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Juan Bosch | Social drama in the short story

Loren L. Laird

The University of Montana

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JUAN BOSCH: SOCIAL DRAMA IN THE SHORT STORY

by

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Definitions of the term drama are almost as numerous as the authors writing on the subject. The various definitions are not contradictory, but usually differ in scope. The narrower interpretations apply the term only to "the literary form designed for the theater, in which the representation is by actors who impersonate the characters and perform the action and dialogue." At the opposite end of the scale is Webster's etymological note pointing out its derivation from the identical Greek noun ὑστερά, which comes from the verb δραμα, meaning "to do" or "to act."

Nuances of meaning of the word can perhaps best be illustrated by further reference to Webster. Following the explanation of the etymology of the word drama, these three definitions are given:

1. A composition, now usually in prose, arranged for enactment, and intended to portray life or character, or to tell a story by actions and, usually, dialogue tending toward some result based upon them.

2. Hence, in a generic or collective sense, dramatic art, literature.

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3. A series of real events invested with a dramatic unity and interest.\(^3\)

The confusion which one might expect in the use of a term subject to many interpretations does not necessarily arise in connection with the word drama. Normally it is apparent from the context if the author intends the word to be interpreted in its general sense, or whether he wishes to give it a restricted meaning.

The reason for these diverse definitions becomes obvious upon consideration of the historical development of drama. In the more than two thousand years since the flowering of ancient classical drama in Greece countless dramatists have practiced their art under continually changing social, political, and religious conditions. As conditions changed they have tried to keep pace with varying tastes and to meet the constant demand for new themes and new treatments, experimenting through the centuries, in an effort to perfect and extend the boundaries of their art. The natural result of this has been a profusion of varied dramatic literature.

Within the general framework of drama a bewildering number of special types and subtypes have been developed — as various as the Greek satyr-play, the Spanish auto and comedia de capa y espada, the Italian commedia dell' arte, the Elizabethan comedy of humors and chronicle play, the Restoration comedy of manners, the nineteenth century sentimental comedy and farce, the Romantic closet drama, and the

\(^3\)Ibid.
realistic drama of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These are some of the many forms drama has taken in its progression from the ancient Greek chorus singing hymns of praise to Dionysus, the god of fertility. The vast array of types of drama and the overlapping of terminology is increased due to the fact that many dramatists classify their works, or even create a new classification for them, in order to indicate the emphasis they wish to be given to them.

As a consequence of the mass of terminology surrounding drama, it is often difficult to recognize any definite trend or pattern in the modern drama. However, critics, such as Cleanth Brooks and Robert Heilman, have been able to do just that:

In the last seventy-five years, however, the dominant force in the drama may be said to have been the "problem" -- the special issue arising out of contemporary economic, social and political conditions.

This period witnessed the growth of an increasingly industrialized society in which the most pressing human conflicts were those produced by social maladjustment. Indeed, the central conflict of the age was between the individual and his social environment, and this state of affairs was sharply reflected in the politics, economics, and literature of the new century.

With respect to the development of drama, the result of this attitude of social consciousness in conjunction with the "dominant

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5 Ibid., p. 31.
force in drama* was not only logical, but almost inevitable — another branch on the family tree of the drama.

This latest addition to the family, social drama, is subject to as wide a range of definitions as its parent. The rash of plays written in the present century in defense of strikers, unionism, minority groups, and anti-fascism formed, in the minds of many, the idea that social drama is nothing more than a form of political propaganda, and that only those plays which have an explicit "call to action" can be classified as social drama. This is a narrow interpretation, and if accepted, would offer very little scope to the social drama.

Fortunately, this concept is losing its widespread acceptance in favor of one much less limiting. As Mr. Blankfort points out, "There are no horizons of character, situation, or ideas beyond which the social dramatist is forbidden," It seems that Mr. Blankfort, in broadening the scope of social drama, has gone too far in the opposite direction, for he does not recognize the obvious limits imposed by the social nature of this type. For the purposes of this study and in order to avoid the extremes of both definitions, social drama will be considered to include any play whose unifying idea is a particular problem or condition of society.


7Ibid., p. 78.
Any social situation that creates a problem can be the subject of social drama. In this respect Mr. Cooper's remark concerning sources of realistic drama is equally applicable to social drama:

The stories of realistic drama are drawn, not from national legend and foreign romance, but from contemporary life. The themes of realistic drama: the personal and social problems of people, big and little.\(^8\)

If the social dramatist is to present these problems clearly and forcefully, it is essential that he should have an intimate knowledge of the people and their environment. Only by expressing the problems in human terms can the author give them credibility, and familiarity with his characters gives the insight necessary to make them and their problems believable and dramatically significant.

Sympathetic understanding of his characters and their problems is of little use if the dramatist is unable to inspire the same attitude in his audience. The purpose of the social dramatist is not merely to entertain his audience, but also to present ideas - to make the audience aware of the existence of social problems.

Although many diverse names have been applied to the types of drama, certain characteristics are common to all. The basic feature of any drama is a fundamental conflict which involves the opposition of individuals, social groups, beliefs, environment, or any combination of these. The drama then proceeds to clarify the exact nature of the conflict and the consequences which arise from it. This development constitutes the real substance of the drama.

Traditionally, the length of drama has been determined by the two or three hour period during which an audience could be expected to remain seated and attentive. Such a limited scope requires that the dramatist select the dramatic situation and concentrate on it; he must eliminate any superfluous material. Whereas the novelist is free to develop many characters as fully as he pleases, and to digress from the main plot, the dramatist must concentrate on a few characters and those incidents which bear directly upon the central issue. The drama does not afford the leisureliness permitted by the amplitude of the novel. The dramatist is under pressure.

In order to observe the principle of economy imposed by the limited scope of drama, the dramatist is obliged to compress his material and utilize it fully. Progressive development and detailed description of characters are nearly impossible, but the author can effectively surmount this difficulty by implication or suggestion. He must select some vivid detail or feature which reveals character and let the audience infer the rest. The maximum utilization of the materials available to the dramatist can be seen easily in the matter of setting. Rather than a vague background with little or no relation to the characters and incidents, the setting, if properly utilized, becomes an integral part of the drama. It can be used to establish the mood or atmosphere, which in turn adds to the portrayal of character. Whether characters gain or lose significance is dependent upon the surroundings in which they are seen. This is especially important in the social drama, where the author tries to arouse sympathy for the characters and their problems.
Upon first reading a short story by the contemporary Dominican writer, Juan Bosch, I was immediately impressed by his dramatic effects and his apparent social intent. After reading all of his published short stories, this first impression was greatly strengthened. Furthermore, I noticed a marked similarity in structure and techniques between Bosch's stories and drama. This, together with the social content of the stories, suggested the possible analogy between Bosch's short stories and social drama.

In this study I will examine selected short stories of Juan Bosch in reference to the principles of drama, and attempt to show that they constitute social drama in the short story form.
CHAPTER II

ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES ON JUAN BOSCH

One viewpoint toward literary art and its relationship to the background of the writer tends to minimize the importance of the latter. Those sharing this opinion would hold that pure literary art does not necessarily reflect personal experience. In opposition to this view are those who contend that an author and his environment are inseparable, and that the latter exerts a direct influence upon his art. The works of Juan Bosch provide strong evidence in support of this thesis.

Hispaniola, the island which the Dominican Republic shares with the Republic of Haiti, lies southeast of Cuba and shares its tropical climate. The terrain of Hispaniola is very rugged; in some places the mountains extend almost to the edge of the sea. In describing the topography of the island Preston James relates the story of "the admiral who, when being asked by the king to describe this island, crumpled up a piece of paper and replied. 'There, your majesty, is Hispaniola.'"¹

Naturally the greater part of the land on this mountainous island is unsuited for agriculture, and the population is concentrated in the fertile valleys and along some of the lower mountain slopes.

The topography of the land has caused a complicated pattern of rainfall. One of the principal lowlands, the Cibao, situated in the northern part of the island between the Cordillera Septentrional and the

Cordillera Central, receives abundant rainfall, and the most productive agricultural area of the country is in the eastern portion of this valley, where Juan Bosch was born in 1909. However, the coastal plain in the southeast receives barely enough moisture for raising crops without irrigation. Of more importance than the amount of moisture is the seasonal pattern of rainfall. The greater share of the rain comes in the period from September through November, and again in May and June. Nor is it a gentle rain capable of being absorbed, but rather it comes in violent storms whose aftermath is frequently a flooding of the valley regions. Following these periods of deluge come the months of little or no rain during which the land suffers from drought. Both of these situations are treated in the words of Juan Bosch.

