLUME AND INTENSITY UNTIL
THE END OF THE SCENE)

PONCIA

(ENTERS FROM DOUBLE DOORS AND CROSSES ULC. ADELA CROSSES DR.
MARTIRIO CROSSES DL.) Bernarda! (START BUILD)

BERNARDA

(ENTERS FROM KITCHEN, FOLLOWED BY ANGUSTIAS, MAGDALENA AND
AMELIA) What's happening? (SEE FIGURE 13)

PONCIA

(TO BERNARDA) Librada's daughter, the unmarried one, had a baby and
no one knows whose it is!

ADELA

A child?

PONCIA

(CROSSES C) And to hide her shame she killed it and hid it under the rocks, but the dogs with more heart than most Christians, dug it out, and as though directed by the hand of God, left it at her door. Now they want to kill her. They're dragging her through the streets--and down the paths and across the olive groves the men are coming shouting so the fields shake.

BERNARDA

(CROSSES UP THE STEPS) Yes, let them all come with olive whips and hoe handles--let them all come and kill her!

ADELA

(FACE FRONT) No not to kill her.

MARTIRIO

(CROSS A FEW STEPS TOWARD C) Yes--and let us go out too!

BERNARDA

(AT WINDOW, FACING UP) And let whoever loses her decency pay for it!

(A WOMAN'S SCREAM RISES
OUT OF THE NOISE)

ADELA

(CROSSES TO MARTIRIO AND GRABS HER ARMS) Let her escape! Don't you go out!

MARTIRIO

Let her pay what she owes!

BERNARDA

(FACE FRONT, SCREAMING AND WAVING HER CANE) Finish her before the guards come! Hot coals in the place where she sinned!

ADELA

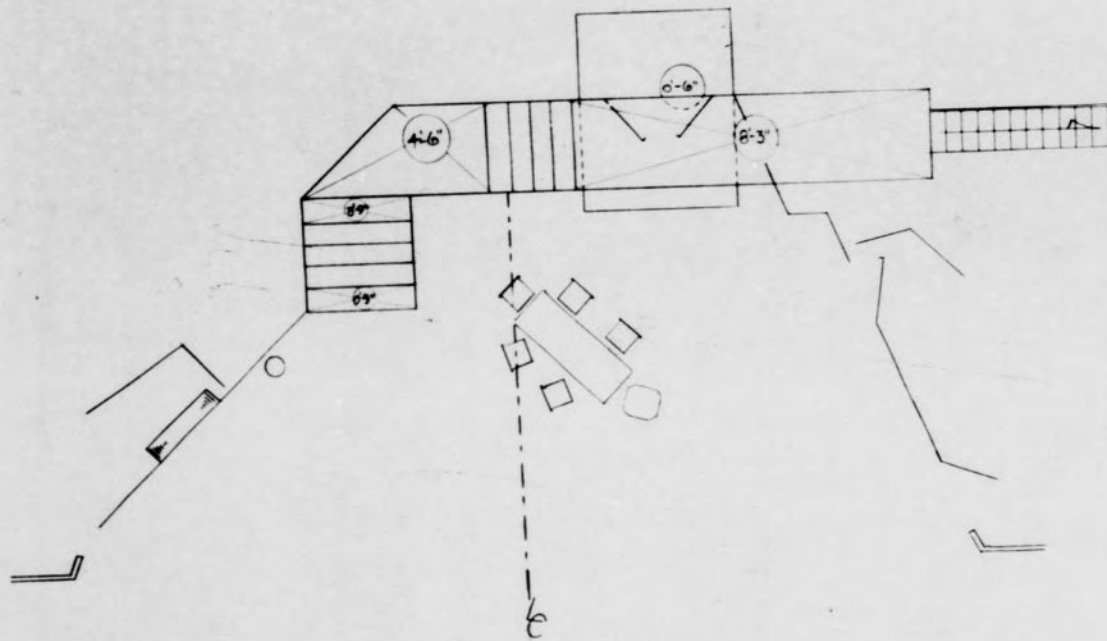
(CROSSES TO STOOL R AND FALLS ONTO IT, SOBBING) No! No!

BERNARDA

(WAVING CANE IN THE AIR) Kill her! Kill her!

(LIGHTS FADE TO BLACKOUT QUICKLY.)

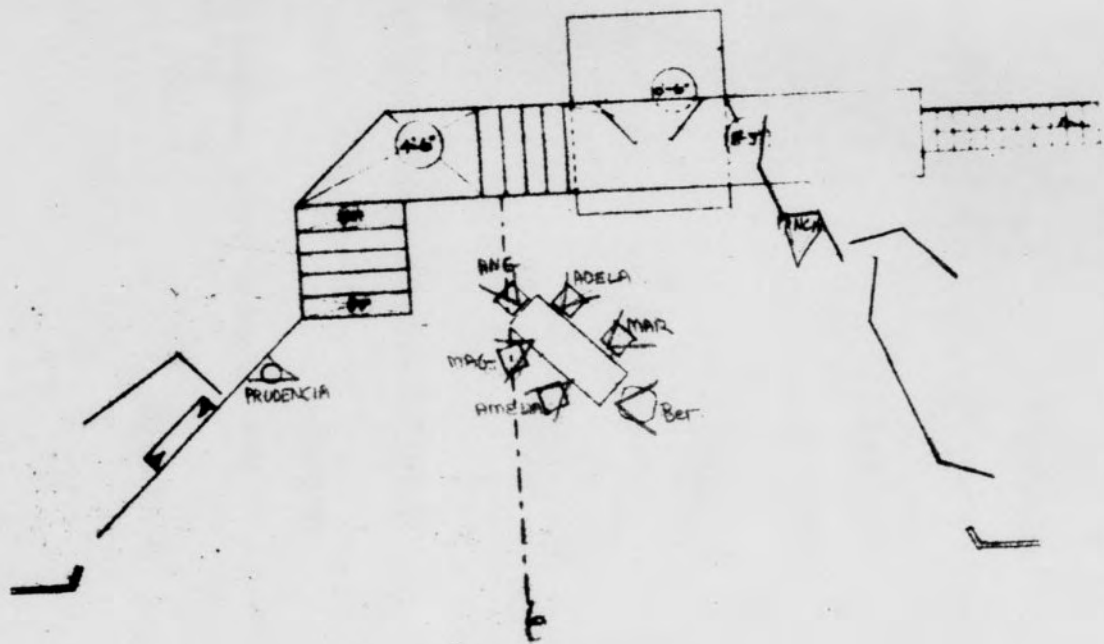
FIGURE 14



ACT THREE

UNC - Greensboro	
The House of Bernarda Alba	
Sheet # 2 Scene Plans	
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0" April, 1969	
designed by	O.A. Barnes

FIGURE 14



ACT THREE

UNC - Greensboro	
The House of Bernarda Alba	
Sheet # 2 Scene Plans	
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0" April, 1969	
Designed By	O.K. Camel

FIGURE 15

ACT III

(LIGHTS DIM UP ON BERNARDA AND HER FAMILY AT TABLE C EATING DINNER. PRUDENCIA IS SEATED ON A STOOL R. PONCIA IS STANDING UL. BERNARDA IS SEATED AT DS END OF THE TABLE. ANGUSTIAS IS SEATED US END OF TABLE. AMELIA IS DR END, MAGDALENA IS DL END, ADELA IS UR END AND MARTIRIO IS UL END OF TABLE. SEE FIGURE 15)

PRUDENCIA

(QUIETLY RISES) I'm going. I've made you a long visit.

