



1948

The Novel of Hugo West and Its Significance in Contemporary Argentine Literature

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THE NOVEL OF HUGO WAST AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE
IN CONTEMPORARY ARGENTINE LITERATURE

BY

SISTER MARY ANGELE WHELAN

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

IN

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY

CHICAGO

FEBRUARY

1948

VITA

Sister Mary Angele Whelan was born in Jefferson, Texas, and received her elementary and secondary education in the public schools of that city. In September, 1919, she entered Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, in Indiana, receiving in June, 1923, the Bachelor of Arts degree and securing, likewise, a license for secondary school teaching in the fields of English, Spanish, and social studies.

From 1923 to 1925 the writer taught English in the Jefferson High School of her home city. Since her entrance into the religious congregation of the Sisters of Providence, in 1925, she has pursued further courses in her teaching fields and likewise in public school music and library science.

Teaching assignments through the years have included classes in social studies, Spanish, and English in schools conducted by the Sisters of Providence in California (Anaheim); in Illinois (Chicago); and in Indiana (Evansville, Washington, Indianapolis, and Fort Wayne).

PREFACE

Hispanic-American fiction selects its native loam as culture from which to portray its novels. This fiction known only in part by the linguistically refined readers in the United States is exotic to the enormous multitude of novel pursuers. Hence, it has been the desire of the writer to acquaint the North-American reading public with some of the salient characteristics of Hugo West as a novelist, specifically in his literary setting, his presentation of women characters, and his regionalism as evidenced in his descriptions of Argentine life and terrain. The writer has essayed to delineate the popularity of West from these angles, which manifest the significance of his novel in contemporary Argentine literature. In this thesis, no attempt has been made to formulate an exhaustive paper on Hugo West; however the writer has aimed to confine this study to primary sources which evince the above mentioned characteristics. Criticisms of his works by important Argentine critics, such as Juan José Soiza Reilly and José María Samperio were consulted.

Of the outstanding twentieth-century Spanish-American writers Hugo West is one who is receiving only a portion of the distinction due him through his art. He has written books other than novels that show his literary ability; he has held responsible posts in the Argentine literary and educational world; he has made a profound contribution to

Argentine culture. The dictionary of the Spanish Royal Academy contains Argentine idioms first employed in literary form by Hugo Wast. At present Wast is the director of the National Library at Buenos Aires. Above all, he is an eminent Catholic--a fact His Holiness Pope Pius XI recognized by the elevation of Hugo Wast to the honor of Pontifical Commander of the Order of Saint Gregory thus placing beyond doubt Wast's eminent position as a Catholic.

The writer wishes to express deep gratitude to Doctor Graciano Salvador for his helpful guidance in the preparation of this thesis.

A NUESTRA SEÑORA DE LOS ANGELES
SE DEDICA ESTA TESIS SOBRE UN PROMINENTE
NOVELISTA, CATOLICO EMINENTE
DE LA
ARGENTINA CONTEMPORANEA

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CHAPTER I

HUGO WAST IN HIS LITERARY SETTING

EARLY LIFE AND EARLY WORKS

From the Nordic anagram GHUSTAWO, composed of two alphabetical symbols foreign to the musical Castilian language but reflecting his own baptismal name, Gustavo Adolfo Martínez Zuviría devised his own world-famous pseudonym of Hugo Wast.¹

In 1883 the most chaste of Argentine cities, ancient Córdoba, in the province of Córdoba, became the birthplace of Gustavo Adolfo Martínez Zuviría. Perennial veneration for truth and beauty formed the educative environment of his home. Few in their boyhood were as mischievous as young Gustavo. Even the cat scampered away upon hearing his footsteps; the watchdog, upon whose back Gustavo played horse, and the little birds, that housed their nests in the peach orchard trees, experienced his playfulness. But his gracious, admirable grandmother knew and understood him better than others could, for she lived closest to that "capullo a medio abrir." It was she who darned the clothes torn in his exploits over tops of sheds and hurdles, and who, between alternating smiles and reprimands, soothed with the sweet balm of affection the wounds he received at the hands of his boy companions or from the jagged thorns of branches on the mountain side. At eventide it was she who entertained this "chiquitín" with astounding legends, exciting history, and every kind of delightful story. Gustavo rejoiced to live from

¹ Nicolás Bayona Posada, "Visión Cinematográfica de Hugo Wast," Prólogo de Lo que Dios ha unido, Obras Completas de Hugo Wast, primera edición, tomo XXXII (Buenos Aires: Editores Thau, 1945), p. 25.

day to day if only to hear his grandmother relate her stories.²

Truly mutual seems to have been the tender devotion between the young Gustavo and "la excelente abuela," whom he thus affectionately pictures:

Mientras avanza la mensajería, permítame que les haga el retrato de la adorable viejita, en cuya casa viví hasta los quince años.

Verla o imaginarla, columbrar su espíritu y sus costumbres, es conocer o recordar a todas las damas de su tiempo, no sólo en Córdoba, sino de toda la nación, desde la muy noble y muy heroica ciudad porteña de Santa María de Buenos Aires hasta la aristocrática y antaño muy rica ciudad de Salta.

La razón de esta semejanza es que en todas las familias argentinas de abolengo vivía la tradición más pura de la raza española, que es castiza, afable y honrada.

Mi abuela tenía los ojos pardos y profundos, luminosos pero tristes, como el agua quieta de las fuentes en las horas del ocaso; las mejillas suaves y rosadas; una barbilla voluntarioso, una nariz fuerte, y grandes orejas que se estiraban con el peso de unos antiquísimos zarcillos de diamantes. Como la recuerdo mejor es en un rincón del segundo patio, a la sombra de un parral con hojas nuevas. Era domingo y volvíamos de misa y ella nos aguardaba, sentada en un sillita de paja, aventando el fuego del brasero con una pantalla de palma ribetada de orillo punzó.

En el brasero hervía una vasija para el mate de leche; y sobre la punta de la mesa del comedor contiguo veíase una bandeja de empanaditas de dulce o de pasteles, cuyo perfume todavía me persiguen.

Los dos rasgos distintivos de aquella señora, los dos rasgos distintivos de todas las señoras de su tiempo y su clase, fueron la religiosidad y la hospitalidad. Es decir, el cumplimiento estricto de aquellos

² Ibid., p. 11.

dos mandamientos en que se encierran los otros diez: amar a Dios sobre todas las cosas, y al prójimo como a nosotros mismos.³

This eminent litterateur, Hugo Wast, was descended from an illustrious family, enduringly alert in political and literary circles of the Argentine. His mother, Carolina de Zuviría, was the oldest child of Doctor Facundo de Zuviría who served as president of the Constituent Convention of 1853. Another of his mother's family, José María de Zuviría, interested himself in belles lettres for thirty years while engaged in the practice of law and the avocation of journalism. Obras Completas (1865-90) has made this uncle's name live indelibly in the memory of the Argentine.⁴

As a boy, Gustavo displayed the literary genius of his family and whetted his already keen imagination by extensive reading. His boyhood reading included the works of: Defoe, Scott, Stevenson, Mayne Reed, Sandeau, Jules Verne, and Malot.⁵ He tells us what captivating charm some of these French tales of adventure had for him in his youth and how they stimulated him to acquire at least a dictionary knowledge of the language. His curiosity was aroused by the illustrations of this French book, "de viaje por África de Stanley "La Terre de Servitude," "con laminas portentosas, entre ellas una donde aparecía un cocodrillo devorándose un muchacho,"⁶ and he

³ Hugo Wast, Las Espigas de Ruth, tercera edición (Buenos Aires: Editores de Hugo Wast, 1941), pp. 13-15.

⁴ Herman Hespelt, "Introduction," La casa de los cuervos, por Hugo Wast (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1940), pp. xiii-xiv.

⁵ Ibid., p. xiv.

⁶ Hugo Wast, "Las 100.000 ejemplares de "Flor de Durazno," Las Espigas de Ruth (Buenos Aires: Agencia General de Librería y Publicaciones, 1926), p. 87.

finally mastered its many pages.