Despite the unsuitability of the land, the Dominican Republic is primarily agricultural, the chief crop being sugar. The production of this crop is concentrated in the coastal plain of the southeast around Ciudad Trujillo. In the lowland of Cibao, where there is little, if any, irrigation, the land use is more varied. Rice and maize take up the greatest acreage, but tobacco and cacao are more important commercially. Although the Trujillo government has done more than any previous administration in dividing the land in the Cibao among

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2Ibid., p. 702.


4Ibid.
small farmers, most of the land is still divided into large estates, and the peasants who work on them live in poverty. Preston James, in discussing the pattern of land usage in the Dominican Republic, observed that, "in many respects the country is operated as if it were the vast private estate of the president." \(^5\)

If one accepts the thesis that social conditions and problems which are the bases of social drama are more likely to develop in a disordered political climate, then the Dominican Republic has been, since its discovery by Columbus in 1492, fertile ground for a social dramatist.

Although the island colony suffered the usual abuses and hardships of the colonial system, the three hundred years of Spanish rule was the period of greatest political calm.

Political events in Europe began to have repercussions in Santo Domingo during the last decade of the eighteenth century when Spain ceded the eastern part of the island (what is today the Dominican Republic) to France in 1795. The Haitians gained their independence from France in 1804, but that portion of the island which is now the Dominican Republic remained a French possession.

The Dominicans revolted and re-established Spanish rule in 1809. Spain was not interested in the colony now, so the Dominicans declared their independence in 1821. It was a very brief period of autonomy as their neighbors, the Haitians, invaded the following year and seized

\(^5\)James, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 707.
the defenseless country. The Dominicans remained under Haitian rule for twenty-two years, until another popular revolt broke out and independence was again proclaimed. The Dominican Republic was established in 1844.

The history of the Dominican Republic as an independent nation has been even more turbulent. Dictators have been numerous, revolutions and counterrevolutions have erupted periodically, and foreign nations have intervened on several occasions. The republic found it very difficult to make its way out of the social and political maladjustments that had resulted from a long colonial period during which most of the population had been neither educated nor given a real voice in the government.6

The internal disorder, economic chaos, and bickering among leaders became so pronounced that it threatened the country's security. Compelled primarily by fear of another invasion from Haiti in 1860, the Dominican strong man of the moment, General Santana, requested foreign help. Spain accepted the proposal to protect the fledgling republic, and in 1861 the Dominican Republic became once more a Spanish colony.7

With her attention and resources devoted almost exclusively to the Carlist Wars at home, the mother country could give little attention to the colony. Groups of Dominican patriots united and drove the

7 Ibid., p. 79.
Spanish forces, including Governor-General Santana, from the island for all time, and the republic was re-established. The idea of a protectorate still appealed to the politicians, however. President Báez tried to arrange annexation of the Dominican Republic to the United States.

In 1882 a young mulatto named Ulises Heureaux succeeded in making himself master of the nation. He ruled for seventeen years. After the manner of strong dictators, he gave the country a measure of peace and some prosperity. Mr. Perkins gives him the following epitaph:

Certainly not a lovable character, contemptuous of opinion as was illustrated by his famous comment that he did not care what history said of him since he would not be there to read it, ruthless, extravagant, lecherous, Heureaux at least gave the republic a period of tranquility in which some economic progress took place.

When this strong man was assassinated in 1899, the country fell into its familiar pattern of revolutions, disorder, and economic decline. The nation's economy was disintegrating so rapidly that the United States was asked to intervene. This it did, but only to the extent of taking over the collection of customs duties. Although American control of the customs resulted in larger revenues, it had no effect on the unstable political conditions of the country. In 1911 another president was assassinated and his successors followed one another in rapid order. Through the administration of the customs receipts and the

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8 Earl P. Hanson (ed.), The New World Guides to the Latin American Republics (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1943), I, 8.

9 Perkins, op. cit., p. 79.
Dominican foreign debt, the United States was becoming more deeply involved in Dominican affairs. Finally, the United States actively intervened by landing a force of marines and placing the republic under the military administration of the United States.  

At the time of the American intervention in 1916, Juan Bosch was seven years old. The political and social conditions of the ensuing years are particularly important for the part they played in developing the social consciousness of the youthful Bosch. A deep concern for his humble countrymen is a dominant note in his works.

The American occupation was beneficial to the Dominican Republic in many respects: roads were built, some of the unsatisfactory sanitary conditions were corrected, educational facilities were expanded, and public finances were placed on a firmer basis. However, the people constantly showed their resentment of improvements imposed by a foreign power. In fact, they had many legitimate grievances. Persons were imprisoned without valid reason, and occasionally tortured. A strict censorship was maintained. The American military courts were sometimes slow in administering justice.  

A feature of the American occupation which had a considerable effect on the course of Dominican politics was the constabulary created and trained by the United States marines. One of the recruits in this new force was Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina. He proved himself adept

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10. Hanson, loc. cit.

at subduing the insurgents who were waging guerrilla warfare against the occupation forces and soon rose to the rank of captain.

In the United States there was considerable sentiment against the occupation and the Dominicans were encouraged to prepare a new constitution for their country, which was adopted in 1924. Upon the election of General Horacio Vásquez as president in the same year, the military government ceased to exist and all the American forces were withdrawn.

The next six years were a period of political tranquility. Vásquez did not have to contend with uprising of rebel groups, for the new army, trained by American marines, was an efficient, well-disciplined force under its Dominican officers. It was not until near the end of his six-year term that political difficulties again made their appearance.

The president's announced candidacy for re-election, in violation of the constitution, had already caused a great deal of dissatisfaction and political agitation when he was stricken by a serious illness and went to the United States for medical treatment in 1929. An acute rivalry developed between the members of his own government who wished to succeed him in power. When Vásquez returned he was no longer able to control the situation. Trujillo had risen to the rank of general and was chief of staff of the army at this time. When a small force of revolutionists seized the fort at Santiago and marched on Santo Domingo, the army offered no resistance. President Vásquez resigned and a provisional government was established.
Trujillo was eager for the presidency and the army was ready to carry out any orders he might issue. From this position of power he waged a political campaign which George Kent describes as follows:

The election, as all other acts of the Benefactor, was within the law and beautifully planned. Trujillo employed thugs to beat up and shoot his opponents until they dared not solicit votes or hold a meeting. In the rural districts his men ranged in cars armed with machine guns. About 100 persons were killed. The election was unanimous because the opposition withdrew. . . . 12

Such tactics proved extremely effective. Trujillo became president of the nation with scarcely an audible objection. Having once attained the position he coveted, Trujillo immediately took steps to insure the perpetuation of his rule. He has continued to dominate the affairs of the Dominican Republic either as president or through a puppet president. Referring to the tactics employed after he was elected, Mr. Kent states:

Politically, the Benefactor proceeded with cold inhumanity to liquidate his enemies. An estimate authenticated by scores of trustworthy witnesses and reports of the Foreign Policy Association is that between 3,000 and 5,000 were slain. The imprisonment and executions have tapered off but they continue — as a member of the foreign diplomatic corps in Ciudad Trujillo said, "Very quietly."13

It is very difficult to get a completely objective evaluation of the Era of Trujillo. Histories and biographies prepared by the Dominican government or sanctioned by it ignore or gloss over any

13 Ibid., p. 16.
unfavorable aspects of Trujillo and his rule. They amount to nothing more than eulogies. On the other hand, accounts written by avowed enemies of Trujillo often lose what validity they might have had by their extremes and by contradictory statements.

As yet, a detailed study of the Dominican Republic since 1930 has not been undertaken by a competent historian or political scientist. However, Professor Dexter Perkins of Harvard has presented a very brief description of Trujillo which at least avoids the extremes of other attempts:

... In many respects Trujillo is one of the least attractive figures that has risen to power in the Caribbean at any time. He is ruthless to a degree, and often charged by his enemies with the lavish use of the weapon of assassination. He is acquisitive beyond measure, using his public post to promote his private interests. He is inordinately vain, and has permitted such extremes of sycophancy as have rarely been tolerated even by the most absolute Latin-American rulers. He has done nothing to encourage and much to destroy the spirit of self-government among the Dominicans... At the same time it is fair to say the Trujillo regime has not been without its brighter side... Communications, land colonization, the encouragement of rice culture, modest advances in social legislation, have characterized his rule. In no sense can that rule be called democratic...\[16\]

Very little biographical material concerning Juan Bosch is available. He was born in 1909 in La Vega, the principal city of the Cibao valley. In regard to the financial circumstances of his family we can only assume that they were adequate for Juan to receive some education. He began his writing career at an early age, publishing his first collection of short stories when he was twenty-four. In 1937 Bosch was exiled

\[15\]E.g. Albert C. Hicks, Blood in the Streets (New York: Creative Age Press, Inc., 1946.)

\[16\]Perkins, op. cit., p. 80.
from the Dominican Republic by the Trujillo government. The specific reason for this expulsion is unknown, but it seems likely, in view of the social and political nature of Bosch's writing, that he was considered dangerous by the administration.