BERNARDA

But wait, Prudencia. We never see one another.

PRUDENCIA

Have they sounded the last call to rosary?

PONCIA

Not yet.

(PRUDENCIA SITS DOWN AGAIN ON STOOL R)

BERNARDA

And your husband, how's he getting on?

PRUDENCIA

The same.

BERNARDA

We never see him either.

PRUDENCIA

You know how he is. Since he quarrelled with his brothers over the inheritance, he hasn't used the front door. He takes a ladder and climbs over the back wall.

BERNARDA

He's a real man! And your daughter?

PRUDENCIA

He's never forgiven her.

BERNARDA

He's right.

PRUDENCIA

I don't know what he's told you. I suffer because of it.

BERNARDA

A daughter who's disobedient stops being a daughter and becomes an enemy.

PRUDENCIA

I let water run. The only consolation I've left is to take refuge in the church, but, since I'm losing my sight, I'll have to stop coming so the children won't make fun of me.

(A HEAVY BLOW IS HEARD OFF
RIGHT.)

What's that?

BERNARDA

The stallion. He's locked in the stall and he kicks against the wall of the house. (SHOUTING) Tether him and take him out in the yard! (IN A LOWER VOICE) He must be too hot.

PRUDENCIA

Are you going to put the new mares to him?

BERNARDA

At daybreak.

PRUDENCIA

You've known how to increase your stock.

BERNARDA

By dint of money and struggling.

PONCIA

And she has the best herd in these parts. It's a shame that prices are so low.

BERNARDA

Do you want a little cheese and honey.

PRUDENCIA

I have no appetite.

(THE HEAVY BLOW IS HEARD AGAIN)

PONCIA

(CROSSES TO L OF DOUBLE DOORS, UC) My God!

PRUDENCIA

It quivered in my chest.

BERNARDA

(RISES AND CROSSES UC TO DOUBLE DOORS AND YELLS OUT OF THE DOORS) Do I have to say things twice? Let him out to roll in the straw. (PAUSE) Well then, lock the mares in the corral, but let him run free or he may kick down the walls. (CROSS A FEW STEPS DOWN) What a life!

PRUDENCIA

You have to fight like a man.

BERNARDA

That's it.

(ADELA GETS UP FROM THE TABLE AND TURNS TOWARD DOUBLE DOORS.)

BERNARDA

Where are you going?

ADELA

For a drink of water.

BERNARDA

(TO PONCIA) Bring a pitcher of cool water.

(PONCIA EXITS TO KITCHEN)

(TO ADELA) You can sit down.

(ADELA SITS DOWN IN HER CHAIR UR OF THE TABLE.)

PRUDENCIA

And Angustias, when will she get married?

BERNARDA

They're coming to ask for her within three days.

PRUDENCIA

You must be happy.

ANGUSTIAS

Naturally!

AMELIA

(TO MAGDALENA) You've spilled the salt. (THIS LITTLE EXCHANGE ABOUT THE SALT IS LIGHT AND FAST.)

MAGDALENA

You can't possibly have worse luck than you're having.

AMELIA

It always brings bad luck.

BERNARDA

(CUTS OFF LAUGHTER OF GIRLS WHICH HAS JUST STARTED) That's enough.

PRUDENCIA

(CROSSES TO ANGUSTIAS, UR OF TABLE) Has he given you the ring yet?

ANGUSTIAS

(HOLDS OUT HER HAND TO PRUDENCIA) Look at it.

PRUDENCIA

It's beautiful. Three pearls. In my day, pearls signified tears.

ANGUSTIAS

But things have changed now.

(PONCIA ENTERS FROM KITCHEN AND PLACES WATER ON TABLE, THEN CROSSES UL)

ADELA

(SARCASTICALLY) I don't think so. Things go on meaning the same. Engagement rings should be diamonds.

PONCIA

The most appropriate.

BERNARDA

With pearls or without them, things are as one proposes.

MARTIRIO

(BITTERLY) Or as God disposes.

PRUDENCIA

I've been told your furniture is beautiful.

BERNARDA

It cost sixteen thousand "reales".

PONCIA

The best is the wardrobe with the mirror.

PRUDENCIA

I never saw a piece like that.

BERNARDA

We had chests.

PRUDENCIA

The important thing is that everything be for the best.

ADELA

And that you'll never know.

BERNARDA

There's no reason why it shouldn't be.

(BELLS TOLL BRIEFLY)

PRUDENCIA

The last call. (TO ANGUSTIAS) I'll be coming back to have you show me
your clothes.

ANGUSTIAS

Whenever you like.

PRUDENCIA

Good evening. (CROSS UC TO BERNARDA) God Bless you!

BERNARDA

(CROSSES TO HER CHAIR C) Good-bye Prudencia.

ALL FIVE DAUGHTERS

(VERY BORED) God go with you!

(PRUDENCIA WAITS, BUT FOR WHAT! AFTER A PAUSE SHE VERY QUICKLY EXITS THROUGH THE DOUBLE DOORS.)

BERNARDA

(SITS DOWN IN CHAIR C) Well we've eaten.

ADELA

(GETS UP AND CROSSES TO DOUBLE DOORS UC) I'm going to walk as far as the gate to stretch my legs and get a bit of fresh air.

(MAGDALENA RISES, AND CROSSES UP THE STAIRS TO THE FIRST LANDING. SHE SITS ON THE TOP STEP OF THE FIRST SET OF STAIRS AND LEANS AGAINST THE R WALL. SHE IS SLEEPY.)

AMELIA

(RISES AND CROSSES SLIGHTLY DR OF ADELA) I'll go with you.

MARTIRIO

(RISES AND CROSSES SLIGHTLY DL OF ADELA) I too.

ADELA

(TURNS FULL FRONT, WITH CONTAINED HATE) I'm not going to get lost!

AMELIA

One needs company at night.

(ADELA, MARTIRIO, AND AMELIA EXIT THROUGH DOUBLE DOORS)

BERNARDA

(SEATED C) I've told you already! I want you to talk to your sister Martirio. What happened about the picture was a joke and you must forget it.

ANGUSTIAS

(SEATED IN R CHAIR AT TABLE) You know she doesn't like me.

BERNARDA

Each one knows what she thinks inside. I don't pry into anyone's heart, but I want to put up a good front and have family harmony. You understand.

ANGUSTIAS

Yes.

BERNARDA

Then that's settled.

MAGDALENA

(ALMOST ASLEEP ON THE STAIRS) Besides you'll be gone in no time.
(FALLS ASLEEP)

ANGUSTIAS

(TURNS TOWARD MAGDALENA) Not soon enough for me.

BERNARDA

(WITH A CERTAIN SOFTNESS) What time did you stop talking last night?

ANGUSTIAS

Twelve-thirty.

BERNARDA

What does Pepe talk about?

ANGUSTIAS

(RISES AND CROSSES TO STOOL RIGHT. CONTINUES TO FACE R FOR THIS WHOLE SPEECH) I find him absent-minded. He always talks to me as though he were thinking of something else. If I ask him what's the matter, he answers--"We men have our worries."

BERNARDA

You shouldn't ask him. And when you're married even less. Speak if he speaks and look at him when he looks at you. That way you'll get along.

ANGUSTIAS

(SITS IN THE STOOL R AND BECOMES WHINEY) But mother, I think he's hiding things from me.

BERNARDA

Don't try to find out. Don't ask him, and above all never let him see you cry.

ANGUSTIAS

I should be happy but I'm not.

BERNARDA

It's all the same.