At the early age of ten his literary tendencies manifested themselves, when from a birthday box of candy from his grandmother he tore the sky-blue lining and formed a note book for his earliest effort at novel writing, Carlos Cronwell o sea Navegante.

Este hecho que a primera vista nada tiene de literario, ejerció una influencia decisiva en la historia de mis libros. Por que gracias a mi cumpleaños yo no había ido a la escuela . . . , y que decidió mi vocación.

Por aquel tiempo yo no veía bien los caminos a que Dios me llevaba: algunos años antes había pensado ser obispo; más tarde propúseme ser rey, estilo Carlos V, y cuando fabriqué mi libretita tenía bastante adelantado el pensamiento de hacerme lego jesuita porque no imaginaba carrera más apetecible que la de pasearme por la iglesia con una mecha prendida en la punta de una caña y con la facultad de darles la espalda a los santos, para encender las velas de las altas arañas de caireles.

La libretita azul privó a la Compañía de Jesús de mi concurso porque al ver aquella colección de páginas inmaculadas, yo, que me abrevaba en Robinson Crusoe, y tenía la cabeza llena de piratas e islas desiertas, aprovechando la vacación de mi cumpleaños, me encerré en la despensa, donde mi abuela cocía a fuego lento una inofensiva pálida de dulce de guindas, y entre guinda y guinda hilvané mi primera novela.

"Carlos Cronwell o sea el Navegante," se llamó aquel esperpento. . . .⁷

Wast recalls with abashment his consigning to the flames his first

⁷ Hugo Wast, "La Ilusión del primer libro," Las Espigas de Ruth (Buenos Aires: Agencia General de Librería y Publicaciones, 1926), pp. 113-114.

efforts at Carlos Cronwell. He laments that he did not preserve the manuscript and counsels other novices in the literary field not to burn "los primeros frutos de su pluma" despite the fact that the authors may experience irritation at their own orthographic and grammatical errors.

Si el ver de nuevo un lugar que vimos de niños suele llenarnos de inapreciables nostalgias, el releer a los veinte años, a los treinta, a los cincuenta, los discursos de los diez, no tiene precio en nuestra vida inquieta, en que vivimos de esperanzas, durante los años en que aun no tenemos recuerdos, y de recuerdos, cuando se nos acaban las esperanzas.

Nada tiene para el hombre maduro, que ha aprendido muchas cosas en libros arduos, la fuerza evocadora de una página escrita por él mismo en que haya frases como ésta: "El baliente helefante se suvió a un árbol."

Y si yo hubiera conservado mi libretita celeste, con la accidentada historia de Carlos Cronwell, o sea el Navegante, vería ahora cómo hubo un tiempo en que yo creía que los helefantes con hache se suben a los árboles con ve.⁸

Creole characteristics and mingled traits of Robinson Crusoe and Treasure Island were the basic features of this first Carlos Cronwell effort at a novel, but Wast does not remember the plot of this work. One vigorous passage depicts Carlos escaping in a canoe with two cowboys amidst a terrible storm to a desert island. This island affords them a few cows, which the gauchos rope and milk. The three then drink the fresh milk while standing near the cows, and return to sea when the storm subsides. They provide for their future needs by taking three kerosene jars filled with the milk of the

⁸ Ibid., p. 115.

island cows.⁹

In 1900 Wast began his primary education in rhetoric under the tutelage of the Fathers of the Society of Jesus. In the "Colegio de la Inmaculada de Santa Fe" he displayed a significant fondness for writing. The papers written for his daily assignments, he converted into novels which he read to his companions on special occasions.¹⁰

¿Cuántas novelas escribí sin retórica en aquel mi primer año de literatura, a escondidas del prefecto de estudios?

No sé; debieron de ser muchas y muy largas, porque el Hermano Molino, que nos daba el papel para los deberes de clase, cada vez que me veía venir a renovar mi existencia, se rascaba pensativo la clava, tratando de adivinar qué hacía yo de tanto papel.

Era un papel de oficio de treinta y dos líneas, que yo cortaba por la mitad y cosía en cuadernitos que estaban diciendo:

¡Comedme!, esto es, ¡borroneadme!

Y la verdad es que, a pesar de la suspicacia del Hermano Molino, el destino que daba yo a mi papel era mucho más noble que el que mis compañeros asignaban al suyo.¹¹

"Avido de nuevas emociones" upon the completion of his secondary education, Martínez Zuviría enrolled in the Facultad de Jurisprudencia de la Universidad de Santa Fe. Pleasure and profit unfolded themselves to him in the study of civil law. Las Pandectas and Las Siete Partidas withheld no mysteries from him, "y hasta en su misma apostura, gallard y señorial, se perfilan los rasgos de quien será más tarde magistrado y legislador, ministro

⁹ Ibid., p. 116.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 117.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 117-118.

de estado y político de vuelo aquilino."¹² While he was studying law, books of narratives still attracted him. Pedro Alarcón and Jules Verne, Charles Dickens and Padre Luis Colma, alternated in his library with Papiniano and "el Rey Sabio," with Fuerzo juzgo and the Normas procedimentales. He makes open confession that at this time three hair-splitting novels of historic depth and length were carefully guarded in his college desk.¹³

Towards the end of 1902, in the hidden village of Los Molinos in the province of Córdoba, where Wast spent his summers with his "santa abuela," he began the work of his first novel Alegre. In the beginning, Wast thought of making this novel somewhat similar in style to that of Los Dos Grumetes.¹⁴ Misfortune, however, marred its completion when Wast's supply of paper became exhausted, and "el triste Alegre no pudo pasar de la página 28."¹⁵ Eventually paper reached this secluded country village, and Wast determined that "el pobre negrito Alegre no moriría antes de la página 500."¹⁶ Periodically, however, Alegre was placed away, while study and hunting occupied the time of the nineteen year old lad. In his twentieth year he resumed and completed the work.¹⁷

Pero a fines de aquel año de 1903, veraneando en una casita de campo, a orillas de río Coronada, en Santa Fe, sentí renacer mis

¹² Posada, op. cit., p. 11.

¹³ Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁴ Hugo Wast, Vocación de escritor segunda edición (Buenos Aires: Editores Thau, 1944), p. 282-283.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 283.

¹⁶ Loc. cit.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 292.

aficiones náuticas con el espectáculo de la isla que teníamos al frente, refugio de isleños mataderos, que vivían de la pesca y hacían largas jornadas a vela y a pala en frágiles canoas.

Reanudé la interrumpida tarea, hice sufrir mucho a mi protagonista, porque tenía toda la sevicia de mi huvenil romanticismo, y no descansé hasta la página 500, y allí lo maté.

Para aplicar los nervios y borrar las huellas de mi crimen, escribí algunas cuartillas más, a al pie de una de ellas, después de una línea y media de puntos suspensivos, puse la palabra Fin con letras mayúsculas.

¡Oh, dicha suprema la de terminar un libro, un verdadero libro, . . . esté impresa, encuadernarse y para se sola de canto, y llevar el nombre escrito en el lomo y hacer muy buena figura en el estante de una biblioteca!

Todos estos y otros mil detalles tipográficos me bailaban en la imaginación mientras, ebrio de ensueños, contemplaba la imponente pila de cuartillas escritas por mi mano.

¡De veras! ¡No habría cambiado mi Alegre en ese instante por la herencia de un príncipe! . . .¹⁸

Alegre was published in Madrid in 1905. Two years later Pequeñas grandes almas appeared on the shelves of the famous book store of Montaner y Simón in Barcelona and still later was reprinted under the title of Novia de Vacaciones. Wast never wished that these early books be placed among his better works. "Maestro de maestros en el arte complejo y sutil de la novela,¹⁹ he perceived technical errors, excessive romanticism, and a general anemic

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 292-293.