Since 1937 Bosch has lived in exile in different countries of the Western Hemisphere—Puerto Rico, Cuba, Chile, and the United States. He has been an active member of the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano which is dedicated to the overthrow of Trujillo. In 1949 Bosch led this group in an unsuccessful attempt to invade the Dominican Republic from Cuba. Not a prolific writer, Bosch has continued to publish periodically while engaged in the political affairs of the Dominican exiles.

Life in the Dominican Republic during Bosch's youth and young manhood was characterized by violence, suppression of political liberty, poverty, injustice, and ignorance. These conditions were completely odious to the humanitarian instincts of the young liberal. He found ample support for his views in the writings of the celebrated Puerto Rican patriot, educator, and sociologist, Eugenio María de Hostos, who had spent ten years in the Dominican Republic trying to reform the educational system. 17

Undoubtedly Bosch found in Hostos a kindred spirit and in his social doctrines a philosophical basis for his own views concerning the political and social situation in his homeland. Bosch's admiration for

Hostos is attested by his biographical study of Hostos\textsuperscript{18} and by a lecture which he delivered before a group of women graduates of the University of Puerto Rico.\textsuperscript{19}

The foremost literary influence on the youthful Bosch was the entire body of Latin American literature dealing with political and social themes. The situation which Bosch encountered in the Dominican Republic was not uncommon in Latin America, and many writers had protested the social evils of their particular environment long before Bosch appeared on the scene. This social protests has continued up to the present time, and has been one of the predominant features of Latin American literature in this century.\textsuperscript{20}

In view of the political, economic, and social environment in which he was reared and the literary tradition in which his attitudes were shaped, it is not surprising that, although Bosch has traveled extensively in both Americas and Europe as a writer and as a representative of the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano, with which he has been associated since his exile from the Dominican Republic in 1937, he has not forgotten his native land and its problems. His travels have widened his point of view, but he still deals with Dominican situations; with the land and the humble natives who must derive their living from it.

\textsuperscript{18}Juan Bosch, Hostos el sembrador (La Habana: Editorial Trópico, 1939).

\textsuperscript{19}Juan Bosch, Mujeres en la vida de Hostos (San Juan, P. R.: Imprenta Baldrich, 1938).

Bosch has written several volumes of short stories, a biography of Hostos, a novel, and several volumes of essays. It is in his short stories that his social protests are most effective and his style most polished. In this genre Bosch's ability as a social dramatist is most apparent.

In this study I shall examine four collections of Bosch's short stories and attempt to demonstrate that they do represent social drama in the short story form.
CHARACTERISTICS OF DRAMA IN THE SHORT STORIES OF JUAN BOSCH

The plots of Juan Bosch's stories are very simple. In the best tradition of the drama, he selects and concentrates on a dramatic situation. One of his very touching stories, "El niño," serves to illustrate this.

As the story opens, the hired car, in which three gentlemen from the city are taking an outing, has a flat tire. While the chauffeur is changing the tire, the three passengers get out to stretch and rest in the shade of a nearby hut. Entering the huts to investigate a noise, one of the gentlemen perceives an object huddled in a dimly lit corner on a pile of filthy rags. It is a sick, motherless boy who is left alone all day while his father works in the fields. Touched by the boy's miserable condition, the man decides to take the boy with him to the city, away from this lonely hovel. Despite the lad's vehement protests, he picks him up and starts for the car. Surprised by his lightness, he glances down to where the covers off — the boy has no legs. As the latter is explaining to the gentleman that they had been cut off by an automobile in the city, the horn sounds from outside, causing the boy to tremble with fright. The would-be benefactor gently lays the boy down and leaves to return to the city with his companions. As they laugh and joke about the joys awaiting them in the city, the

1 Juan Bosch, "El niño," Dos pesos de agua (La Habana: [A. Ríos], 1941), p. 103.
one who has seen terror in the eyes of the young boy reminds them,
"La civilización es dolor también. No lo olvides."

This pattern of clear, unadorned plots appears in all of Bosch's stories, even when the time element would seemingly preclude it. In one of his most powerful character portrayals, "El difunto estaba vivo," Bosch utilizes the flashback technique to present with striking effectiveness incidents spanning two generations without tangling the plot or sacrificing the concentration on the central theme: that a man is not dead as long as there remains in the world one person who respects his memory.

The opening scene is laid in a courtroom, where an old servant, Felicio, is on trial for the murder of a police sergeant. The latter had used his position for personal profit by persuading the highway engineer to alter the proposed route of a new highway so it would increase the value of land he owned. The new route passed through the cemetery and caused the disturbance of the grave of Felicio's former master. The young engineer who apprehended Felicio rises in court to defend him with the apparently absurd contention that "el difunto estaba vivo." His entire defense is based on this idea, and in order to clarify it, he recounts the life story of don Pablo, the deceased master, portraying him as a man of such strength of character that all those who knew him respected him to the point of reverence. His influence was strong enough to be felt even from the grave, and it was this influence which caused Felicio, in an emotional turmoil over the desecration of

his master's resting place to imagine that he saw don Pablo arise from
the grave and mount Felicio's horse. In his aberration Felicio felt
compelled to kill the sergeant as he attempted to halt the imagined
escape of don Pablo.

The author is not concerned with the trial nor with its outcome;
this is merely a device for portraying a character so powerful that
respect for his memory leads another man to kill. Bosch has done this
so skillfully that Felicio's aberration seems completely plausible.
In spite of the span of years covered by the story, the plot consists
simply of those incidents in the life of a rural patriarch which make
the violent climax inevitable, and the dismissal of the case against
Felicio a logical and acceptable conclusion.

The opening paragraph of "La mujer" offers an excellent illus-
tration of the powerful impact of the settings created by Bosch.

La carretera está muerta. Nadie ni nada la resucitará.
Larga, infinitamente larga, ni en la piel gris se le ve vida.
El sol la mató; el sol de acero, de tan candente al rojo, — un
rojo que se hizo blanco. Tornóse luego transparente el acero
blanco, y sigue ahí, sobre el lomo de la carretera.

Against this background of stark desolation and blinding heat,
the elemental passions of the protagonist acquire a certain nobility.
When she kills the stranger who is defending her from a violent beating
at the hands of her husband, the woman is reacting naturally to the
animal instinct which demands that she protect her mate.

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3Juan Bosch, "La mujer," Camino real (2ª ed.; Santiago,
4Ibid., p. 11.
In this same story the setting, or environment, contributes directly to the action. In order to be able to nurse her child, the woman drank the goat's milk which her husband had ordered her to sell. For this disobedience she was beaten and thrown out. If they had been able to make a living from that cruel, drought-stricken land, she would not have been forced into this situation and the stranger would never have entered her life. But he did, and he paid for his kindness with his life.

In order to utilize more fully the forces of nature, Bosch gives the intense heat a part in the drama's closing moment:

La mujer tenía las manos crispadas sobre la cara, todo el pelo suelto y los ojos pugnando por saltar. Corrió, sentía flojedad en las coyunturas. Quería ver si alguien venía; pero sobre la gran carretera muerta, totalmente muerta, sólo estaba el sol que la mató. Allá al final de la planicie, la colina de arenas que amontonaron los vientos. Y cactos, embutidos en el acero. 

The violent contrasts which characterize the climate of Bosch's native land are reflected in the varied settings of his stories; the scorching drought of the summer months and the relentless torrential storms during the winter form the backdrop against which the drama is enacted. In "Mal tiempo" two distinct settings are employed: the first scene opens at midnight in a tiny hut where a woman lies awake trembling in fear as the raging hurricane threatens to destroy the hut. But even more compelling than her fear for her personal safety is her concern for her son who is in the forest and exposed to the full fury of the storm. Her husband's curt dismissal of her anxieties, and his assurance

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5 Ibid., p. 16.

that the son, Julián, is perfectly safe, do little to calm the woman.