ANGUSTIAS

Many nights I watch Pepe very closely through the window bars and he seems to fade away--as though he were hidden in a cloud of dust like those raised by the flocks.

BERNARDA

That's just because you're not strong.

ANGUSTIAS

I hope so!

BERNARDA

Is he coming tonight?

ANGUSTIAS

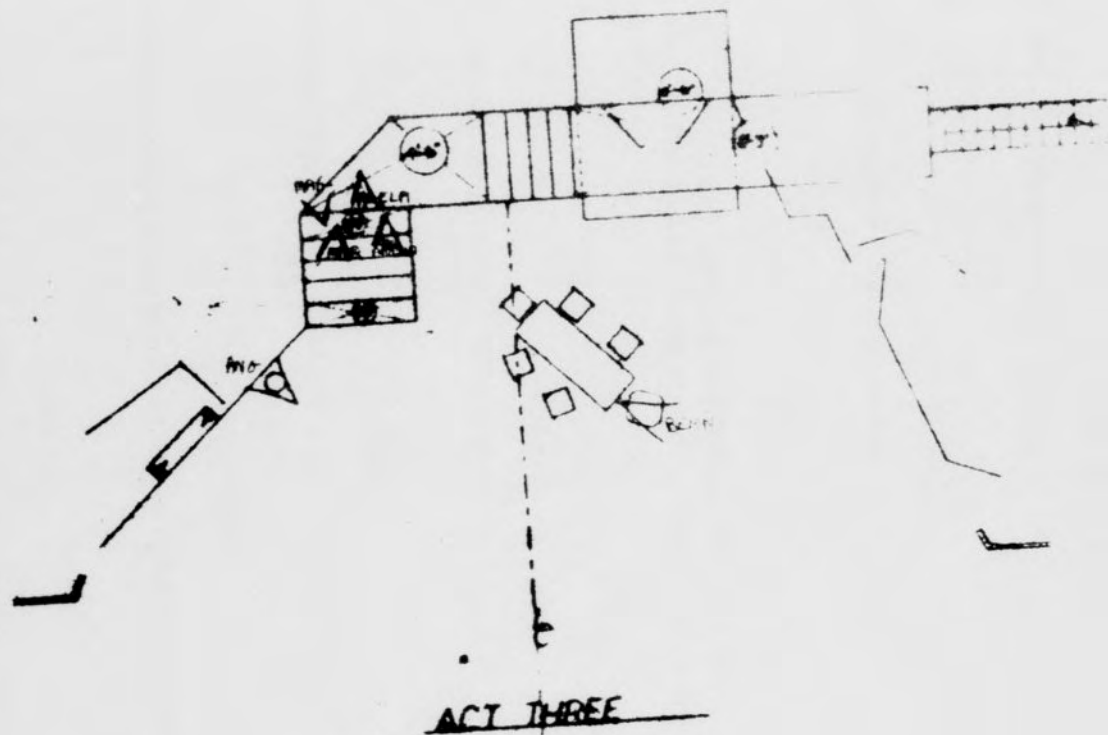
No, he went to town with his mother.

BERNARDA

Good we'll get to bed early. (TURNS TO UR) Magdalena!

ANGUSTIAS

She's asleep.



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FIGURE 16

(ADELA ENTERS THROUGH DOUBLE DOORS, FOLLOWED BY MARTIRIO, AND AMELIA. THEY CROSS UP THE STAIRS. ADELA STOPS ON FIRST LANDING. MARTIRIO STOPS DR OF HER ON FIFTH STEP. AMELIA STOPS DL OF HER ON FIFTH STEP. SEE FIGURE 16)

AMELIA

What a dark night.

ADELA

You can't see two steps in front of you.

MARTIRIO

A good night for robbers, for anyone who needs to hide.

ADELA

(CROSSES A FEW STEPS LEFT ON LANDING. SHE IS QUITE EXCITED) The stallion was in the middle of the corral. White. Twice as large. Filling all the darkness.

AMELIA

It's true. It was frightening. Like a ghost.

ADELA

(IN WONDERMENT) The sky has stars as big as fists.

MARTIRIO

(FACING ADELA) This one stared at them till she almost cracked her neck.

ADELA

(CROSSES UP TO C OF TOP LANDING) Don't you like them up there?



FIGURE 17

MARTIRIO

(MARTIRIO CROSSES UP TO FIRST LANDING) What goes on over the roof doesn't mean a thing to me. I have my hands full with what happens under it.

ADELA

Well that's the way it goes with you! (THE TWO GIRLS STARE AT EACH OTHER. SEE FIGURE 17)

BERNARDA

(VERY STERNLY) And it goes the same for you as for her.

ANGUSTIAS

(RISES AND CROSSES UP STAIRS) Good night.

ADELA

Are you going to bed now?

ANGUSTIAS

(STOPPING FOR A MOMENT) Yes, Pepe isn't coming tonight. (EXITS INTO BEDROOM)

(MARTIRIO CROSSES UP ONE STEP OF SECOND SET OF STAIRS AND STARES AT ADELA. ADELA STARES BACK AT HER AND THEN LOOKS AWAY.)

ADELA

(TURNS FRONT) Mother, why when a star falls or lightening flashes does one say:

Holy Barbara, blessed on high
May your name be in the sky
With holy water written high?

BERNARDA

The old people know many things we've forgotten.

AMELIA

(CROSSES L TO MARTIRIO) I close my eyes so I won't see them.

ADELA

Not I. I like to see what's quiet and been quiet for years on end, running with fire.

MARTIRIO

But all that has nothing to do with us.

BERNARDA

And it's better not to think about it.

ADELA

(NOT REALLY PAYING ATTENTION TO THEM) What a beautiful night! I'd like to stay up till very late and enjoy the breeze from the fields.

BERNARDA

But we have to go to bed. (TURNS R) Magdalena!

AMELIA

(LOOKS AT MAGDALENA) She's just dropped off.

BERNARDA

(LOUDER NOW) Magdalena!

MAGDALENA

(ANNOYED) Leave me alone!

BERNARDA

To bed!

MAGDALENA

(RISES AND CROSSES UP INTO BEDROOM) You don't give anyone a moment's peace!

AMELIA

(CROSSES UP STAIRS INTO BEDROOM) Good night!

BERNARDA

(TALKS UP TO MARTIRIO AND ADELA WHO ARE AGAIN STARING AT EACH OTHER. YOU CAN FEEL THE TENSION BUILDING BETWEEN THEM.) You two get along, too.

MARTIRIO

(CROSSES UP ONE STEP) How is it Angustias' sweetheart isn't coming tonight?

BERNARDA

He went on a trip.

MARTIRIO

(LOOKS AT ADELA) Ah! (EXITS INTO BEDROOM)

ADELA

I'll see you in the morning.

PONCIA

(STILL STANDING UL) Are you going to sit there?

BERNARDA

Yes, I'm enjoying this quiet and not seeing anywhere the "very grave thing" that's happening here--according to you.

PONCIA

(CROSSES TO UL OF TABLE) Bernarda, let's not go any further with this.

BERNARDA

In this house there's no question of a yes or a no. My watchfulness can take care of anything.

PONCIA

Nothing happening outside. That's true, all right. Your daughters act as though stuck in a cupboard. But neither you nor anyone else can keep watch inside a person's heart.

BERNARDA

My daughters breathe calmly enough.

PONCIA

(STARTS STACKING DISHES ON US END OF TABLE) That's your business, since you're their mother. I have enough to do just with serving you.