¹⁹ Posada, op. cit., p. 13.

condition in these first two novels. The two books show strikingly similar defects of conception and execution.²⁰

These two early novels contain the nuclei of many of the elements developed in the later novels of Wast. Episodes, scenes, and characters in the later books reflect the wanderings of Alegre, the little negro boy,— from the hour of his parent's African captivity through his servitude with strolling acrobats, his ramblings in Argentina to find his foster parents, and his love for Margarita Alvarado. The benign Padre Rochero of Flor de durazno, and the staunch Don Dimas Carrizo of Ciudad turbulenta-ciudad alegre are characters derived in embryo from the aged, kind pastor of Brandzen; the charming youthful scenes between Margarita and Alegre presage the wondrous adventures of Mirra and Garcían in Valle negro, or Judith and Pablito in La que no perdonó. The opulent brushes of color in Argentine locale and customs are the bases of the country-side scenes of Fuente sellada and La casa de los cuervos. Even the abandoned protagonist, Angelina, and the sisters Lidia and Javierita possess similarities which again bud forth in Matilda and Laura of Los ojos vendados or in El vengador.²¹

Meanwhile, he continued his studies at the University of Buenos Aires, and received his doctorate in law in 1907. While still a student at the University, he had begun to write and publish his novels, under his newly-adopted nom de plume of Hugo Wast, thus gaining popularity from the Santa Fe

²⁰ Ibid., p. 12-13.

²¹ Herman Hespelt, "Hugo Wast--Argentine Novelist," *Hispania*, 7: 361, December 24, 1924.

press as well as from foreign critics.²² Non-literary pursuits likewise claimed his attention between and often during his most fruitful writing periods. In 1911 he was appointed to and creditably filled the post of professor of political economy at the Universidad del Litoral: from 1916 to 1920 he practiced law;²³ afterwards he devoted himself to agricultural pursuits; and later he was "diputado nacional y catedrático titular" of the University of Santa Fe.²⁴

On April 2, 1908, he married Señorita Matilde de Iriondo.²⁵ Twelve children were born of this marriage: Myriam, Matilde, Gustavo, Garciela, Ruth, Jorge, Hugo, Beatriz, Marcelo, Teresa, Magdalena Sofía, and María Elena.²⁶

It is interesting to observe that Wast has used his wife's name and the names of five of his daughters as leading characters in his different novels.²⁷ An amusing and significant letter written by Wast while he was in Europe links his children with his books.

²² "Martínez Zuviría," Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrado Europeo-Americana (S. A. Editores: Espasa-Calpe, 1932), Tomo VIII, Apendice, p. 84.

²³ "Martínez Zuviría," Who's Who in Latin America, Second edition (California: Stanford University Press, 1940), p. 313.

²⁴ "Martínez Zuviría," Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrado Europeo-Americana, op. cit., p. 84.

²⁵ Hespelt, op. cit., p. xiv.

²⁶ "Martínez Zuviría," Quién es Quién en la Argentina, Tercera Edición (Buenos Aires: Editorial Guillermo Kraft Ltda., 1943), p. 503.

²⁷ Observation of the writer.

I have twelve children who correspond with fair exactness to the twelve long novels that I have published, so that 'back home' they say my wife presents me with a baby and I reciprocate with a book. She and I are of Basque decent, and it is well known that the Basques are prolific.

One year, in order to see what mysterious relation there might be between my books and my children, I published two books and awaited the result--but only one child was born--which shows that the angels who send babies to the earth do not read my books and are not informed as to whether I publish one or two a year.²⁸

The third novel of this prolific writer, Flor de durazno, appeared in 1911. It signaled a marked and entire change in the writings of Wast. With the maturity of years there came a definitive contrast between the delicate and fantastic page and the manly, complex, yet naturally human, theme. Wast understood that the true novel was not the exact portrayal of existence; furthermore, he perceived that the novelist's mission was not that of introducing verbal lyrics but of transporting to the end an ideal completely developed through the creation of characters or the invention of episodes; he comprehended that the novel, since it is a spiritual food for millions, should vitally touch those subjects of faith and morals in which the majority of men are interested. He realized that the ill-use of themes on the part of unscrupulous writers placed upon the esteemed novelist the obligation of presenting subject-matter of rational pedagogy:

sabe que la novela eficaz no es en ningún
caso la que flanquea el tema inmoral, sino

²⁸ Rowena Gallaway, "Hugo Wast, Pater Familiae," The Pan American Magazine, 43: 213, September, 1930.

aquella que lo ataca de frente y con lealtad; sabe, por último, que es el novelista un apóstol, un vidente, un artista para quien la belleza no puede ni podrá jamás tener derechos superiores a los inalienables derechos naturales.²⁹

Flor de durazno has its setting in the summer-recreation grounds of the Córdoba Sierras. In this mountainous district a young man from Buenos Aires passes his idle moments in falsely loving a lass of the country with the fatal logical disaster.³⁰ Wast affixed his family name to all of his earlier works; but sensing the fact that a provincial writer would not receive proper consideration from the capital critics, he permitted Flor de durazno to appear as the posthumous work of Hugo Wast.³¹ This idea was engendered by the successful publication of de la Barra's Stella. Wast's novel seems to have been lost in the bookstores for lack of recognition among literary men in Buenos Aires. One day Wast inquired, by title, for one of his own books. The salesman was unfamiliar with it, Flor de durazno, but after a thorough search found a package of Wast's books as yet unwrapped. Here Wast resorted to a ruse similar to that of the posthumous publication--that of stimulating sale by purchasing the first copy of his own book. The next day he induced a friend to procure a copy. Eventually sales leaped to thousands.³²

²⁹ Posada, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

³⁰ Alfred Coester, "Novels," The Literary History of Spanish America, second edition (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1941), p. 497.

³¹ Herman Hespelt, "Introduction," La casa de los cuervos, op. cit., p. xv.

³² E. R. Sims, editor, "Introduction," Desierto de piedra (New York: D. C. Heath and Company, 1930), pp. vii-viii.

Steadily and earnestly Wast formulated his own aesthetic beliefs and brought forth works of the first rank and quality. In 1914 the public received in Fuente Sellada a "radiograph" of a variety of characters of provincial life reflecting its various aspects.³³ The mountain girl, María Teresa, is betrayed by Darma, her lover. She harbors resentment, becomes melancholic, and plans Darma's death. Her fevered emotions later reveal themselves in her seeking Damian, the day laborer, as the executor of her designs. The killing of Darma, the husband of Evangelina, permits Evangelina to marry a lover not of her father's choice. Penance is now the self-chosen life-long portion of María Teresa.³⁴ Concha Espina styled Fuente sellada as a most interesting novel, one which propelled Castilian letters to world heights.³⁵

In 1916, La casa de los cuervos captivated its readers by its strong and bold narrative.³⁶ This work ranks as one of Wast's best novels and won for him a prize of 10,000 pesos. The locale is the province of Santa Fe in Argentina during a certain revolutionary turmoil of 1877. The work is filled with "blood and thunder" action, and the plot is built around Gabriela's tragic love of Insua, slayer of her husband, Jarque, and her brother, Carmelo. Wast shows great skill in cleverly weaving together his material and in preserving the swift tempo of his multiple events. However, the master

³³ Posada, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

³⁴ Hugo Wast, "Fuente sellada," Todas las novelas de Hugo Wast (Madrid: Ediciones Fax, 1942), pp. 102-191.

³⁵ Juan Pinto, Panorama de la literatura Argentina contemporanea (Buenos Aires: Editorial Mundi, 1941), p. 379.

³⁶ Posada, op. cit., p. 16.

portrayal of the unique characteristics of Latin-American life is an achievement surpassing even that of his clever manipulation of plot.³⁷

The immortal pages of Valle negro portray another family tragedy caused by feuds between adjoining landholders. A brother's haughtiness keeps his sister from her lover and her daughter.³⁸ An unsigned article entitled "An Argentine Novelist," in the Galveston News contained this comment on the book:

Those readers who relish a literary adventure that will carry them away from the beaten paths and into contact with little-known foreign authors, will derive considerable pleasure out of the pages of "Black Valley." It is an unusual novel more of an impressive, somber and powerful tragedy than a romance as the word is generally interpreted. Now and then it is faintly reminiscent of those two English writers who have written of the Argentine, W. H. Hudson and R. B. Cunningham-Grahame.³⁹

These last three novels, Fuente sellada, La casa de los cuervos, and Valle negro, though of dissimilar genre and style, present a wonderful unity throughout. They constitute the fundamental material on which any estimate of Wast's writings must be based. In Fuente sellada, interest in character is aroused by contrast between individual protagonists and between numerous groups of characters; La casa de los cuervos forms a complete triumph of plot through intimate character psychology in Wast's presenting as actual the deeds

³⁷ New York Times Book Review, February 10, 1924.