The scene shifts to the hills where Julián has been caught by the tempest while felling trees for his father's charcoal business. From the first moment Julián knows that he cannot expect relief:

Era septiembre, el temido septiembre de las islas, y no había, esperanzas de que el mal tiempo se debiera a cambios de la luna. Julián sabía, pues, que no debía parar un instante.

The fury of the storm grows during the night as Julian is guiding a prized mahogany tree down the swollen river. The raging torrent capsizes his tiny boat, leaving him at the mercy of the flood, watching his boat disappear downstream. His frantic efforts to reach the mahogany tree are futile and he disappears from the surface while the rain beats down and the howling wind bends the trees that line his watery grave.

The final scene is again set in the hut of the parents of Julian. The hurricane has spent its strength after several days, and Venancio expects to find some timber left on the beach in the wake of the storm. The discovery of a huge trunk of a mahogany tree overwhelms him, and he can scarcely contain himself as he relates the news to his wife:

Dio no le falta al pobre, Eloisa. ¡Vea que traer este temporal pa ayudarnos!

Y se quedó con la mirada en el cuadro, de cielo que se veía a través de la puerta, quizás esperanzado en que viniera otro mal tiempo tan generoso como el que acababa de pasar.

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7 Ibid., p. 138.
8 Ibid., p. 147.
The bitter irony with which Bosch concludes this story illustrates his view of the struggle between Man and Nature, or between the individual and his environment. In the uneven conflict with the forces of nature, whether they be drought, heat, fire, or flood, the outcome is inevitable; the individual must go down in defeat.

While pointing out the terrible power of the forces of Nature, Bosch does not close his eyes to the beauty to be found in the Dominican scene, even as a background for subsequent tragedy. The following paragraph from "El río y su enemigo" describes the delicate beauty of a river bathed in moonlight:

Se sentía la fuerza del mundo allí. Cantaba alegre y dulcemente el río, chillaban algunos insectos y resonaban con apagado acento las incontables hojas de los árboles. De pronto por entre las ramas enlazadas apareció una luz verde, pálida, delicada luz de hechicería, y vimos las leves ondas del río tomar relieve, agitarse, moverse como vivas. Todo el sitio empezó a cobrar un prestigio de mundo irreal. Los juegos de luz y sombra, animaban a los troncos y a los guijarros, y parecía que se iniciaba una imperceptible pero armonica danza, como si al son de la susurrante brisa hubieran empezado a bailar dulcemente el agua, los árboles y las piedras.

The following night this scene of peaceful beauty becomes the background for the tragic drowning of a young man whose land has been swept away by this same river. Unbalanced by the loss of his life's work, he vows to kill the river with a machete, and in a frenzy throws himself into the river, where he drowns as he slashes the surface.

Seldom does a trace of gaiety or humor appear in Bosch's stories; they are somber, violent at times, and permeated with a depressing

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9 Juan Bosch, "El río y su enemigo," Ocho cuentos, pp. 78-92.
10 Ibid., p. 81.
fatalism. The settings, which Bosch depicts so graphically, reflect faithfully his native land; but this does not constitute their primary function in Bosch's art. Their chief contributions to the dramatic power of the stories is in the establishment of moods which intensify the character portrayal.

As outstanding characteristic of Bosch's writing is this vivid portrayal of the protagonists in his dramas, who are always depicted in relation to their natural environment with the latter becoming a determining factor. Bosch is particularly fond of movement and utilizes fully the dramatic effect of this device in the initial presentation of characters.

Thus, in the two stories, "Chucho"11 and "El cobarde,"12 the protagonists are first seen in violent movement. Chucho, desperately tired, hungry, and alone in the desolate hills, is fleeing from the law and about to give up hope. The reader first views Fano, the hero of "El cobarde," in the commotion of his stormy arrival on a spent mount, seeking refuge in his flight from a guerrilla band.

The figure of Juan, the narrator and central character of the story "Rosa,"13 is also presented in flight -- flight from the loneliness which has assailed him as he traveled the length of the drought-stricken Cibao valley.

La sequía de los nueve meses agostó todo el Cibao. Los viejos no recordaban castigo igual. La tierra tostada crujía bajo el pie; los caminos ardían como zanjas de fuego; los potreros se quedaron

11 Juan Bosch, "Chucho," Dos pesos de agua, pp. 69-75.
12 Juan Bosch, "El cobarde," Ibid., pp. 76-80.
13 Juan Bosch, "Rosa," Dos pesos de agua, pp. 111-144.
pelados. Centenares de familias se acostaban sin haber comido y los animales no tenían ya fuerzas para espantar las moscas.

Sufrió mucho en ese tiempo, Desde las orillas del Yaque hasta las del Yuna quemado por el sol, anduve buscando trabajo. . . .

His loneliness and suffering at the hands of a cruel Nature bring Juan back to the good job and the fiancée he left some months earlier seeking independence. However, even the assurance of a secure future as the husband of the rancher's daughter and eventual owner of the ranch does not compensate, in Juan's mind, for the loss of liberty. With the memory of the lonely months of wandering dimmed by time and comfortable living, Juan again leaves the ranch. The circle has been completed; in the final scene Juan is again depicted in movement, but this time against the background of the tropical rains: "Y me lanzo al camino por cuyos desniveles corre rauda el agua sucia."

In "Forzados" the presentation of the characters in motion under a burning sun heightens the feeling of sympathy for these peasants who have been torn from their homes and families and herded like animals into forced labor camps. It is an outcry against the injustice of a government which so callously denies the rights of its citizens; a protest against the apparent hopelessness of the situation.

La línea era larga, larga. Caminaban bajo el sol como quien no camina. Hubieran podido estar así años y años, sin que los pies dolieran ni el sol quemara, a pesar de ir todos descalzos y de sudar. Nadie habló; pero los soldados reían mientras duro la marcha.

14 Ibid., p. 111.
15 Ibid., p. 144.
16 Juan Bosch, "Forzados," Camino real, pp. 67-73.
Bolito levantó los ojos al cielo y le asombró su luz. Vió a los primeros subiendo un repecho y recordó su tiempo de peón, cuando venía por este camino arreando las vacas de Viguín, el amo. Igual, exactamente igual. También las vacas venían amarradas en parejas.\footnote{Ibid., p. 68.}

Bosch uses this dramatic device of presentation in motion so frequently and with such impressive force that it becomes a hallmark of his style. In the title piece of the collection, *Camino real*, the stylistic device is extended to such a point that it overshadows the plot, and the reader is left with a single impression of movement to which the narrative is subordinate. The story ends, not with a resolution, but with the suggestion of endless and aimless wandering.

El camino real está a nuestra vera, esperándonos. Otro lado del río sube por la ladera pedregosa. Floro y yo no sabemos adónde vamos.

\footnote{Juan Bosch, "Camino real," *Camino real*, p. 198.}

/Es tan rico y tan grande este Cibao, y son tantos los caminos que lo cruzan/\footnote{Ibid., p. 68.}

The striking coincidence between the life of Juan Bosch and that of the protagonists of "Camino real" and "Rosa" offers the strong possibility that these stories are autobiographical. Both stories are narrated in the first person by a man named Juan who comes from Bosch's birthplace—La Vega, principal city of the Cibao valley, where the action of each of the stories is set. Furthermore, both heroes are represented as restless, independent men, acutely aware of the misery and injustice which surrounds them, but without a positive plan for ameliorating these conditions. Judging by Bosch's political activity
as a leader in the Dominican exile group seeking the overthrow of the Trujillo regime and by the constant note of social protest in his writings, the narrators of these stories would appear to be representative of Bosch as a youth.

The effect of introducing characters in motion is much like that produced by actors' entrances onto the stage: the audience's attention is focused on them and the author, or dramatist, then allows the audience to witness their development against the particular background he has chosen. Bosch's consummate skill in this respect makes the personages of his drama an adjunct of the setting: it is only in their particular situation that the characters achieve their full significance.

The heroine of "En un bohío" is one of the most memorable characters created by Bosch, and the setting in which she is seen and in which the short drama unfolds is of utmost importance in achieving this. Her husband is in prison and she is left with the job of raising two children on a tiny farm which has been rendered worthless by the ravages of drought and violent storms. Surrounded by filth and misery, and facing starvation, she is tempted to sell herself to a passing stranger for a paltry sum in order to buy food. She is stopped by an innate sense of pride which will not allow her to dishonor the home in the presence of her daughter, and she sends the man on his way knowing full well that she has slammed the door on any possibility of relief. Resigned to her fate, she accepts it and tries to comfort her sick child.