BERNARDA

(LOOKS AT PONCIA) Yes, you've turned quiet now.

PONCIA

I keep my place--that's all.

BERNARDA

(CONFIDENTLY) The trouble is you've nothing to talk about. If there were grass in this house, you'd make it your business to put the neighbors' sheep to pasture here.

PONCIA

(CROSSES DL SIDE OF TABLE) I hide more than you think.

BERNARDA

(WARMING UP TO AN ARGUMENT) Do your sons still see Pepe at four in the morning? Are they still repeating this house's evil litany?

PONCIA

They say nothing.

BERNARDA

Because they can't. Because there's nothing for them to sink their teeth in. And all because my eyes keep constant watch!

PONCIA

(GETTING ANGRY) Bernarda, I don't want to talk about this because I'm afraid of what you'll do. But don't you feel so safe.

BERNARDA

Very safe!

PONCIA

(CROSSES IN BACK OF BERNARDA'S CHAIR AND LEANS OVER BERNARDA)
Who knows lightening might strike suddenly. Who knows but what all
of a sudden, in a rush of blood, your heart might stop.

BERNARDA

(REMAINING COLD AND CALM) Nothing will happen here. I'm on guard
now against all your suspicions.

PONCIA

All the better for you.

BERNARDA

Certainly all the better !

SERVANT

(ENTERS FROM KITCHEN DOOR AND CROSSES TO L OF TABLE) I've just
finished with the dishes. Is there anything else, Bernarda ?

BERNARDA

(RISES AND CROSSES C) Nothing, I'm going to get some rest.

PONCIA

What time do you want me to call you? (PILES DISHES)

BERNARDA

(STOPS AT RC, SAYS LINE, THEN EXITS OUT R ARCH) No time. Tonight
I intend to sleep well.

PONCIA

(LOOKING R, WHERE BERNARDA JUST EXITED) When you're powerless against the sea, it's easier to turn your back on it and not look at it.

SERVANT

(ALSO FOCUSED R) She's so proud! She herself pulls the blindfold over her eyes. (PILES DISHES)

PONCIA

I can do nothing. I tried to head things off, but now they frighten me too much. (GRABS SERVANT'S ARM) You feel this silence?--in each room there's a thunderstorm--and the day it breaks, it'll sweep all of us along with it. But I've said what I have to say.

SERVANT

Bernarda thinks nothing can stand against her, yet she doesn't know the strength a man has among women alone. (SITS IN CHAIR US END OF TABLE)

PONCIA

(SITS IN CHAIR ON THE DL END OF THE TABLE) It's not all the fault of Pepe el Romano. It's true last year he was running after Adela; and she was crazy about him--but she ought to keep her place and not lead him on. A man's a man.

SERVANT

And some there are who believe he didn't have to talk many times with Adela. (LEANS TOWARD PONCIA)

PONCIA

(LEANS TOWARD SERVANT) That's true. And some other things.

SERVANT

I don't know what's going to happen here.

PONCIA

How I'd like to sail across the sea and leave this house, this battleground behind!

SERVANT

(EXITS TO KITCHEN WITH SOME DISHES) Bernarda's hurrying the wedding and it's possible nothing will happen.

PONCIA

(RISES AND COLLECTS MORE DISHES) Things have gone too far already. Adela is set no matter what comes and the rest of them watch without rest.

SERVANT

(ENTERS FROM KITCHEN AND STOPS L SIDE OF TABLE) Martirio too. . . ?

PONCIA

(SITS IN US CHAIR AT TABLE) That one's the worst. She's a pool of poison. She sees El Romano is not for her, and she'd sink the world if it were in her power to do so.

SERVANT

How bad they all are.

(DOGS START BARKING OFF
STAGE R)

PONCIA

They're women without men, that's all. And in such matters even blood is forgotten. Sh-h -h! (LISTENS)

SERVANT

What's the matter?

PONCIA

(CROSSES UC TO DOUBLE DOORS) The dogs are barking.

SERVANT

Someone must have passed by the back door.

(ADELA ENTERS IN HER NIGHTGOWN FROM THE BEDROOM DOOR. SHE IS OBVIOUSLY TRYING TO SNEAK OUT OF THE HOUSE. PONCIA'S VOICE STOPS HER ON THE FIRST LANDING AND SHE IS CONFUSED FOR A MOMENT.)

PONCIA

(UC LOOKING UP AT ADELA) Aren't you in bed yet?

ADELA

(THINKING UP AN EXCUSE) I want a drink of water.

PONCIA

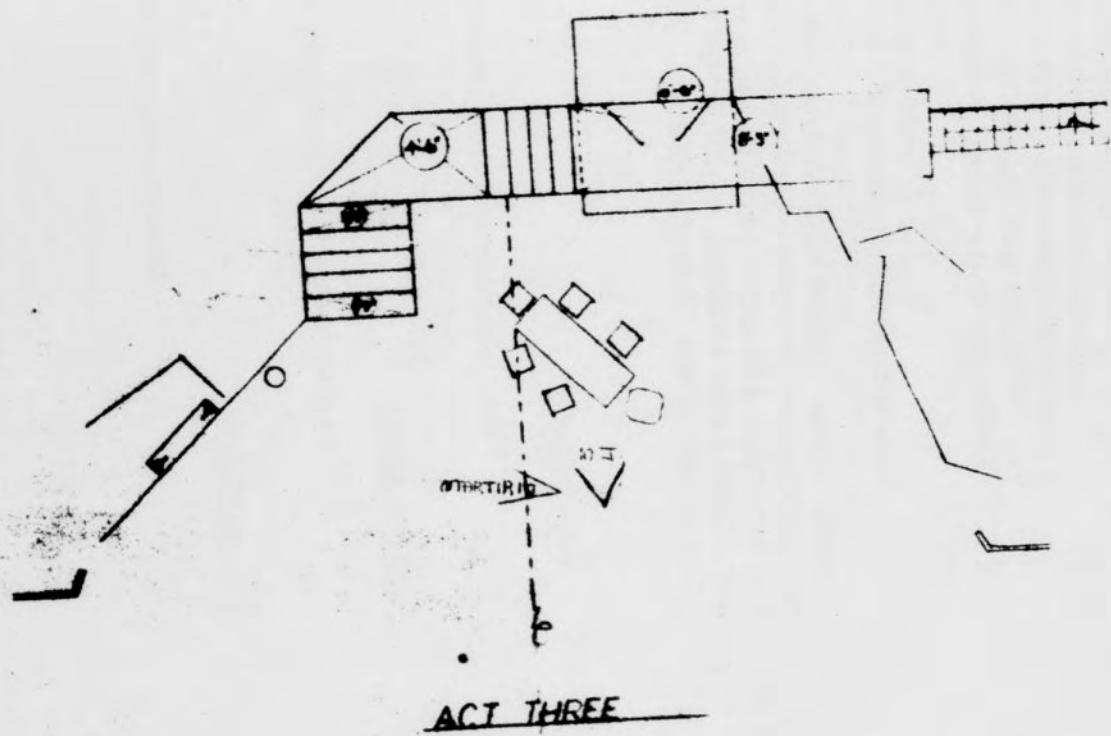
I imagined you were asleep.

ADELA

(CROSSES DOWN THE STEPS TO KITCHEN DOOR AND EXITS INTO KITCHEN)
I got thirsty and woke up. Aren't you two going to get some rest?

PONCIA

(TO SERVANT AS SHE IS GATHERING UP THE REMAINING DISHES) Let's go.