³⁸ Herman Hespelt, "Hugo Wast—Argentine Novelist," Hispania, op. cit., p. 362.

³⁹ "An Argentine Novelist," The Literary Digest, 97:25, May 12, 1928. [quoted from Galveston News.]

of his characters. He displays his plot-weaving power with masterly skill; in Valle negro, the great talents of the author are manifest through the multiple episodes of the plot. In these episodes Wast, by his perfect character analysis, shows at the proper time what is hidden in the soul of the actors.⁴⁰

At this time Wast, cognizant of his outstanding works, and master of his own artistic creed, continued the writing of novels of different types and lengths. He later revealed his creed in his Confidencia de un novelista. After entertaining for some time his Argentine reading public with his matchless series of publications in La Nación, Wast assembled these serial writings in 1919 under the title of Ciudad turbulenta, ciudad alegre about Buenos Aires.

In 1920 appeared La corbata celeste, an historical novel of dramatic interest dealing with the tyranny of Rosas. Even Pérez Galdós would have envied this novel.⁴¹ Two men, don Baltasar Balbastro, the father, and don José Antonio, the son, love the same girl, Señorita Leonora; but the son crushes his love in suffering and silence. Of this novel del Casal says: "Parecía imposible hacer una novela del tiempo de Rosas, emociante y veraz, que no fuera un reguero de sangre o un panfleto político."⁴² Wast has accomplished this apparent impossibility.

Vital social problems were treated in Wast's great work of Los ojos vendados in 1921. The sad chapters of El vengador, a continuation and

⁴⁰ Posada, op. cit., p. 16.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 17.

⁴² Hugo Wast, "El autor cuyor libros han conmovido millares de almas," El jinete de fuego, Buenos Aires: Agencia General de Libreria y Publicaciones, n.d.), [In back of book.]

conclusion of the previous mentioned novel, were completed for the public in 1922. Through striking pictures Wast produced in 1923 La que no perdonó which surpassed in tragic action La casa de los cuervos. The former is regarded as one of the outstanding Hispanic-American works. In Una estrella en la ventana, Wast by means of the marvellous execution of his ideas, blends the tragic element with the idyl.

A complete fusion and range of all classes of narratives are found in this last circle of works of this prolific Argentine novelist. Actually Wast has written novels of adventure, of intrigue, of character, of historic reconstruction, and social criticism. The great variety of contrasts in these novels is manifest not only in the themes but also in the method and style.⁴³

That which was best and serviceable in "la novlea picaresca" of the actual customs, was molded and modernized into Pata de Zorra in the year of 1924.⁴⁴

Aquella gracia cascabeleante que deleita en El lazarillo de Tormes, aquel espumante desenfado que maravilla en El diablo cojuelo, aquella risa fresca que bulle en las páginas de El buscón y aquella maliciosa ingenuidad que tanto agrada a los lectores de Guzmán de Alfarache o de Marcos de Obregón, deleitan, maravillan, bullen y agradan también, y en grado sumo, en esta novela regocijante y atrayente.
 . . .⁴⁵

⁴³ Posada, op. cit., p. 18.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 19.

⁴⁵ Loc. cit.

Wast published his life records under the titles of Las espigas de Ruth in 1926, 15 días sacristán, a spirited collection of anecdotes, in 1929, and the already mentioned Confidencias de un novelista in 1931. Posada relates, "Así, pues, tras Pata de Zorra publica, en 1925, otra seria. Y a fe que la mejor, la más bella, la más interesante, la más completa de todas sus novelas."⁴⁶ The same critic states that Desierto de piedra, in reality, is one of the greatest novels in the Castilian language.⁴⁷ He thus confirms this statement:

Y lo es porque, si de novelas emocionantes se trata, Desierto de piedra, supera en interés a cuantas quieran oponérsele; si se habla de obras famosas por la creación de personajes, la narración de Wast ocupar lugar de preferencia; si se discute en torno de libros caracterizados por sus líneas armoniosas, urge reconocer que en esta obra la urdimbre arquitectónica es un modelo de precisión y de elegancia; si se catalogan los relatos en que la variedad sorprende, ella también figurará, por derecho de conquista, entre las primeras de todo el universo; si se enumeran las relaciones en que mejor enfocados aparezcan los paisajes de América, nada tendrá que envidiar la magna creación del argentino a las más afamadas de otros países; si se ponderan los romances en que es lógico pero no previsto el desenlace, un sus capítulos se encontrará el admirable dechado de libros artísticamente concluidos; . . . Con esta sola novela puede Wast, autor de tantas y tan bellas, librar su nombre para siempre de la cenizas del olvido.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 20.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 20-21.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 21.

HIS IDEAS OF A NOVEL

Ortega Torres, a famous writer of the Salesian Congregation of Bogotá, Colombia, stresses the fact that all the works of Hugo Wast are pleasing and didactic.⁴⁹ In reference to the literary part of Wast's works there is so much of the teaching and expository element that one may call this preceptive part of his works the Catholic precepts of the novel. This difficult genre is found in Wast's Confidencias de un novelista, in which he portrays this religious and artistic creed. Few writers have attained heights of success in this field.⁵⁰ Wast has written and professed in reference to his fame:

"Mil veces más prefiero vivir y morir libre y oscuro novelista, como tantos de quienes ya nadie se acuerda, pero cuyos libros han hecho bien, que vivir y morir prisionero y desesperado como Zola, del cual dijo Anatole France que era un miserable a quien más le valiera no haber nacido; o pero aún, como el mismo France, que pedía a su médico que lo envenenara, porque era "el hombre más desgraciado de la tierra." Dan frío en los huesos las postreras palabras de este cínico autor, y horror el trágico silencio de la muerte del otro, a quien la avidez del éxito corrompió en la raíz misma de su arte. Contadores de fábulas que erraron el camino de la sabiduría, y se destruyeron por su propia locura (Baruc)."⁵¹

The writer finds through comparison of Confidencias de un novelista

⁴⁹ José J. Ortega Torres, S.S., "Un juicio sobre "606", "Juana Tabor, Cuarta edición (Buenos Aires: Editores Thau, 1946), p. 7.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 20.

⁵¹ Loc. cit.

with Vocación de escritor that the latter book is a revision and enlargement beyond several new chapters of the former work. Slight additions have been made and several chapter headings have been changed. Ortega Torres⁵² says that in this new edition this book is titled Vocación de escritor.

Characteristic features concerning a novel are contained in Vocación de escritor. The author makes clear his purpose in writing this type of book; namely, that although he acknowledges himself incapable of setting up any new literary standards, he would concretize the personal convictions that have resulted from his experience as a novelist. He humbly states that he has no magic formula to offer as to how a novel should be written; all he presumes to tell is how he writes them. More humbly still he observes that his book about novel writing may be worth even less than the novels he has written but at least it will demonstrate how novels ought not to be written. Here Wast terms a novel as a representation of life through descriptions of atmosphere and character portraiture. This representation must avoid the chill of a cold and stagnant presentation; instead it should present a continued action, one which proceeds through gradual and increasing interest to a justifiable conclusion.

In his opinion there are three distinct types of novels, those of ideas, of atmosphere, and of intrigue. In the novel of ideas the author presents and develops a thesis. Nearly all of Fogozzaro's novels and a great number of Pérez Galdós's are of this type. The novel of atmosphere, as Wast styles it, stresses description as an essential element. Pereda and George

⁵² Loc. cit., [Footnote.]