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19Juan Bosch, "En un bohío," Dos pesos de agua, pp. 38-42.
Se sentía muy cansada y se animó a la puerta. Con los ojos turbios vio al hombre perderse lentamente en la bajada. Ardía el sol sobre el caminante y enfrente mugía la brisa. Ya no pasaría otro ese día, ni el próximo, ni acaso nunca más. Teo hallaría las cruces y los horcones.

-- Mía mañana dijo el niño adentro—¿No era taita? ¿No tuvo aquí taita?

Pasándole la mano por la frente, que ardía como hierro al sol, ella se quedó respondiendo.

-- No, hijo no. Tu taita viene después, más tarde. 20

With remarkable economy the author has created another character who, once seen, cannot be forgotten. As with the use of movement in presentation of characters and with the full utilization of setting in portraying and developing characters, the principle of economy pervades Bosch's works and is the chief characteristic of his style.

His stories are marked by their tight construction, which reflects the author's careful planning and polishing. Even in the purely narrative passages, uninterrupted by dialogue, paragraphs are usually short and strictly confined to one idea, and the sentences within the paragraphs are brief and concise — often to the point of choppiness:

El hombre que estaba allí adentro, en el corazón del monte, oía sólo dos cantos: el suyo y el del hacha.

De mañana empezó a tumbar la yaya y a los primeros golpes aleataron los pajaritos. Piaron y se fueron. El hombre, duro, oscuro y desnudo de cintura arriba, los siguió con la vista. Por entre los claros de las hojas había manchas azules.

El canto triste del hombre resonaba en el monte. Hasta muy lejos, tropezando con todos los troncos, se regaba el golpe del

20 Ibid., p. 42.
The curt, clipped phrases give a staccato effect to the sentences, and in their very simplicity are all the more forceful. In this passage Bosch has painted the background with swift, sure strokes; avoiding superfluous details. The suggestive power of Bosch's highly selective style is exemplified in the opening lines of "El abuelo."

Yo vi a mi abuelo crecer hasta cubrirme el horizonte. . . .

Mi abuelo era alto, muy alto; su espalda se balanceaba al caminar; movía los brazos, terminados en manos huesudas.

Thus, he opens the story with a brief, but vivid, description of the grandfather; without background narrative, the action begins at what, in the manner of modern drama employing the flashback technique, is really the climax.

Yo marché tras él. También en mí había crecimiento. De pronto me subió una pleasa caliente, llenándome el pecho, y rompi en llanto. Había visto a Garantía lamer la sangre. Mi abuelo volvió el rostro, me clavó aquella mirada honda y dura, se detuvo, posó sobre mi cabeza su manaza huesuda y me empujó levemente.

Yo me estrujaba los ojos con los puños.

With this terse, compact scene the reader is plunged directly into the middle of the situation. Only enough details are presented to create interest and suspense; the child and his grandfather are sketched quickly and clearly, if not fully, and the relationship between

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21 Juan Bosch, "El algarrobo," Camino real, p. 63.
22 Juan Bosch, "El abuelo," Camino real, pp. 27-36.
23 Ibid., p. 27
24 Ibid.
them is immediately understood.

In spite of its unaffected and straightforward manner, Bosch's direct style does not become ordinary and unimaginative. In fact, the rigorous selection and polishing of language that he exercises frequently imparts a definite lyric quality to his prose, which abounds with unusual and striking images:

Afuera se come la luz el paisaje; aquí dentro está el hombre y la soledad le come en el pecho.

Por las lomas va subiendo el hacha y clarea el monte; se empinan, todavía, algunos troncos sobre el agua; pero el hacha sobra en la tierra llana y sobra también el sol.

El hombre está solo aquí dentro; es como si no mirar su mirada. Sin embargo, igual que al frijol recién nacido, apunta la esperanza, y los ojos se le van.  

Bosch’s style is marked by a blend of the language of the peasants with whom he grew up, modified by a keen selectivity of words; a vigorous, incisive manner, and a lyrical tone that reveals the poet who walks hand in hand with the cuentista. It is a style particularly suited to the creation of dramatic values within the narrow limits prescribed by the short story form.

The heart of all drama—conflict—plays a paramount part in Bosch’s works; particularly when the principals in the struggle are in an individual and his environment. By aligning the individual against the relentless forces of Nature and Society, Bosch achieves such outstanding characterizations as those we have seen in the heroine of "La mujer" and "En un bohío," and in the deranged young man of "El río y sus enemigos."

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25 Juan Bosch, "El cuchillo," Camino real, p. 75.
His compact, highly selective style, together with his marked ability to fuse action, setting, and characters, gives his works the compression so essential to drama. Bosch's keen sense of observation allows him to select a detail which, by the image it creates, portrays more than a lengthy descriptive passage.

Estrechó la mano fuerte y callosa que le extendía Cholo. Con paso seguro salió al camino. Cholo vio su espalda ancha, a contraluz, en la puerta.

Two physical details—a sure step and a broad back—are sufficient to create in the reader's mind a picture of a man whose physical strength and determined self-confidence enable him to impose his will on Cholo, persuading him to leave his family and take up arms in a revolution.

This compressed form, with its elimination of digressions and superfluous details, demands close attention from the reader. All the action is immediate and directed unswervingly toward the resolution to provide a constant strain forward to the conclusion. Just as a viewer of drama will not chat with his neighbor when the play keeps him on the edge of his seat, so the reader of Bosch's dramatic short stories will not allow himself to be distracted. The chance of losing something is too great.

In appraising Bosch's works, one is struck by the fact that their appeal is not concentrated in one area; he synthesizes the physical, the rational, and the esthetic so that the reader appreciates his art on all three levels simultaneously.

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26 Juan Bosch, "Revolución," *Camino real*, p. 19.
Scenes of violence and sudden outbursts of emotion such as those we saw in "El difunto estaba vivo" and "El río y su enemigo" are powerful in their physical, or emotional, appeal. The reader's esthetic sense is stirred by the backgrounds of Bosch's native land; the vivid descriptions of the harsh, violent beauty of tropical storms; the stark, empty beauty of a land stricken by drought; the serene, quiet beauty of a hillside occupied only by a man happily engaged in his work. These settings, depicted in Bosch's poetic style, excite the artistic sense primarily, but are not devoid of emotional appeal.

Although subtler than the emotional and esthetic elements, the intellectual aspect of Bosch's works has an equal impact, and a more lasting effect, on the reader. This appeal to the audience's discernment and understanding can be roughly divided into two broad categories: the psychological and the social. This division does not mean that the two do not appear in the same work; rather, they frequently complement each other.

Bosch does not undertake a psychological analysis of his characters for the reader. He presents action, dialogue, and, occasionally, inner thoughts of the characters, but makes no attempt to interpret them -- this task falls to the reader. The protagonists of Bosch's stories do not serve as mouthpieces for the author; they are highly individualized characters whose actions and speeches are dictated by their particular personalities and situations. They are so lifelike that it is very likely that they are actual persons whom Bosch has known during his early years of wandering through the Cibao.
valley. The psychological understanding demonstrated by Bosch reflects his deep sympathy for the characters who populate his drama, and it is a characteristic of his work which enhances their appeal to the audience's social consciousness.

The second category of intellectual appeal of Bosch's art appears in the presentation of social conditions and problems of the Dominican Republic. More subtly presented than the other elements of his stories, this aspect of his stories could quite possibly be missed by an inattentive audience. The destructive power of the forces of Nature, the poverty of a people dependent upon the harsh and uncompromising land, and the injustice of social institutions which deny human rights are the most prominent conditions portrayed by Bosch. They are never explicitly mentioned by the author as problems, but when viewed in relation to the personal problems of the protagonists, they must be understood as such. The appeal to social consciousness is the feature of Bosch's work which brings it into the realm of social drama, and it is this feature which will be examined in the remaining chapters of this thesis.
CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND PROBLEMS TREATED BY JUAN BOSCH

There is an element of ambiguity in the use of the terms "problems" and "conditions," which must be clarified before progressing to a consideration of individual stories. No attempt has been made, either in this study or in the works of Juan Bosch, to establish a precise "cause-effect" relationship between the two terms. Thus, poverty might be considered a condition which causes problems such as crime, injustice, and ignorance, or it could be regarded as the problem arising from these, or other, conditions. In this sense the terms can be used almost interchangeably. However, it matters not whether the circumstances depicted by Bosch are viewed as causes or effects: they exist; they exert a profound influence on the people who must suffer them; and they demand correction.