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The House of Bernard Alba	
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SCALE: 1/2" = 1'-0" April, 1969	
designed by	O.K. Barnes

FIGURE 18

SERVANT

(GATHERS LAST SCRAPS FROM TABLE) We've certainly earned some rest.

(THEY BOTH EXIT INTO KITCHEN L. MARIA JOSEFA ENTERS FROM R ARCH WITH A LAMB IN HER HANDS. SHE CROSSES TO C AS SHE IS SINGING)

MARIA JOSEFA

Little lamb, child of mine,
 Let's go to the shore of the sea,
 The tiny ant will be at his doorway,
 I'll nurse you and give you your bread.
 Bernarda, old leopard face (SPOKEN)
 And Magdalena, hyena--face (SPOKEN LOUDLY)
 Little lamb. . .
 Rock, rock-a-bye,
 Let's go to the palms at Bethlehem's gate.

(MARIA JOSEFA IS FACING FRONT. ADELA ENTERS FROM THE KITCHEN AND QUICKLY RUNS UC AND OUT THE DOUBLE DOORS. AT THE SAME TIME, MARTIRIO ENTERS FROM THE BEDROOM DOOR AND IS ABOUT TO FOLLOW ADELA WHEN SHE SEES MARIA JOSEFA STANDING CENTER. MARTIRIO CROSSES DOWN TO MARIA JOSEFA AND STOPS R OF HER. SEE FIGURE 18)

MARTIRIO

Grandmother, what are you doing here?

MARIA JOSEFA

You are going to open the door for me?

MARTIRIO

How did you get out here?

MARIA JOSEFA

(LAUGHING A LITTLE) I escaped.

MARTIRIO

(GETTING ANGRY) Go back to bed!

MARIA JOSEFA

When are you going to have a baby. I've had this one. (SHOWS MARTIRIO THE LAMB)

MARTIRIO

Where did you get that lamb.

MARIA JOSEFA

I know it's a lamb. But can't a lamb be a baby? It's better to have a lamb than not to have anything. Old Bernarda, leopard-face, and Magdalena, hyena-face! (BY THIS TIME SHE'S SHOUTING)

MARTIRIO

Don't shout.

MARIA JOSEFA

(FACING FRONT) It's true. Everything's very dark. Just because I have white hair you think I can't have babies. Why isn't there any sea-foam here? Nothing but mourning shrouds here.

MARTIRIO

Hush, hush!

MARIA JOSEFA

I have to go away, but I'm afraid the dogs will bite me. Won't you come with me as far as the fields. (TAKES A FEW STEPS RIGHT AND THEN STOPS AND LOOKS L AT MARTIRIO) Pepe el Romano is a giant. All of you love him. But he's going to devour you because you're grains of wheat. (PAUSE,

THEN SHE GIGGLES A LITTLE) No, not grains of wheat. Frogs with no tongues!

MARTIRIO

(PUSHES MARIA JOSEFA OUT R ARCH) Come, off to bed with you.

(MARIA JOSEFA EXITS SINGING.)

(MARTIRIO CROSSES UC TO DOUBLE DOORS AND HESITATES. THEN SHE CALLS) Adela! (PAUSE) Adela!

ADELA

(ENTERS, AND CROSSES DLC) And what are you looking for me for?

MARTIRIO

(AT DOUBLE DOOR) Keep away from him. (THIS SCENE IS PLAYED THROUGHOUT AT AN INTENSE LEVEL)

ADELA

Who are you to tell me that.

MARTIRIO

That's no place for a decent woman.

ADELA

How you wish you'd been there!

MARTIRIO

(CROSSES DLC TO R SIDE OF ADELA) This is the moment for me to speak. (TURNS ADELA AROUND SO THAT THEY ARE FACE-TO-FACE) This can't go on.

ADELA

(RUNS UP STAIRS TO FIRST LANDING AND TURNS FRONT) This is just the beginning. I've had strength enough to push myself forward--the spirit and looks you lack. I've seen death under this roof, and gone out to look for what was mine, what belonged to me.

MARTIRIO

(CROSSES TO URC) That soulless man came for another woman. You pushed yourself in front of him.

ADELA

(TURNS TO MARTIRIO) He came for the money, but his eyes were always on me.

MARTIRIO

I won't allow you to snatch him away. He'll marry Angustias.

ADELA

(SOFTER NOW) You know better than I he doesn't love her.

MARTIRIO

(SITS ON SECOND STEP FACING FRONT) I know.

ADELA

(STEPS DOWN TO FOURTH STEP) You know because you've seen--he loves me, me!

MARTIRIO

(DESPERATELY) Yes.

ADELA

(TRIUMPHANTLY) He loves me, me! He loves me, me!

MARTIRIO

(QUIETLY INTENSE) Stick me with a knife if you like, but don't tell me that again.

ADELA

That's why you're trying to fix it so I won't go away with him. It makes no difference to you if he puts his arms around a woman he doesn't love. Nor does it to me. He could be a hundred years with Angustias but for him to have his arms around me seems terrible to you--because you love him. (LEANING OVER HER) You love him!

MARTIRIO

(MOMENT OF TRUTH) Yes! Let me say it without hiding my head. I love him!

ADELA

(CROUCHES DOWN OVER MARTIRIO AND PUTS HER ARMS AROUND MARTIRIO'S SHOULDERS. THIS IS A SOFT MOMENT FOR ADELA) Martirio, Martirio, I'm not to blame!

MARTIRIO

(CROSSES TO CHAIR US OF TABLE. THIS IS URC.) Don't put your arms around me! Don't try to smooth it over. My blood's no longer yours, and even though I try to think of you as a sister, I see you as just another woman.

ADELA

(TRIUMPHANT AGAIN) There's no way out here. Whoever has to drown--let her drown. Pepe is mine. He'll carry me to the rushes along the river bank. . .

MARTIRIO

(FACES L) He won't!

ADELA

(FACES FRONT ON STAIRS) I can't stand this horrible house after the taste of his mouth. I'll be what he wants me to be. Everybody in the village against me, burning me with their fiery fingers; pursued by those who claim they're decent, and I'll wear, before them all, the crown of thorns that belongs to the mistress of a married man.

MARTIRIO

Hush!

ADELA

Yes, yes. (TURNS L AS IF TO GO UP STAIRS BUT DOESN'T MOVE) Let's go to bed. Let's let him marry Angustias. I don't care any more, but I'll go off alone to a little house where he'll come to see me whenever he wants, whenever he feels like it.

MARTIRIO

That'll never happen! Not while I have a drop of blood left in my body.

ADELA

(CROSSES TO MARTIRIO, R OF HER) Not just weak you, but a wild horse I could force to his knees with just the strength of my little finger.

MARTIRIO

(TURNS TO ADELA. THIS IS THE HEIGHT OF THE ARGUMENT) Don't raise that voice of yours to me. It irritates me. I have a heart so full of evil that, without my wanting to be, I'm drowned by it.

ADELA

I can see you as I've never seen you before.

(A WHISTLE IS HEARD FROM
OFF UL.)

(WHEN ADELA HEARS THE WHISTLE SHE RUNS UC. MARTIRIO MOVES
THERE TOO AND PREVENTS ADELA FROM EXITING THROUGH THE DOUBLE
DOORS UC.)

MARTIRIO

Where are you going?

ADELA

Get away from that door!

MARTIRIO

Get by me if you can!

ADELA

Get away!

(THEY STRUGGLE.)

MARTIRIO

(SHOUTING AS THEY STRUGGLE) Mother, Mother!

ADELA

Let me go!



