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Antonio Buero Vallejo: In the Burning Darkness (Hispanic Classics) (Aris and Phillips Hispanic Classics)

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Arguably Spain's leading playwright of the twentieth century, Antonio Buero-Vallejo published thirty original plays. In the Burning Darkness was the first play he wrote. The seminal, and lasting, significance of this play was confirmed when an extract from it was read over Buero-Vallejo's grave on the day of his burial. In the Burning Darkness describes a teaching centre for young people who are blind, where a false unity is maintained by a mixture of fear, coercion and diversion where, when persuasion fails, violence is the resort, and where "education" is seen to play a part in the regime's ideological apparatus and to encourage the acceptance of pleasant and reassuring myths. The play's principal protagonist is Iggy who, although blind like his classmates, is immediately seen to be different from the others because he carries a cane. When Iggy makes a move on Jane, part of the Centre's golden couple with her boyfriend Charles, he begins to challenge and destabilise the values cherished by the Centre. Buero-Vallejo described In the Burning Darkness as a work "loaded with future", and that observation points the way to why it is being translated now. Although it emerged in 1950 onto a dreary and trivial theatre scene in Francoist Spain, its themes speak to modern audiences and have a universal, rather than merely parochially Spanish, resonance. It poses a transcendental question about whether or not violence can ever be justified. The teaching centre and the blindness of those within is symbolic of post-Civil War Spain, where anti-democratic abuses were overlooked. The play operates on literal, political and philosophical levels. Challenging audiences and seeking to change mind-sets was the stock in trade of Antonio Buero-Vallejo as a dramatist. As he once stated himself: "Se escribe porque se espera" ("One writes because one hopes").

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