The acute and widespread poverty of the Dominican peasants is a dominant theme in Bosch's work, although it seldom is explicitly described. It is an atmosphere that permeates his stories and clings to the reader's mind, yet a critic would be hard-pressed to find specific illustrations of this privation. Frequently economic conditions are seen only by virtue of brief references to squalid huts, ragged clothes, or lack of food. Occasionally the same conditions are portrayed by a mention of the great value attached by these people to what we would consider trifles. Seldom does Bosch dwell on the impoverished state of his fellow Dominicans, but in two of his most
powerful stories he has placed Poverty squarely on the stage, giving it equal billing with the female leads.

As previously mentioned, the setting of "La mujer" shows the harshness of the Cibao valley during the drought period, and the pitiful state of the families trying to subsist on the land. However, Bosch goes further in his portrayal of indigence by making it the motivating force which causes the woman to deliberately disobey her husband and precipitate the fatal quarrel. Unable to stand idly by and watch her child starve, she chooses to drink the goat's milk so she can nurse him. Torn between two loyalties, she is forced into this decision by an uncompromising necessity. Consequently, Bosch has dramatized the motive—poverty—as much as the character or action. Perhaps this is what William Kozlenko meant when, in discussing the evolution of the social drama, he said:

Moreover, writers abandoned the legend that social drama must consist mainly of external action. They realized that the implicit motivations of a human being are themselves dynamic and that, when shown in relationship with his background, the dramatization of his conflicts becomes at once both individual and social.

In general the theme of "La mujer" is paralleled in "En un bohío." In both cases the specter of starvation forces the heroine into action which is, by her unsophisticated standards, wrong. However, in the latter story the woman stops short of prostituting herself and accepts, for herself and her children, the slow death which

is inevitable. Although there is none of the violence of "La mujer," the conclusion moves the reader with equal, or greater, force.

The real "villain" of both stories is the suffering and destituation of those peasants who are dependent upon a land subject to the uncontrolled excesses of climate—a situation which prevailed in the Dominican Republic at the time these stories were written. Although not explicitly advocated by the author as a definite program, it is apparent that he is pointing out the need for some type of flood and drought control which would eliminate the suffering and degradation he portrays.

These same two conditions—drought and flood—appear in many of Bosch's stories, but with various degrees of emphasis. The fury of the tropical storms which lash the island republic are vividly depicted in "Mal tiempo," "El río y su enemigo," and "Dos pesos de agua." The other extreme—drought—plays an important part as the background in "Forzados," "Rosa," and the first part of "Dos pesos de agua. It is not unusual that Bosch should dwell on the harsher features of Nature, for they are prominent in the weather pattern of the Dominican Republic and are of paramount importance in the lives of Bosch's countrymen.

Another problem, or condition, of the Dominican peasantry which Bosch treats frequently is that of widespread ignorance. Lacking education, the poor peasants rely to a great extent on blind faith and superstition in determining their actions, with the tragic results which

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2 Juan Bosch, "Dos pesos de agua," Dos pesos de agua, pp. 5-16.
one might expect.

In "Dos pesos de agua" it is a blind faith in the efficacy of prayer which proves fatal to the protagonist. An old woman, Remigia, and her grandson live alone in a tiny hut and subsist on the produce of their tiny plot of land. The old woman has even been able to put away a few pennies, one at a time, in order to provide for the boy. The valley has been suffering from drought for many months, and the people from the surrounding farms are giving up hope and abandoning their homes. But Remigia stays. As the intense heat continues it is destroying her corn and beans, but still she remains. To each of the departing neighbors Remigia gives a coin and asks them to buy a candle for las Animas in her name. The grandson falls ill with fever and she prays to las Animas de Purgatorio. Finally, everyone has left except Remigia and the boy, and the situation continues to get worse:

"/Polvo y sol! /Polvo y sol!"\(^3\)

The scene shifts to Purgatorio, where las Animas are discussing an old woman from Paso Hondo who has burned two pesos worth of candles requesting water. They are shocked, for never have they had a request for even a third of this quantity, but they decide to grant it. With diabolical glee they begin shouting, "Dos pesos de agua a Paso Hondo."\(^4\)

Back in Paso Hondo, Remigia, whose faith has never wavered, is overjoyed when the rain comes. She falls asleep dreaming of how her

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 12.
\(^4\)Ibid., p. 13.
farm will again be fruitful,

... y veía su conuco lleno de plantas, verdes, lozanas, batidas por la prisa fresca; veía los rincones llenos de dorado maíz, de arroz, de frijoles sangrientos, de batatas henchidas.¹

However, as the storm continues unabated for a fortnight, her joy turns to fear. Still she clings to her faith and refuses to heed the advice of a passing stranger who tells her she should move to higher ground to avoid the flood which is threatening the valley.

At last, when the flood waters are lashing her tiny hut and threatening to destroy it, Remigia decides to abandon her home and seek safety in the hills. Taking her sick grandson in her arms she sets out wading through the torrent. The water has risen to waist level and continues to rise. Remigia raises the child to protect him, but the relentless water pursues him as she clutches him to her bosom.

In a final scene filled with a touching pathos, Remigia, even as the water engulfs her, reaffirms her belief that she and the child will be saved from the raging flood and be allowed to return to her land and her crops:

Su falda flotaba. Ella rodaba, rodaba. Sintió que algo le sujetaba el cabello, que le amarraban la cabeza. Pensó:

--- En cuanto esto pase siembro batata.

Veía el maíz bajo el agua sucia. Hincaba las uñas en el pecho del nieto.

--- ¡Virgen Santísima!

Seguía ululando el viento, y el trueno rompía los cielos.

⁵Ibid.
Se le quedó el cabello enredado en un tronco espinoso. El agua corría hacia abajo, arrastrando bohíos y troncos. Las Animas gritaban, enloquecidas:

—¡Todavía falta; todavía falta! ¡Son dos pesos! ⁶

With a skillful blending of fantasy and realism, Bosch has presented a situation which occurs among his fellow Domminicanos when, because of their ignorance, they allow blind faith to outweigh reason. He does not attack religious faith nor the Catholic church; he only points out the possible consequences of action based upon an irrational trust.

A superstitious belief in the invincibility of a man who has pledged his soul to the Devil, and an overwhelming desire for revenge are woven together to establish an atmosphere of mystery in which the plot of "El socio" unfolds. In the opening scene the reader is given a brief glimpse of three men, unknown to each other, who have two things in common—each one has been wronged by the wealthy rancher, don Anselmo, and each one is plotting how he can kill don Anselmo without the interference of el Socio.

Negro Manzueta has had his land stolen from him by don Anselmo—land that had been passed down from father to son for three generations. Dionisio Rojas has been imprisoned and publicly disgraced as a cattle thief because of the false testimony of don Anselmo's henchmen. The young niece of Adán Matías has been taken as a mistress by don Anselmo. Now the three men are planning their revenge.

⁶Ibid., p. 16
Negro Manzueta attempts to burn don Anselmo's fields, but after he has started the fire, the wind, apparently without reason, shifts suddenly and carries the blaze directly to Negro's hut. As soon as Negro's home has been destroyed, a sudden rainstorm puts out the fire and saves don Anselmo's property. Negro, seeing his vengeance thwarted, blames don Anselmo's ally, "¡El! /En el nombre de la Virgen, en el nombre de la Virgen! ¡Fue el Socio!"^8

Upon his release from prison, Dionisio returns to his home and is rudely received and insulted by his brother because of the disgrace he has brought to the family name. In the fight which ensues, Dionisio's back is broken and he dies, but the neighbors attribute his death to el Socio:

-- /Sí, fue el Socio, como en lo del Negro Manzueta!—exclamó una mujer.

-- /El Socio! ¡Fue el Socio—repitió, de bohío en bohío, la voz del campo!^9

Word of these happenings reaches Adán Matías and he decides that he must have the help of el Socio if he is to be successful. From the same woman who arranged the affair for don Anselmo, he buys the information necessary for summoning el Socio. Adán goes to the appointed spot and summons el Socio to whom he offers his own soul, that of his daughter, and that of his niece if el Socio will withdraw his aid from don Anselmo. El Socio is ready to abandon don Anselmo, for the latter has

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^8 Ibid., p. 21.