FIGURE 19

BERNARDA

(ENTERS R ARCH AND CROSSES TO RC) Quiet!

(GIRLS SEPARATE FORCIBLY. ADELA IS PUSHED DC. MARTIRIO R.)

How poor I am without a man to help me!

MARTIRIO

(POINTING TO ADELA) She was with him. Look at those skirts covered with straw.

BERNARDA

(CROSSES SLOWLY TO ADELA DC) That's the bed of a bad woman!

ADELA

(FACE BERNARDA DEFIANTLY) There'll be an end to prison voices here!
(ADELA SNATCHES BERNARDA'S CANE AND BREAKS IT OVER HER KNEE.
SHE THROWS THE TWO PIECES DOWN ON EITHER SIDE OF HER.)

(ANGUSTIAS ENTERS FROM BEDROOM AND CROSSES DOWN TO SECOND
STEP. MAGDALENA ENTERS FROM BEDROOM AND CROSSES DOWN TO
FIRST LANDING. AMELIA ENTERS FROM BEDROOM AND STAYS ON TOP
LANDING. PONCIA ENTERS FROM KITCHEN DOOR AND STAYS UL.)

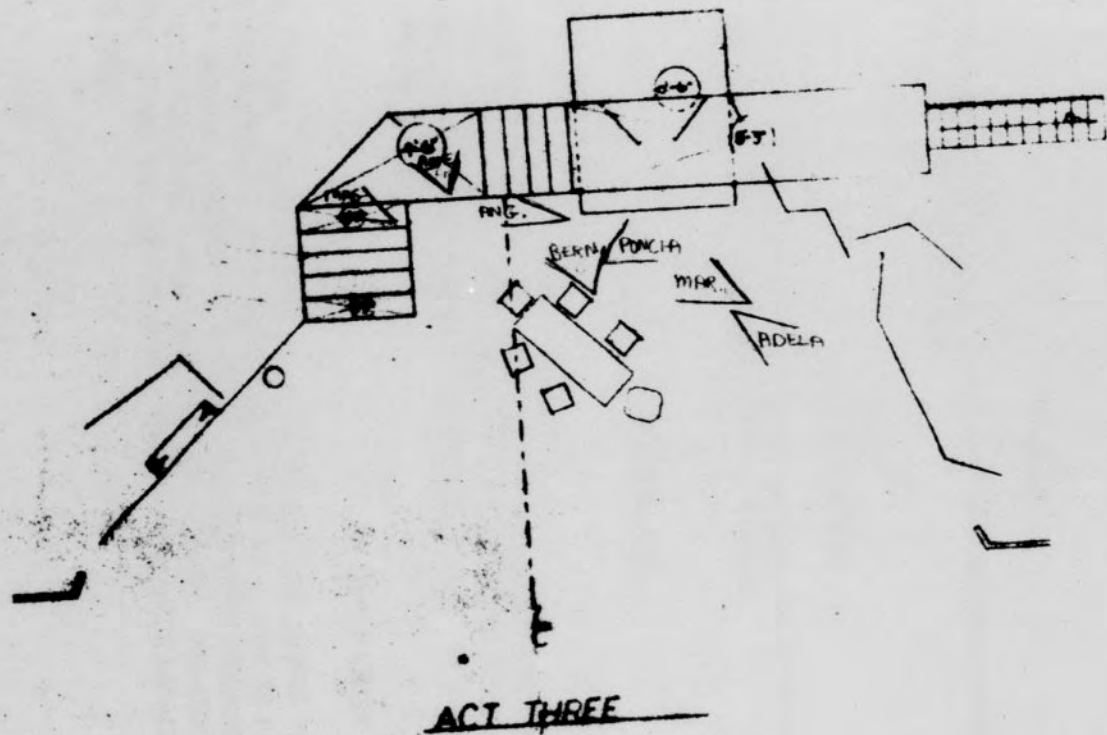
This is what I do with the tyrants cane. Not another step. No one but
Pepe commands me! (SEE FIGURE 19)

MAGDALENA

Adela!

ADELA

I'm his. (CROSS RC) Know that and go out in the yard and tell him. He'll
be master in this house.



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SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0" April, 1969	
designed by	O.H. Conrad

FIGURE 20

ANGUSTIAS

(CROSSES UC AGAINST BACK WALL OF SET COMPLETELY AGHAST) My God!

BERNARDA

The gun! Where's the gun! (BERNARDA TURNS AND EXITS THROUGH DOUBLE DOORS.)

(MARTIRIO AND PONCIA FOLLOW BERNARDA OUT.)

ADELA

(CROSSES UC AND IS ABOUT TO GO OUT WHEN ANGUSTIAS BLOCKS HER WAY) No one can hold me back!

ANGUSTIAS

(STRUGGLING WITH ADELA) You're not getting out of here with your body's triumph! Thief! Disgrace of this house!

MAGDALENA

(CROSSES ONE STEP DOWN)

(AMELIA CROSSES DOWN TO THE FIRST LANDING. ANGUSTIAS AND ADELA STRUGGLE UNTIL THE MIDDLE OF THIS LINE WHEN ADELA BREAKS AWAY AND HEADS FOR THE DOUBLE DOORS.) Let her go where we'll never see her again!

(A LOUD SHOT IS HEARD)

(ADELA IS JUST ABOUT AT THE DOORS WHEN SHE HEARS THE SHOT. IT SENDS HER REELING BACK INTO THE ROOM LC. SHE IS FACING THE DOUBLE DOORS. BERNARDA ENTERS SLOWLY AND CROSSES URC, FOLLOWED BY PONCIA WHO STANDS UL OF HER. MARTIRIO ENTERS AND CROSSES TO ADELA, UR OF HER. MARTIRIO STARES AT ADELA. SEE FIGURE 20)

BERNARDA

(SHE DOES NOT SPEAK UNTIL SHE STOPS AT URC.) Just try looking for him now!

MARTIRIO

(UR OF ADELA) That does away with Pepe el Romano.

ADELA

(REACTING SLOWLY TO THE EVENTS) Pepe! My God! Pepe! (THESE WORDS COME OUT VERY SLOWLY AND WITH MUCH DIFFICULTY. SHE THEN RUNS OUT THROUGH THE KITCHEN DOOR.)

PONCIA

(TO BERNARDA) Did you kill him?

MARTIRIO

No. He raced away on his mare!

BERNARDA

It was my fault. A woman can't aim.

MAGDALENA

Then why did you say. . . ?

MARTIRIO

For her. I'd like to pour a river of blood over her head.

PONCIA

Curse you!

MAGDALENA

Devil.

BERNARDA

Although it's better this way.

(A THUD IS HEARD OFF LEFT.)

(CROSSES TO KITCHEN DOOR L) Adela! (SHE TRIES THE DOOR AND FINDS IT JAMMED.) Adela!

(MARTIRIO BACKS ACROSS THE STAGE R AND WILL WIND UP AT THE FOOT OF THE STAIRS. ANGUSTIAS BACKS UP AGAINST THE US WALL OF THE SET AND WILL WIND UP AT FOOT OF THE STAIRS, SLIGHTLY UL OF MARTIRIO. MAGDALENA AND AMELIA STAY ON STAIRS. ALL OF THE GIRLS FOCUS L, AND CONTINUE TO DO SO UNTIL THE END OF THE PLAY.)

PONCIA

(CROSSES TO KITCHEN DOOR) Open this door!

BERNARDA

Open! Don't think the walls will hide your shame!

SERVANT

(ENTERS THROUGH DOUBLE DOORS AND STANDS IN R SIDE OF ARCHWAY)
All the neighbors are up!