Eliot illustrate this genre. In the novel of intrigue, there is no thesis; there are few descriptions; the predominating interest is in action. Wast names as masters of this type of intrigue or adventure novel Fernandes y Gonzales, Feval, and Hope.⁵³ He is of the opinion that books of adventure, such as: Robinson Crusoe, Treasure Island, and the Sons of Captain Grant, are better fitted to instruct boys in the process of learning how to think and to write, than are many of the more ponderous novels which are placed in their hands.⁵⁴

The novelist is a creator, and his principal faculty is imagination. In addition he must cultivate a good memory to annotate such details of his work as the names of persons, episodes, and features which must be retained.⁵⁵ Frequently this imaginative power has been condemned by those who lack it, but Wast insists that the faculty of a creative imagination is of prime importance to the novelist.⁵⁶

He considers imagination as the gift of conceiving not only a novelistic idea, but also of developing it through orderly and effectively executed episodes which progress to a denouement whose elements were foreshadowed in those ideas that were a point of departure.⁵⁷

The novel must possess action as an essential element. Well ordered

⁵³ Hugo Wast, Vocación de escritor, op. cit., p. 22.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 23.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 25.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 26.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 27-28.

episodes contribute movement to the theme of the novel and constitute its action. Action creates the greatest amount of interest for the majority of people.⁵⁸ This fundamental element may never be sacrificed by the novelist. The words of the characters are very important, but of still great import are their actions, especially in romances.⁵⁹

Interest is not the product of frightening adventures. Vital and real characters are made more realistic through interest, which is a sympathetic and ardent form of curiosity.⁶⁰ Simple scenes of domestic life in the novels of Pereda, George Eliot, and Dickens captivated millions of readers. Narratives embracing domestic aspects which portray a child observing a rain, a widow folding her lace veil, or a marine, without sweetheart, wife, or mother to help him, sewing a button on his trousers--such simple situations evoke hearty reader interest.⁶¹

In order that the narrative may be presented as just happening and avoid a frigid appearance, it is necessary that the characters and episodes possess life or movement in action. There must be the sensation of the actual within the picture of the novel. The author needs to imbibe the sense of the real in his situations and fill them with animation and ardor. This tends to place the reader in an atmosphere of a participant in the actions of the characters. There is created by this method a sense of attraction on

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 40.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 43.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 44.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 45.

the part of the reader. He transports himself as one of these characters, he sympathizes with them, oftentimes despises them, delights or sorrows with them. Wast calls the ability on the part of the author to make the reader enter into these emotions with his characters a great secret, "y no fómulas que lo encierren ni recetas que puedan enseñarlo."⁶² Furthermore he says that it is an inspiration of genius and not a learned lesson.⁶³

El interés, la miel de la novela, está en la vida de los personajes, que se aprecia por la claridad cristalina de la narración. Está en su realismo, pero el realismo artístico ni es el realismo de la vida.

No es necesario que los personajes sean verdaderos: basta que el autor haya hecho aceptar su ficción como cosa cierta, y que esos personajes imaginarios actúen con lógica y verosimilitud, dentro de su atmósfera convencional.

.....
Lo primordial es atar al relato la espantadiza imaginación del lector. . . .

Hay que crear una atmósfera ficticia, con tanto aspecto de verdad, que el lector viva con ella como en una realidad.

.....
No hay que ser demasiado ingenioso; no olvidar que una condición del buen novelista es desaparecer de su libro.⁶⁴

Ne narrates that two eminent qualities of style are clarity and vitality.⁶⁵ The elements of propriety, naturalness, and concision are

⁶² Loc. cit.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 45.

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 47-48.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 105.

considered as essential for clarity. In order to obtain propriety it is necessary that the choice of words convey the idea which the author wishes to express. Naturalness is spontaneity devoid of vulgarity. It is the personal touch of each writer that reveals the originality within the author's art. Few writers are able to conceal their known strength under the veil of simplicity. A great crime of writers is that of affected elegance, but a still greater is that of affectation of the natural.⁶⁶

Toda simulación es la negación de la cualidad simulada.

Durante años, he perseguido con una tenacidad que no se ha fatigado aun, la difícil sobriedad, que desdeñan los estudiantes de retórica, mientras les duda la crisis de la cursilería (de que muchos jamás se curan).

Aspiraba por este medio, a la mayor claridad del retrato, sin la cual se amengua la animación, cualidad esencial de la novela.⁶⁷

"Concisión" demands that an author express his ideas by confining himself to words essentially necessary to portray his coloring and vigor.

Concisión no es escribir con frases cortas peroratas largas. Concisión es condensación de la idea que queremos expresar, más que de las palabras con que la expresamos. Es toda enérgica de toda remoción inútil en la constitución interna del pensamiento, lo cual lógicamente lleva a una economía externa de la expresión.

No hay nada más elocuente que una frase breve, hinchada de ideas y que rebosa de ingenio y de sentido.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 108-109.

⁶⁷ Hugo Wast, "Advertencia del autor," Fuente sellada (Buenos Aires: Tall. Graf., 1923), p. 6.

⁶⁸ Hugo Wast, Vocación de escritor, op. cit., p. 110.

Furthermore, he states that no other eminent condition can replace the quality of vitality in a novel. An excellent example of a writer who is a model of vitality in style is Padre Luis Coloma, whose Pequeñeces show this quality to a remarkable degree. Padre Coloma possessed the supreme gifts of the novelist; realistic and picturesque vision, loquacity and grace of dialogue, emotion and tenderness in the portrayal of certain scenes, "la risa española" [Spanish laughter]; rapid and involved narration, "la luz de su Andalucía en todos de los detalles" [the light of his Andalusia in all of its details].⁶⁹

Wast's vibrant Catholicism reveals itself in his critical writings as well as in his novels. He devotes a section of Vocación to the Catholic novelist. Here he lays down the principle that a Catholic novelist, who is versed in his catechism, may never forfeit his Catholic character. The writings of this novelist must bear the character of Catholicism in spirit and principle.

Al leer novela católica la imaginación del lector vuela hacia las obrillas que en ciertos ambientes pasa por tales; novelas para premios, encuadernadas por el editor, a menudo con planchas doradas, y a menudo también, tan insoportablemente predicadoras que sus felices dueños apenas si las leen una vez en el colegio, y nunca más afuera y salen con la convicción de que la novela católica, por definición, no puede ser distinta de eso, ocho veces sobre diez, un libro necio y aburrido.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 106.

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 262-263.

He considers it an injustice to deny to works essentially Catholic in character their perfect orthodoxy and faith.⁷¹ He compares the Catholic novel to the Sacrament of Baptism; the latter may be administered by any one having the use of reason, and the former may be written by any man or woman who fulfills and understands the spirit of Holy Mother Church even though he may be a non-Christian.⁷²

Puede existir la moraleja católica sin dar a la novela el carácter de tal; y puede no existir sin privarla de él.

Lo que vale es el espíritu que anima las escenas y hasta la frases.

Los magníficos libros de Pereda son inflexiblemente católicos y por ventura para el arte, rarísima vez descubren ninguna moraleja.⁷³

CATHOLICITY IN HIS WRITINGS

Padre Luis Gorosito Heredia, S. J.,⁷⁴ a distinguished man of letters, writing in the Revista Javeriana of Bogotá, mentions Wast, the novelist, among the distinguished Argentine Catholic writers. Profession of this Catholicity can be found in Wast's "Páginas Católicas," which first appeared in the 1937 edition of Naves, oro, sueños in Buenos Aires. (It may be of some interest to note that although the first edition, in 1937, of Naves, oro, sueños contained a collection of Wast's verse, the Thau edition of the same title in 1943 contained only prose.)

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 263.

⁷² Loc. cit.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 264-265.

⁷⁴ Stephen J. Brown, S.J. and Thomas McDermott, "Latin America," A Survey of Catholic Literature (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1945), p. 98.

"Páginas Católicas" contains "La misa de las 6" dated in Paris February 8, 1930; "La primera misa de Lamennais," Buenos Aires, May 31, 1933; "La última misa de Lamennais," Buenos Aires, September 17, 1933; "Don Bosco y el Padre Vespignani," Buenos Aires, April, 1934; "La señorita Tamisier, promotora de los Congresos Eucarísticos," Buenos Aires, October 8, 1934; "La Cruz del Sur," dated Buenos Aires, October 4, 1934; "Una ciudad en estado de gracia," a discourse given at the Columbus Theater on the ever memorable night of October 12, 1934, in the presence of Cardenal Pacelli, several Cardinals of Spain, the Cardenal of Argentina, and the National President; "La mayor apoteosis de la Eucaristía en veinte siglos," likewise undated; and "Un filósofo ante la muerte," Buenos Aires, October 12, 1934.⁷⁵

The writer has selected three, "La misa de las 6," "La Cruz del Sur," and "La mayor apoteosis de la Eucarestía en veinte siglos," of these works as illustrations of Wast's Catholic pages.