^9 Ibid., p. 25.
denied that he has any help other than provided by his money, so the pact between Adán and el Socio is made.

The following morning Adán goes to don Anselmo's ranch, hacks him to death with a machete, and flees. The ranchhands, most of whom are illegitimate children of don Anselmo, overtake him and he surrenders docilely. Although Adán is certain that don Anselmo's sons will kill him, he is contented and grateful to el Socio for helping him to realize his revenge. El Socio has allowed justice to be obtained, thereby succeeding where social institutions had failed.

Adán Matías, cristiano viejo, no se alarmaba al pensar que tardaría muy poco en entregarle su alma al Diablo.

Trato es trato, y el Diablo se había portado lealmente...

— Como un hombre serio—pensaba Adán Matías al tiempo de entregarse.10

Again in this story, as in "Dos pesos de agua," human and supernatural elements are blended, but the reality and the dramatic force of the situation are not vitiated. Both stories illustrate how the Dominican peasants, with whom Bosch is vitally concerned, will turn in times of stress to that which they know best—traditional beliefs and superstitions.

Bosch's concern with the problem of ignorance and the graver social and moral problems that it brings about is clearly expressed in the following speech by the hero of "Camino real":

10Ibid., p. 37.
¡Señor! ¿Cómo es posible que los hombres vivan ignorantes de por qué ven, por qué oyen; en la creencia de que todas las cosas vienen de un ser milagroso; de que sus vidas están dispuestas así y no tienen derecho a rebelarse, a pretender una vida mejor?

... De pronto me mordió la desigualdad, la horrible desigualdad entre estos hombres buenos, trabajadores, sufridos, conformes con su vida miserable, descalzos, hediondos y sucios; y los otros, retorcidos entre sus lacras morales, codiciosos, fatuos, vacíos, innecesarios; o los menos, los amos autoritarios, rudos y despóticos. Una amargura que venía de muy hondo me subió a los labios, y hablé...11

The last paragraph also serves to indicate the attitude of the author toward these humble peasants. He always treats them sympathetically, with a tenderness that is almost paternal. Even when involved actively in violence and brutality, they are absolved of blame.

Nor does Bosch scoff at the religious and superstitious beliefs of his people; often he uses them for a minor theme or as a device to create a mood. "San Andrés"12 is in itself a light piece, but the narrative is held together by the protagonist’s belief that the death of his fighting cock was caused by his own failure to light a candle in memory of his deceased companion. An air of mystery permeates "La pájara"13 from the opening scene in which an old man relates the story of el Enemigo Malo—the evil spirit that resides in any snake that has been wounded and causes him to follow and kill the one who attacked him.

In these two stories, as well as other in which the local superstitions play minor parts, Bosch utilizes peasant traditions and beliefs

11 Juan Bosch, "Camino real," Camino real, p. 181.
12 Juan Bosch, "San Andrés," Camino real, pp. 143-149.
13 Juan Bosch, "La pájara," Camino real, pp. 51-61.
as folkloristic elements and does not attempt to vest them with any particular social significance. They are tools to enhance his storytelling art, and he uses them skillfully.

A list of the stories by Bosch in which crime and violent death appear would include nearly all of the fifty short stories he has published. Murder and assault are the types of crime which appear most frequently in his stories. He does not present them as complicated puzzles to be solved nor does he dwell on details of violence and brutality, but as part of the tragic picture of barbarism among the uneducated and impoverished Dominican peasants. In most cases it is the protagonist of the story who has committed an act that our society would label a crime, but Bosch views them as victims of circumstances who have been forced into such actions by economic, political, and social circumstances over which they have no control.

Frequently the crime is only an incidental feature of a story in which Bosch depicts the injustices suffered by the lower classes in his homeland. Again, these injustices are economic, political, and social, and they overlap just as the institutions from which they arise overlap.

A prison in which a young man is serving a life sentence for murder is the setting for "Piloncito." Piloncito is almost childlike in his simplicity, with a horrible fear of being enclosed. His only desire is to be transferred to a prison farm, but the authorities show no concern for his case. So great is his dread of remaining in the prison

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that he becomes ill and wastes away to the point where he cannot move by himself. Finally, a new warden arrives and transfers Piloncito to the prison farm. Piloncito is so overjoyed with this news that he dies in the arms of his cellmate. The hopelessness of life in the prison and the callous attitudes of the authorities is seen in the final scene as Piloncito is being buried by his fellow prisoners.

Cuando echaban tierra aseguró un preso—Piloncito ta mejor que nosotros. Dios lo tenga en su gloria.

Un soldado saltó y le pegó la culata del rifle en el pecho. — ¿Quieres decir que usted no se conforme con el trato que se le da, vagabundo? ¿Usted quiere ver? ¿Qué reclama?

—No, nada—dijo el preso en voz baja. Y volvieron dos en dos, silencioso.\(^\text{15}\)

"Forzados" is the most clearly revolutionary of Bosch's stories. Two men are taken by force from their homes and herded into a forced labor camp by government troops. The indignities and brutalities they suffer there lead them to take up arms against the government forces and join the rebel bands in the hills:

Con un brillo raro en los ojos, Bolito sacó de la vasija un reluciente revólver que chorreaba aceite. Lo desgozó, sonreído, sin ver nada de lo que le rodeaba. Después, con el mismo amor que a un niño, lo puso junto al pecho y comenzó a acariciarlo lentamente . . .

Hacia las lomas remotas se le iban los ojos húmedos.\(^\text{16}\)

"Luis Pie"\(^\text{17}\) gives us an example of the unfair treatment a peasant can expect at the hands of the law. The story opens with Luis,

\(^{15}\)Ibid., p. 90.

\(^{16}\)Juan Bosch, "Forzados," Camino real, p. 73.

\(^{17}\)Juan Bosch, "Luis Pie," Ocho cuentos, pp. 5-12.
a field hand, seated on the ground in a cane field. He is racked with fever and pains in his leg and strikes a match in order to see the wound in his foot that he received while chopping cane the previous day. He tries to rise and walk, but the pain is so intense that he cannot move his leg. The thought of his two motherless children awaiting him impels Luis to drag himself toward the road in search of help. Before he reaches the road, a car passes, but Luis' feeble cries do not reach it. In the chauffeur-driven car is don Valentín Quintero, owner of a neighboring estate, on his way to enjoy his Saturday night revelry. As the car passes the field in which Luis is struggling, don Valentín flips a match out of the window.

Luis suddenly finds himself surrounded by flames and, terror-stricken, begins to shout frantically for help. His fear mounts until he loses his senses and struggles blindly to escape. In a moment of lucidity he hears voices and renews his shouting to guide those who are searching for him. He greets the men with immense relief and gratitude which quickly turns to bewilderment when his rescuers begin to beat him unmercifully. The poor man does not know why this is happening, and he is not given an opportunity to defend himself.

The leader of the group, and the one who ordered the beating, is don Valentín. He accuses Luis of setting the fire in the cane field, and only spares Luis' life in order that he might reveal the names of his accomplices. On the word of don Valentín alone, Luis is convicted without benefit of trial and dragged to jail to be tortured and executed.

As the procession passes through the village, Luis sees his two boys in the doorway of their wretched hut. He is able to call to them
and ask if they are all right. The older boy answers that they are well, as he chokes on his tears. In this pathetic scene Bosch reveals the compassion he feels for these humble victims of cruelty and injustice, and their human dignity—almost nobility when contrasted with their oppressors. Luis' only concern, even in his pain and misery, is with the welfare of his children. When the boy answers that they are well, Luis "no pudo contener sus palabras. --'Oh Bonye, tu se' gran!—clamó volviendo al cielo un honda mirada de gratitud."\(^{18}\)

One of the guards raises his hand to strike Luis, but restrains himself when he realizes that Luis, "no podía darse cuenta, porque iba caminando como un borracho, mirando hacia el cielo y hasta ligeramente sonreido!"

The theme of the social differences between the rich and the poor—so common in Latin America—is clearly presented in "Los amos."\(^{20}\) The plot is so simple that it is hardly more than a sketch. Cristino has worked on don Pío's ranch for many years. Now, when Cristino is too old and feeble to be of much use on the ranch, don Pío calls him and tells him that he is no longer needed. But don Pío, in an excess of generosity, offers him a medio peso for the trip home. Cristino thanks his master, but requests permission to remain until his fever and chills subside. He is allowed to stay overnight on the ranch.