BERNARDA

(STEPS BACK A LITTLE FROM THE DOOR) Open! Or I'll knock the door down. (PAUSE) Adela!

(PONCIA STRUGGLES WITH THE HANDLE OF THE DOOR AND OPENS IT, BURSTING INTO THE KITCHEN. ALMOST IMMEDIATELY WE HEAR A LOW GROAN FROM PONCIA AND SHE BACKS OUT OF THE KITCHEN DOOR AND

HUGS THE L WALL OF THE SET. SHE FACES R.)

What is it?

PONCIA

May we never die like that! (SHE SINKS TO HER KNEES AND STARTS TO MOAN.)

(THE DAUGHTERS IN THE GROUP R ALL REACT BY CONTRACTING AND THEN THEY START A STYLIZED LOW MOAN WHICH WILL CONTINUE UNTIL THE LAST WORD OF THE PLAY.)

BERNARDA

(LOSES CONTROL FOR A MOMENT BUT ONLY HER FACE BREAKS. IN A MOMENT SHE IS STIFF AND ERECT ALTHOUGH IT TAKES HER A FEW LINES TO REGAIN THE CONTROL OF HER VOICE. SHE IS STANDING AT THE KITCHEN DOOR.) No, not I! Pepe you're running now, alive, in the darkness under the trees, but another day you'll fall. Cut her down! (CROSSES SLOWLY UC TO THE DOUBLE DOORS WHICH ARE OPEN) My daughter died a virgin. Take her to another room and dress her as though she were a virgin. No one will say anything about this! She died a virgin. Tell them so that at dawn the bells will ring twice.

MARTIRIO

(FACES FRONT. SHE IS THE ONLY ONE OF THE GIRLS WHO IS NOT CRYING.) A thousand times happy she, who had him!

BERNARDA

(SHUTS DOUBLE DOORS) And I want no weeping here. (STARTS TO CROSS CENTER TO CHAIR) Death must be looked at face to face. Silence!

(DAUGHTERS ARE STILL MOANING LOUDLY)

Be still I said! (APPROACHES CHAIR AND SITS IN IT) Tears when you're alone! We'll drown ourselves in a sea of mourning. She, the youngest daughter of Bernarda Alba died a virgin. Did you hear me? Silence, silence, I said. (SHE PAUSES HERE.)

(THE DAUGHTERS AND PONCIA STOP MOANING.)

(IN A VERY LOW BUT INTENSE VOICE) Silence!

(THE LIGHTS DIM DOWN QUICKLY TO BLACKOUT.)

PART III

CRITICAL EVALUATION

The purpose of this chapter is to present the director's personal
 critical evaluation of his work with The House of Bernard Alba. The
 evaluation will be divided into three parts: (1) the goals and
 objectives of the production, (2) the production process, and
 (3) the director's reaction to the production.

PART III

The director's critical evaluation of his work with The House of Bernard Alba
 is presented in three parts. The first part is a brief history of the
 production. The second part is a detailed description of the production
 process. The third part is a personal reaction to the production.
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PART III

CRITICAL EVALUATION

The purpose of this chapter is to present this director's personal critical evaluation of her work with The House of Bernarda Alba. The analysis will be handled by discussing the following: (1) the goals and aims of interpretation, style and mood, (2) actor-director relationships, and (3) audience reaction to the production.

Interpretation, Style and Mood

The director chose The House of Bernarda Alba because of its challenge in terms of staging. The play is a kind of tragedy that easily tempts inexperienced actors to become melodramatic. It is not a realistic play and as such it poses a number of stylistic problems as to interpretation, staging and handling of actors. The play presents unusual balance problems with regard to characterization. The daughters are almost a collective character; however, each one must have her own idiosyncrasies. Each character has her own pattern of action as stated in Chapter One. Thus, The House of Bernarda Alba becomes a special challenge in ensemble playing. This director believes that long, concentrated rehearsal periods are a prerequisite to achieving it. The play is a difficult one for college actresses as they have basic difficulties in identifying with the characters.

The situations depicted in the play are foreign to the actresses' environment. For example, during a rehearsal one actress asked, "If this was such an awful household, why wouldn't the servant quit her job and get another one?" Many hours were spent answering questions of this nature.

The House of Bernarda Alba states simply that matriarchal Catholic Spain and the spirit of youth cannot co-exist. A confrontation between these two leads to a tragic situation. The playwright refrains from making moralistic judgment on any of his characters in the play. He presents the situation as objectively as he knows how.

As this director has already stated, the play is not realistic. It is a form of symbolic, poetic realism. The script illustrated this in the following ways: (1) the characters cannot be completely explained in realistic terms, and (2) the structure does not conform to the tenets of the "well made" play. At the end of Act III, for example, Adela does not have time to hang herself, nor does she have time in the same act to make love to Pepe el Romano after she secretly leaves the house and before she is confronted by Martirio upon her return. The characters appear and leave according to the playwright's needs. For instance, during Act II Bernarda and Poncia have a heated discussion about Pepe el Romano. Poncia states that Pepe left Angustias' window at 4:30 in the morning. In rapid succession the sisters appear on the stage to continue the argument, entering through different doors. If handled properly, these seemingly unmotivated entrances do not seem inappropriate, and (3) word

images with definite symbolic overtones constantly appear in the script, such as "doors," "windows," "sea-foam," and "water." All of these words connote more than their literal meanings.

Because of the style of the play, interesting staging methods were sought. Ideas which emerged through extensive study of the script were established as specific guidelines to staging. For instance, opposing forces were placed on opposite sides of the stage. Bernarda's area was assigned to stage left, and the daughters' area to stage right. Poncia operates freely in both areas but most frequently stands beside or behind Bernarda. Bernarda's cane takes on symbolic meaning as an extension of her authority; it is her prop. She is in no way crippled or arthritic as some critics have suggested. Bernarda's chair, set in all three acts slightly left of center stage, also evolves into a symbol of her authority. She sits in it shortly after she enters the scene in Act I and returns to it in Act III to utter her final words.

The daughters spend a large portion of their time sitting or grouped around four identical low, black stools placed in a very formal arrangement. In Act I they are arranged in a parallelogram and in Act II they are diamond-shaped. When the other four sisters are sitting on these stools, the fifth sister, in the center of the geometrical shape is harassed by the others.

The play evolved into a sequence of tableaux with smooth transitions from one tableau to another. The flow was interrupted occasionally by

moments of violent action; for example, when Bernarda beats Angustias with her cane, and Adela and Poncia exchange blows.

The designer's model of the set turned out to be an appropriate vehicle for the implementation of the director's interpretation. A staircase, starting on stage right and ending with a second landing up center provided levels to work with. A window placed at the first landing of the stair unit was used by the director both realistically, as the girls run to the window to hear the reapers, and symbolically, when Adela claws at the window when threatening to break out of her confinement.