In "La misa de las 6," Wast relates his unsuccessful attempt to enter his son, George, in Beaumont College, near Windsor, England. A year later, when George was ten years old his father placed him in "los primeros grados" at Mount Saint Mary's College, another Jesuit College, near Chesterfield. A younger son, Hugo, also begged to be placed in school since he so keenly missed his brother-playmate. A prompt reply from England stated that there would be a vacancy for Hugo, only seven at the time, in the college

⁷⁵ Hugo Wast, Naves, oro, sueños, Second edition (Buenos Aires: Editores Thau, 1943), pp. 143-228.

annex for young ladies. Hugo indignantly chose to remain at home, where he studied his lessons and attended the Christian Brothers School, Petit Pere.

Wast and his son, Hugo, viewed Paris early in the morning on their way to Mass. Little Hugo sympathized with the Parisian rag-pickers. Their lot seemed to him so miserable and sad. The father attempted to explain that their work was self-chosen. There was no necessity for the rag-pickers' selecting Monday as their day of rest. The son, Hugo, wanted the pickers to find a spoonful of gold among their rags. Wast then narrates the story of a king's son who left the palace to find wealth in the rubbish heaps of the city.⁷⁶

Illustrating Wast's manner of moralizing, when the child concludes that the rag-pickers are foolish, is the following:

. . . . Pero no están menos locos los que son
hijos de Dios, que es el más grande de los
reyes y algún día deben heredar el más her-
moso de todos los reinos y, sin embargo, re-
negan de Dios, que es su padre, y renuncian
al cielo, que es su herencia, por buscar una
cucharita de oro en las basuras del mundo.
. . . .⁷⁷

Hugo and his son attended the six o'clock Mass in the dark church of Saint Ferdinand. A few women of Biscay, garbed in provincial dress, with a basket on arm or a jar of milk in hand, attended the services as devout worshipers. Here lingered remains of Jansenism manifested by the worshipers in casting surprised looks at little Hugo when he received Holy Communion at his father's side. After the Mass a visit was made to the altar of Saint

⁷⁶ Hugo Wast, "La misa de las 6," Naves, oro, sueños, op. cit., pp. 145-48.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 149.

Therese, where Wast prayed for Hugo's mother, his little brothers, his grandparents, his godparents, and his little friends, while the child prayed for the rag-pickers.⁷⁸ Wast says:

. . . . Pienso que si las riquezas espirituales se pudieran condensar en piedras preciosas, ese día todos los traperos de París tendrían una gran alegría, pues en su tarro de basura encontraría cada uno su anillo de brillante: la oración de Hugo.
¡Qué verdad es que ignoramos nuestras mejores riquezas!⁷⁹

"La Cruz del Sur" picturesquely describes the gigantic white cross of the International Eucharistic Congress. This cross energetically cuts the dark clouds of the horizon, and, like a heavenly constellation, points out the way--la Cruz del Sur--for the solitary man of the fields. This cross, by far the largest in the world, was constructed by the architect, Mayol. The genius of this Catholic artist brought forth a work of imposing dimensions and of extreme beauty in its simplicity and modernity of line.⁸⁰ Endless groups of pilgrims contemplate this cross and yearn to linger and gaze, but theirs is an unsatiated gaze. There are some who, through hatred, deny themselves this vision. Wast is sorry for them and writes, "Perderán una visión incomparable, que solamente a un espíritu prevenido contra las emociones supremas no le hablará con el blanco silencio de su forma."⁸¹

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 152-153.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 154.

⁸⁰ Hugo Wast, "La Cruz del Sur," Naves, oro, sueños, op. cit., p.201.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 202.

Wast emphasized the esteem the early Spaniards had for the cross when he related that the first thing that the conquistadores did upon landing on the coasts of America was to kiss the soil and to plant a cross to signify that they were taking this territory for Christ.

America surrendered to a degree its Catholic traditions with the passing of centuries, and the sign of the Christian disappeared. Buenos Aires seemed to have drifted its farthest from the Cross of Christ, but her Eucharistic Congress, teeming with Godless men, gained two distinct victories, more bishops, and this great cross.⁸²

Y lo que aumenta el significado de estos hechos es la ardiente adhesión popular, no sólo de los habitantes de Buenos Aires, sino de todas las ciudades, de todas las aldeas argentinas. Se siente en el aire la vibración de los espíritus. No en balde contamos los años desde el día en que apareció Cristo en la tierra.⁸³

Buenos Aires was singularly blessed in the presence of the Papal Legate, Cardenal Pacelli, and his illustrious retinue. Through the Pope, the Church carries on without change while nations disintegrate, crumble, and pass into oblivion; "y el Papa sigue en Roma, única dinastía que conserva sus leyes, su bandera y su idioma."⁸⁴

It is a rather curious fact that within contemporary times a devotion or love for the Pope had grown throughout the world. In the late

⁸² Loc. cit.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 203.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 204.

century there were threats to the papacy if the dogma of infallibility were promulgated. Nevertheless the Church defined this dogma and continued unharmed. The Church has continued to influence nations in their internal life. For Catholics who live and practice their religion, "Esta gran Cruz del Sur tiene la inmortal claridad de las estrellas."⁸⁵

"La mayor apoteosis de la Eucaristía en veinte siglos" pictures the spiritual harvest for the souls of Buenos Aires after their two years of hard labor in preparation for the International Eucharistic Congress. This was evident in the Fall of 1934 by the daily increase of confessions and Holy Communion. On the second day of the Congress, October 11th, a column of reverent men assembled in the Avenida de Mayo and went contritely to the Plaza de Mayo to receive Holy Communion.

Wast terms this group of communicants not the multiplication of the loaves but the multiplication of the guests.⁸⁶ The numbers were so great that the communicants knelt on the highways, on the sidewalks, and in the subterranean platforms to receive Our Eucharistic King. At the foot of the enormous cross thousands of children received Holy Communion, and 700,000 women received the Holy Eucharist. Buenos Aires surpassed any historic record in the history of the world by its 1,200,000 Communion up to October 12, 1934, "y el radiante sol de aquel día extraordinario, iluminó, junto con la mayor apoteosis de la Eucaristía en veinte siglos, una enorme

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 204-205.

⁸⁶ Hugo Wast, "La Mayor apoteosis de la Eucaristía en veinte siglos," Naves, oro, sueños, op. cit., p. 214.

ciudad en estado de gracia.⁸⁷ Wast impressed upon his readers that the International Eucharistic Congress is a Catholic feast. It testifies faith in the greatest of miracles; it exalts the divinity of Christ; and it is a confession of the living real Christ in the Sacred Host.⁸⁸

The deep Catholicity of Wast impressed the writer. His attitude toward the precept of Holy Mother Church in regard to Sunday obligation, his spirit of faith, his good example, his respect for the cross, must have impressed his young son.

THOUGHTS ON EDITING

Among the books of his favorite authors Wast finds most interesting those which mention the difficulties that the authors endured, and the unavoidable displeasure connected with literary beginnings. He prefers to know that his admired authors partook of the dregs of the chalice of failure and discouragement.

Besides these influential books, another class, those which handle editorial business, possessed attraction for Wast. He considered the presentation of a book to the public beyond the limits of a distinctive art and placed it in the detailed realm of scientific knowledge.

The advertising of a book is the least step in its success. He himself states, ". . . justamente en esos días habían dado en la flor de achacarme, como un pecado contra el arte, la propaganda que se hacía de un

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 215.