Cristino is seriously ill and sits down in the shade of the barn to rest. From the porch of his comfortable house, don Pío sees in the

\(^{18}\)Ibid., p. 12.

\(^{19}\)Ibid.

\(^{20}\)Juan Bosch, "Los amos," Dos pesos de agua, pp. 17-20.
distance a cow with a new-born calf. He calls to Cristino and asks him to go after the cow. Cristino is hardly able to move and tells don Pío that he will go as soon as the spell passes. However, don Pío is not accustomed to waiting and he insists. Cristino, in spite of the severe attack of fever, arises and painfully makes his way across the fields. Don Pío remains on the porch watching him and his wife joins him. In the following dialogue Bosch reveals the extent of the social differences and the callous attitude of masters toward servants:

-- ¿Qué día tan bonito, Pío—comentó.

El hombre no contestó. Señaló a Cristino, que seguía andando torpemente.

-- No quería ir. Y ahorita mismo le di medio peso para el camino.

La mujer parecía preguntar con los ojos.

-- Malagradecidos que son, Herminia. De nada vale tratarlos bien.

-- Te lo he dicho mil veces, Pío.

Y ambos se quedaron mirando a Cristino, que ya era apenas una mancha sobre la sabana verde.21

The importance of these problems of poverty, ignorance, crime, injustice, and social and political inequality was recognized by William Kozlenko when he wrote:

The social dramatist is vitally concerned with the forces at work in life; his material is, in the main, derived directly from his milieu: war, strikes, evictions, sit-downs, unemployment, the

21Ibid., p. 20.
cruelties of feudal penal institutions, oppression and persecution of individuals, and their strivings and hopes, their dreams of a better life and their efforts to attain it.22

22 Kozlenko, op. cit., p. vii.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In attempting to demonstrate the similarity between Bosch's short stories and the social drama, we have examined some of his stories from two viewpoints—the characteristics of social drama present in Bosch's stories, and the social problems or conditions they portray.

The plots of his most powerful stories are, like the most effective social drama, simple and straightforward; their force is not dissipated in unnecessary complications and digressions. Bosch further adheres to the dramatic principle of economy, or compression, by integrating the setting into the action and utilizing it as a device to create mood and to increase the significance of his characters. These characters are portrayed, not by detailed descriptions, but by implication and by selection of some graphic detail or feature which reveals character, and by allowing the reader to do the rest.

The conflicts in Bosch's stories vary, but he seems to prefer the presentation of Man pitted against Nature in a struggle for survival. The forces of Nature are harsh and relentless; hence the helpless individual is beaten into submission by his powerful opponent. As we have seen, drought and flood—which are so familiar to Bosch—are the preferred agents of the individual's defeat.

Unlike the early propaganda play of the social theater whose "unique quality was to excite and convince its audiences emotionally,"¹

¹Kozlenko, op. cit., p. viii. (Italics in the original.)
the dramatic short stories of Bosch have a threefold appeal—emotional, aesthetic, and intellectual. His stories are thought-provoking and stimulate the audience's social consciousness. It is in this respect that they deserve to be called social drama in the short story form.

Not all of Bosch's short stories can be classified in this manner; nearly all of them have social or political themes but some are lacking the necessary dramatic qualities. For example, one of his most poignant stories, "Fragata," is neither social nor political in its theme. It is the story of an extremely ugly girl who, because she is unable to bear children, turns to drink and prostitution. When she moves into a quiet neighborhood, her nocturnal activities scandalize and baffle her neighbors. By day she plays games with the neighborhood children who idolize her; by night she receives her male visitors. In the end it is her love for the children which forces her to pack her few possessions and leave. The women of the neighborhood tell her that she is setting a bad example for the children and she immediately prepares to leave. The reader feels keenly Fragata's sense of futility as she moves on to another place to seek a happiness which will always be denied her.

Desde su puerta, doña Ana estaba observándola. Durante unos segundos Fragata contempló la callecita, triste y sucia, y los árboles que cubrían al final el camino de Pontón; después giró y echó a andar de nuevo.

A study of Bosch's total output of short stories reveals a lack of uniformity in quality. A discernible pattern can be seen when one

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2 Juan Bosch, "Fragata," Ocho cuentos, pp. 38-45.

3 Ibid., p. 45.
notices the publication date of the four collections of short stories. Most of his best stories appear in the two earliest collections, *Camino real* (1933) and *Dos pesos de agua* (1941). The later collections, *Ocho cuentos* (1947) and *La muchacha de La Guaira* (1955), contain excellent stories also, but the general level of quality does not measure up to the standard of his earlier works.

*Camino real* was written while Bosch was a young man living in the Dominican Republic. The stories undoubtedly are based on actual incidents from his life in the Cibao valley, and the characters—so realistically portrayed—are probably persons he knew personally and intimately. *Dos pesos de agua* appeared only four years after Bosch's exile from his homeland, and the memory of the people and places of his youth was as yet undimmed. In both of these collections the author frequently uses geographical names which definitely place the action in the Dominican Republic—usually in the Cibao valley.

His next volume of short stories, *Ocho cuentos*, was published ten years after he had left his native land. Half of the stories in this collection—"Luis Pie," "El socio," "Fragata," and "El difunto estaba vivo"—definitely take place in the Dominican Republic, and perhaps it is significant that these four were written before 1943. The use of place names is much less frequent in this volume, and the author is obviously not as close to the scenes he depicts nor the characters he portrays.

Bosch had lived in exile for nearly twenty years when his last

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4Juan Bosch, *Ocho cuentos*, foreword by the author.
collection of short stories, *La muchacha de La Guaria*, appeared in 1955. During these years he had traveled extensively and had been actively involved in the affairs of the group seeking the overthrow of the Trujillo regime. Bosch's long absence from the Dominican Republic is quite apparent in these latest stories. Geographical names do appear frequently, but now they are the names of places in Chile, Bolivia, Venezuela, and Cuba; only one of the stories in this volume, "Mal tiempo," has a Dominican setting. These stories show much less of the dramatic force which was so prominent in his earlier works. As he writes of people and places less familiar to him, he tends to complicate his plots and to lose the compressed, direct style which gives the dramatic impact to his better stories.

In view of the direct relationship between a social dramatist's intimate knowledge of the people and environment and his ability to present their problems clearly and forcefully, it is easy to understand the reason for this decline in the social significance of Bosch's stories. As he loses touch with the people and their problems, he fails to meet the prerequisites for a social dramatist. Consequently, his stories move away from the classification as social drama.

The foregoing chapters certainly have not exhausted all the aspects of Bosch's art which might arouse a student's curiosity. While examining Bosch's works, two questions arose which do not fall within the scope of this thesis, but which could be the subject of a study by a student interested in Latin American letters.

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5 Supra, p. 5.
The first of these questions is concerned with the possible symbolism in Bosch's work. For example, throughout his short stories he portrays—often very vividly as in "La mujer"—highways, roads, trails, and paths. Although of various sizes and descriptions, they have a common feature—all disappear into the distance toward an unknown destination. The fact that he has entitled one of his stories and one collection of stories Camino real, and the prominent place he has given the highways in the final passage of this story—and collection—lend some credibility to the possibility that highways are used as a symbol.

The other question—briefly mentioned earlier, but not explored—regards the possibility that many of his stories, particularly those in Camino real, are autobiographical. In many instances the protagonist bears the same Christian name as our author and narrates the story in the first person. In one story, "El abuelo," the narrator also has one of Bosch's surnames—Gaviño. Furthermore, these protagonists who carry his name also display the character traits one might expect from a young man of liberal tendencies such as Bosch was.

Both these questions are, in the absence of factual support, matters of conjecture. The only way in which they could be proved or disapproved conclusively would be through personal interview or direct correspondence with Juan Bosch. I have attempted the latter, but my efforts have been fruitless. His publishers, colleagues in the Partido

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6Supra, p. 31.
Revolucionario Dominicano, and various acquaintances with whom I have corresponded have been unable, or unwilling, to provide an address where I could contact him. Perhaps in the near future, if the troubled political affairs of the Dominican Republic are settled, the elusive author will establish himself permanently, and some interested student may provide the answer to these and other questions concerning the man that a critic as distinguished as Max Henríquez Ureña considers one of the outstanding portrayers of the national scene in modern Dominican letters. 7

I PRIMARY SOURCES


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_______. *Mujeres en la vida de Hostos, conferencia*. Segunda edición. San Juan, Puerto Rico: Imprenta Baldrich, 1939.


II SECONDARY SOURCES