Using this set to its best advantage, every element in the play was adapted to the non-realistic style. The mourners in Act I entered in groups of two spaced evenly apart, and arranged themselves in a group up right center against the stark white walls. Old and bent, they huddle together, facing in different directions, delivering their lines impersonally. They respond to the prayers monotonously and mechanically and finally leave the stage in much the same way as they entered. (SEE FIGURE 2)

While the director thinks she achieved a certain consistency in style, there were several tableaux she would have changed. Many of the tableaux and some of the scenes were changed several times during rehearsals. For instance, the director worked through the staging of the final scene four times. At one point Adela ran up to the bedroom instead of the kitchen to hang herself. This created too much traffic on the stairs. This staging, however, might have been the best solution if

the director had been able to work on it longer and exercised greater patience. At one time Bernarda climbed the stairs to deliver her final "Silence." This created an impressive composition but was ill-conceived in terms of the staging that had been worked out prior to this point in the play. The denouement of the play was open-ended: life will go on in this house, just as before. Therefore, it seems that Bernarda should end up at her chair in center stage. Staging of the final phase of the play with Adela hanging herself in the kitchen, and Bernarda closing the heavy front doors and then crossing to her chair in the center was unsatisfactory to the director. Stylistically the scene never achieved its goal because the moaning of the sisters remained on too realistic a plane. It was intended as a dissonant musical accompaniment to Bernarda's last words in the play. Instead it turned out to be an undefined wailing that distracted from Bernarda's final speech.

The mood of the play is stark and the heat of the Spanish summer should be felt throughout. There are very few lines which are "light." In Act III there is a quick exchange between Magdalena and Amelia that could be construed as light, but Bernarda terminates the dialogue between the two before it ever really has started. The tension in this household is evident from the opening lines. Throughout the play long silences are broken by violent outburst of temper and subdued by intensely bitter dialogues. There is no comic relief in the play, therefore no lines should be played in a comic vein. Each act starts slowly and at a low key. In

Act I, the two lusty, earthy servants introduce the character of Bernarda and set the mood for the play quietly and almost jovially at times. Act II opens with the sisters and Poncia sewing quietly. Act III begins even more slowly with the family at the dinner table talking with a visiting neighbor. Each act builds progressively in intensity, pace and tempo.

In order to prepare the audience for the play, no one was allowed into the auditorium until fifteen minutes before the start of the play. The curtain was not used and the set was partially lighted. Bells started to toll for five minutes before the first characters appeared on the stage. The bells rang first at one minute intervals, then thirty second, then fifteen second, then five second intervals. During the last two minutes the houselights were dimmed out and during the last thirty seconds the stage lights were dimmed up. This slow beginning of Act I, the least intense of the acts served to set the mood for the entire play. However, it did not work as well as it might have. The director assumed that it would take five hundred people about ten minutes to file into the theatre from the lobby. Then, at 8:25, when they were just getting settled, they would hear the first bell toll and then gradually get quiet and focus on the set. The timing was wrong. It took three minutes for the audience to take their seats in the theatre. By 8:25 everyone was ready for the play to begin. A sudden hush fell over the audience when the first bell sounded. As a result they looked at an empty set for five minutes before the first character entered. For the second performance it was decided to let the audience into the theatre at 8:25. Unfortunately, the ushers were

never informed of the decision.

Mood was further intensified by the same bells which were used throughout the first act; such as when Martirio comes quietly down the stairs and sits on her stool before her scene with Amelia. The mood was also enhanced by the set. Its heavy-looking doors were in stark contrast to the white set, decorated by a cross on the right wall of the stage. The doors were handled by the actresses as if they were quite heavy. Those who used the center doors spent one afternoon practicing opening and closing them. Suggesting in the handling of the doors their actual light weight would have diminished the mood of the play.

Actor-Director Relationships

Forty girls came to the tryouts for The House of Bernarda Alba. Out of these forty, ten were chosen for the leading roles and twelve others for mourners. Each of the actresses with large parts was asked to remain during spring vacation for extra rehearsals. From the beginning the director made the girls aware of the seriousness of the task at hand. This director feels that she had no problems working with her actresses. Therefore, a brief discussion of how the actresses were handled follows.

Scripts were distributed the night tryouts were held and each actress was told to come to rehearsal the next night with a written character analysis. This forced the actress to read the play and think about the role she was to play before the first rehearsal. Each analysis was read and discussed at the first rehearsal. The director and the individual

actress came to an understanding of the basic outline of her character. Details were filled in later. Again the difficulty of the task was stressed but this time the director made it quite clear that none of them would fail and that she had complete confidence in all of them.

The next several rehearsals were devoted to blocking. By the end of the ninth rehearsal the members of the cast had learned all of their lines and blocking. Scripts were no longer used. Then the real work on character development began. During this beginning period each actress had a private session with the director to talk about particular problems and to discuss solutions to problems. The approach to the problem varied from person to person. For example, the actress who played Poncia was told to develop a heavy walk and a slumped, relaxed body posture. The actress worked on this many hours outside of rehearsal and gradually developed the desired attributes. Whenever the actress became impatient and jumped ahead of herself in her work, the director took the necessary corrective measures. The next step was her voice. Again, a heavy earthy quality was needed. The actress worked on pitch variation, and after a week of experimenting, she arrived at an acceptable voice quality.

The other actresses worked in much the same manner. Whenever any of the girls lost her sense of direction, a conference was arranged. For example, the actress who played Magdalena is a freshman and as a result of her inexperience needed extra attention. During the third week of rehearsal she developed an annoying, high pitch level. She also

began to have problems articulating. In conference, these problems were reviewed and she was corrected. Subsequently, she became more conscious of voice control.

The director was never prescriptive and no specific line readings were given. Much of this director's guidance came from talks with the individual actresses and review sessions at rehearsals. Only once was there a necessity for a relatively harsh step to keep an actress working in the right direction, with the right attitude. On one occasion, the most mature member of the cast was asked, politely, but firmly to leave rehearsal because the director felt she was not seriously concentrating on what she was doing. Her attitude after that was much improved.

The director also made mistakes. For example, one half hour was taken up during a rehearsal period working on a girl's pronunciation. The girl became more and more nervous and soon lost all of her control. The director stopped at this moment and went on to something else.

The actresses gradually realized the importance of their tasks. They also felt a spirit of co-operation, not only between the director and the actresses but among themselves. They started asking for extra rehearsal time and they became more excited about the play as they delved into it more deeply. By the end of the rehearsal period a spirit of ensemble was attained.

This director feels that her approach to the actresses was sound and her methods of handling the actresses, as stated in the previous pages,

worked well.

Audience Reaction

After four weeks of rehearsal, the show opened on April 15, 1969, and played for two nights. The director feels that the production was as well prepared as it might have been considering the acting talent and available time. The performance was reasonably well polished and imaginatively staged.

Approximately 1000 people came to see the play on the two nights. Out of this number over 60% were college students. The director's assessment of audience reaction is based on this figure.

The director hoped for the audience to feel the mood of the play as soon as the bells started tolling. She felt that as the tension of the play increased so the tension in the audience should increase also.

The spectators were indeed affected by the play. At times they were so tense that nervous laughter rippled through the auditorium. At moments of greatest tension the audience was completely silent and still.

There are several ways for audiences to react to the tense, sick situation in The House of Bernarda Alba. The laughter heard opening night is one of the possible reactions. When Angustias states in Act II "this is the first time I had ever been alone with a man," the predominantly college age audience laughed since for them this was totally unbelievable. Laughter also was heard during Poncia's more lusty speeches. The director had not prepared the actresses for this laughter. Although their performances did

not suffer because of it, they were visibly upset during intermission and the director had to calm them down. The director, obviously should have alerted the actresses to possible laughter.

In conclusion, the director approached this critical analysis from three different points of view: (1) goals and aims of interpretation, style and mood, (2) actor-director relationships during the rehearsal period, and (3) audience reaction to the production. One final statement may be made: this director feels some sense of incompleteness now that the show is over because there was not enough rehearsal time to personally satisfy the director, and not enough performances to fulfill the actresses. This was not a finished show, but a respectable effort.

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