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 203-204.

librejo mio."⁸⁹

Editorial art is guided by the principle that even though all books may be printed, not all books may be published. He explains that to print a book the author finds it necessary only to prepare the background and to have a printing establishment open credit for him. He considers it a more difficult task to edit or publish a book. He styles the latter the process of launching a book on a successful career. In order to attain this end books should first be received by the book dealers and placed in display cases where the interest of thousands of people will be aroused. Present day publications are so numerous that book dealers ought to make a literary selection even though their choice be not that of a scholar. Their business sense will direct them to select the more adequate for profits and reject the less promising. How truly Wast observes, "Un libro que los libreros saben que no se venderá, nace muerto."⁹⁰

Good books need not only good but also discreet advertisement; this is true to so great a degree that "una mala propaganda puede matar un buen libro."⁹¹ Wast compliments the North Americans on their advertising ability. "Los norteamericanos son los maestros insuperados hasta hoy de los anuncios eficaces y artísticos. . . ." ⁹² He explicitly denies that the French are

⁸⁹ Hugo Wast, "La Verdad sobre el arte de editar," 15 días sacristán y otros relatos, Tercera edición (Buenos Aires: Editores de Hugo Wast, 1943), pp. 262-3.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 264.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 265.

⁹² Loc. cit.

as successful.

Los editores franceses anuncian copiosamente sus novedades. Tienen numerosas y muy difundidas revistas literarias, llenas de avisos de libros, que se publican también en todos los diarios.

Pero no tiene buen gusto para componerlos, y los imprimen muy mal, por la mala calidad del papel que emplean en sus periódicos.

En este momento, uno de los más importantes editores franceses anuncia la novela de un célebre novelista.

El aviso pondera así la obra:

"Los que buscan en la vigorosa novela de. . . alusiones personales a tal o cual miembro de la aristocracia del corcho (los bodegueros), sabiendo que esta novela cruelmente satírica tiene por cuadro a Burdeos, se sentirán defraudados", etc.⁹³

Due to the fact that the Spanish language is, next to the English, the most widely spread in well-ordered nations, the book industry in the Castilian tongue has developed almost co-extensively with civilization.⁹⁴

HIS STYLE

In an article entitled "Un novelista y un santo," which appeared in La literatura argentina, Salvador Merlino⁹⁵ commends Martínez Zurviría for his ability to make the difficult in the art of writing become a facility because of the appropriate manner in which he expresses his noble sentiments. Grace of facility and simplicity, faculties of style most successful under

⁹³ Wast, loc. cit.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 267.

⁹⁵ Salvador Merlino, "Un novelista y un santo," La literatura argentina, 51: 89, Noviembre de 1932.

the molding hand of Wast, have approached towards perfection; furthermore, "El had dado relieve a su ya indiscutida personalidad con la gracia de su sencillez."⁹⁶

Herman Hespelt relates that Wast's style is straightforward, simple, direct, and vigorous.

It is absolutely pure and polished in construction, and it enriches itself by the use of localisms and dialect form. It has a Valera-like objectivity and finish. The constant use of the short paragraph is largely responsible for its terseness and crispness. In his treatment of delicate situations Wast also follows Valera in frankness of treatment and chasteness of expression. There is nothing sordid in his works, no reveling in vice and human perversity. . . .

The strength of Wast's works lie in its terseness and its excitement, its vigor of narrative, its picturesque setting, its wealth of atmosphere, its power of characterization. . . .⁹⁷

Arturo Montori⁹⁸ in Cuba contemporánea characterizes Wast's style as possessing clear and unaffected qualities. His descriptions are transparent, and his character types, precise.

Within Wast's novels one perceives the sense of artistic skill which is evidently one of the characteristics of his style. That which is lofty and illustrious in the deeds and personalities of those who are in his surroundings, despite their modest and destitute conditions, is conveyed to

⁹⁶ Merlino, loc. cit.

⁹⁷ Herman Hespelt, "Hugo Wast--Argentine Novelist," op.cit., p.366.

⁹⁸ Arturo Montori, "Hugo Wast--Desierto de piedra," Cuba contemporánea, 154; 113, October, 1925.

the reader. Thus one appreciates the aesthetic in the characters that are portrayed in the novels of Wast. There is the sense of the poetic permeating his novels. In many instances the beauties of the characters coincide with the beauties of nature. Ruth Sedgwick maintains that this artistic sense of Wast's style reflects his personality.

As seen through his novels one pictures Hugo Wast as a straight-forward, sincere man, keenly interested in his fellow countrymen, and blessed with an unusual ability to understand and to sympathize with them. There are also glimpses of the quiet spirit of humility of the author, who claims himself unworthy of the praise heaped upon him and who expresses surprise to learn that his fame has reached foreign shores.⁹⁹

The writer finds in Wast's works a fascinating beauty of style enhanced by a powerful clearness. In fact, the writer is entirely oblivious of any effort in the style of the novelist. True to his characteristics, Wast bears his own individualistic stamp throughout his novels. Indeed the reader forgets the author and his style by an all absorbing interest in his original characters. In the novel Valle negro, the voice of Pichana, the witch, terrifies yet creates a desire to see her.

Señor de Viscarra, after returning from Córdoba with his foster son, Gracián, is dining with this newly acquired son, his little daughter, Mirra, and his sister, Flavia. Lazarus, the overseer of the ranch, enters the dining room for his orders of the following day. While Señor de Viscarra is silently planning these orders, a penetrating scream from the woods enters the supper room. It was neither a shriek of anger nor a wail

⁹⁹ Ruth Sedgwick, "Hugo Wast, Argentina's Most Popular Novelist," Hispanic American Historical Review, 9: 123, February, 1929.

of sorrow. Who could tell whether the scream were that of a wild beast or of a human being!

-Es la Pichana - murmuró Flavia, y su frase pareció una angustiada disculpa.

El señor de Viscarra, que se había parado, dejando caer la silla, la miró como si lo inquietara un recelo.

-¡Es la Pichana - volvió a decir ella con el mismo acento, y entonces Lázaro habló:

-¡Es raro! Al venir de Cosquín la he hallado como a una legua de aquí y hace poco rato. . .

-La Pichana anda de noche como un alma en pena - observó Flavia.

-Pero anda a pie - objetó don Jesús, que se había vuelto a sentar.

Concluyó la cena en silencio. Don Jesús comía con el ceño fruncido. A los postres se levantó, dió unos cuantos pasos por la galería donde se espesaba la sombra y llamó a Gracián para llevarle a su cuarto.

-¿Tendrá miedo de dormir solo?

-No, señor - contestó el niño, temeroso siempre de confesar la verdad.

Y esa noche, por primera vez en su vida, durmió solo, tapada la cabeza con las mantas y lleno su sueño de extrañas visiones en que se confundía su breve pasado con su incierto y misterioso porvenir.¹⁰⁰

Mirra and Gracián are munching corn in the woods when suddenly Gracián perceives the vision of Pichana. There on the fork of an old willow "encaramada allí como un gato del monte"¹⁰¹ [crouching like a wild cat] was an old negress wearing filthy, ragged, ashen-colored garments. Mirra tries to persuade Gracián to give Pichana some of his grains of corn, but to no avail. She leaves her willow seat and runs over to Pichana:

¹⁰⁰ Hugo Wast, "Valle negro," Todas las novelas de Hugo Wast, op. cit., (Madrid: Ediciones Fax, 1942), pp. 281-282.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 285.

que alargó su brazo, negro y descarnado como el tronco de una parra, y tomó en su mano la mano fresca de la niña que le hacía la limosna.

Y de salto, con agilidad felina, se descolgó del árbol, se acercó a Gracián, hizo una pirueta y se escabulló disimulándose por entre los árboles de la acerquia para que no la vieran los perros, que la odiaban.¹⁰²

Verily, Wast makes his style what he desire, "El estilo es tanto más real, cuanto menos se siente su precencia."¹⁰³ One believes in the reality of his novels even though he knows they are fiction. Well has he put into practice his own suggestions which negatively advise the reader:

Todo artificio retórico perjudica la verdad de una obra, especialmente si es una novela, y prolongándose, vuelve insoportable su lectura.

.....
El lector se resiste a creer en la sinceridad de un autor a quien lo sorprende "haciendo estilo," y cazando giros rebuscados, trastrocando el orden usual de la oración y desenterrando arcaísmos para simular riqueza de vocabulario.¹⁰⁴

An amplification of Wast's precepts of style emphasizes that style is an essential inherent element and not an external, perceptible, material thing. Any author who has recourse to a dictionary style and a purely verbal rendition of his thoughts stilts and limits the perfection of his style. If one accepts "proezas retoricistas"¹⁰⁵ [rhetorical prowess] as

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 286.

¹⁰³ Hugo Wast, "Advertencia del autor," Fuente sellada, op. cit., p.7.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 6-7

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 7.

style then the great ancient and modern writers are at fault, "a Homer como a San Agustín, a Cervantes como a Shakespeare, como a Molière, como a Sarmiento, cuyas páginas no han pasado nunca por un modelo de corrección externa."¹⁰⁶

Wast defends plastic vigor, emotional strength, and vitality as essential qualities for the creative power or originality of an author.¹⁰⁷ He expatiates by stating, "Menéndez y Pelayo, crítico asombroso por su ciencia y su buen gusto, sostiene esta doctrina, en su estudio sobre la cultura literaria de Cervantes, con las siguientes palabras:"¹⁰⁸

"Han dado algunos en la flor de decir con peregrina frase, que Cervantes no fue "estilista": sin duda los que tal dicen confunden el estilo con el amaneramiento. No tiene Cervantes una "manera" violenta y afectada, como la tienen Quevedo o Baltasar Gracián grandes escritores por otra parte. Su estilo arranca, no del capricho individual, no de la excéntrica y errabunda imaginación, no de la sutil agudeza, sino de las entrañas misma de la realidad que habla con su boca. El prestigio de la creación es tal que anula al creador mismo, o más bien le confunde con su obra, le identifica con ella, mata toda vanidad personal en el narrador, le hace sublime por la ingenua humildad con que se somete a su asunto, le otorga en plena edad crítica algunos de los dones de los poetas primitivos, la objetividad serena, y al mismo tiempo el entrañable amor a sus héroes, vistos, no como figuras literarias, sino como sombras familiares que dictan al poeta el raudal de su canto."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Loc. cit.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 7-8.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁰⁹ Loc. cit.

Concerning Wast's style, Monseñor Tirso R. Yáñez of Buenos Aires writes, "Se ha dicho que el mejor estilo es el que hace fulgurar la idea, quedando él invisible. Cuando aplico a Hugo Wast este principio, Pata de Zorra, lo mismo que La que no perdonó me parecen libros de cristal."¹¹⁰

Ricardo León terms Hugo Wast an, "Argentine in respect to his elegance and delicacy; Spanish through his sense of race and language; and universal in reference to this creative genius."¹¹¹

With respect to Wast's works, Elda M. Bertelli of Milan reveals, "El estilo tiene una increíble frescura y simplicidad. . . Sus personajes viven y nos introducen en su corazón y en su casa."¹¹²

From Río de Janiero Saúl de Navarro states, "Estilo propio, precisión clásica, la prosa de Hugo Wast es fluida y nerviosa."¹¹³

José A. Oría of Buenos Aires comments, "Su (Hugo Wast) prestigio lo debe a sus cualidades innegables de narrado y estilista."¹¹⁴

The Peruvian critic, D. José Gabriel Cosío, in his criticism of Wast's style in the novel El vengador, is quoted by Wast as writing:

"La técnica literaria no puede ser más simple ni más precias; casi no hay episodios secundarios que quiten interés y animación al asunto principal, y por muy quisquillosa y predispuesto que sea el crítico para buscar lunares a la obra, no hallará ningún artificio en la estructura y la sucesión de

¹¹⁰ Hugo Wast, "La critica y Hugo Wast," Una estrella en la ventana (Buenos Aires: Agencia general y librería y publicaciones, n.d.), /In back of book./

¹¹¹ "Martínez Zuviría," Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrado, op.cit., p. 85.

¹¹² Hugo Wast, "La critica y Hugo Wast," Una estrella en la ventana, op. cit., /In back of book./

¹¹³ Loc. cit.

¹¹⁴ Hugo Wast, "El autor cuyo libros han conmovido millares de almas," El jinete de fuego, op. cit., /In back of book./

los episodios, ningún énfasis en el lenguaje, siempre pulcro y fluido, ningún amaneramiento en el estilo, siempre llano, propio y preciso, nada que delate esfuerzo y afán de sorprender con imágenes peregrinas, fantasías de relumbrón o frases contorsionadas enmareantes pirotecnias. Pocos novelistas americanos, tal vez ninguno, tendrán como Hugo Wast esta bella cualidad de la parsimonia literaria, de la ausencia de afeites y de las sonoridades retóricas."¹¹⁵

HIS RECENT WORKS

There is a new cycle of the more recent works of this prolific novelist. Wast published from 1926 to 1935 novels from Myriam la conspiradora to El Kahal. American atmosphere, dramatic intensity, and emotional adventures with historic background characterize these works.

His interesting trilogy based on episodes of Argentine independence consists of Myriam la conspiradora, El jinete de fuego, and Tierra de jaguares. Both Myriam la conspiradora and its sequel, El jinete de fuego, charm by their exciting arguments. The character, Chaparro in Tierra de jaguares ranks with Martín Fierro and Santos Vega. The compilation of stories in Sangre en umbral forms a synthetic novel. The gaucho and the contrabandist of the sierras are admirably painted in El camino de las llamas.¹¹⁶ El Kahal and Oro form a two-part novel of social character. In the opinion of Posada, Lucía Miranda is the "cúspide más alta de esta armoniosa cordillera."¹¹⁷ In Lucía Miranda the Timbú king, Mangoré, be-

¹¹⁵ Hugo Wast, "Advertencia del autor," Fuente sellada, op. cit., p. 10.

¹¹⁶ Posada, op. cit., pp. 21-22.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 22.

comes deeply enamored by the beauty of Lucía, wife of Sebastian Hurtado, a Spanish captain. The Indian invades the garrison and abducts Lucía, but she remains faithful to her husband.¹¹⁸

In 1932 Wast published Las aventuras de don Bosco; the first part was entitled "Bajo el reinado de Carlos Alberto," and the second part "Bajo de reinado de Pio IX." This is an historic picture of the great saint-educator.¹¹⁹ Merlino writes, "Pero donde hallamos al verdadero novelista, al novelista de recia envergadura, es en el capítulo en que se habla de la muerte de Don Bosco, cuya pintura, realizada de mano maestra, de la sensación de encontrarnos frente a la realidad. . ."¹²⁰

In 1941 Wast compiled articles of biblical exegesis into the novel called El 6º sello. It is interesting to note that this novel treats of the second coming of Christ, the restoration of Jerusalem and the ruin of Rome; the great millennium; the new land; the vision of Daniel; the Messianic prophesies; the frequently discussed question of the passing of all men before the appearance of the Anti-Christ; individual and scriptural prophesies about the end of the world, and the prophesy of the last Popes. The book closes with the prophesy or dream of Don Bosco concerning the events heralding the last judgment bound in a special manner with the

¹¹⁸ Hugo Wast, "Lucía Miranda," Todas las novelas de Hugo Wast, op. cit., pp. 1452-1577.

¹¹⁹ Hugo Wast, "Gustavo Martínez Zurviria," Todas las novelas de Hugo Wast, op. cit., p. 8. [Tomada de la Enciclopedia Espasa-Calpe y puesta al día.]

¹²⁰ Salvador Merlino, op. cit., p. 90.

French nation.¹²¹

The two splendid novels Juana Tabor and "666" were given to the public in 1942.¹²² In the first edition "666" comprises one volume, but since that time he has augmented the material and has published it in two separate volumes under different titles.¹²³ The principal character of this book is the enigmatic Anti-christ. The number 666 according to the belief of some comes from the name of Mohammed in Greek Maometis. The arithmetic addition of each of these values forms the mysterious number. Another interpretation refers to the Hebraic writing of Ha-Melek Le Israel - "el rey de Israel" since this forms a puzzling cipher. Wast uses both interpretations and presents the Anti-christ under the character of Ciro Dan, rey de Israel, and as sultan-Mohammed VI.¹²⁴ The theme of these novels is the fight of the Anti-christ against the doctrine and followers of Christ.¹²⁵ The principal characters are Juana Tabor, the prophetess and aider of Ciro Dan, Fray Plácido representing the forces of good against evil, and the Anti-christ, Ciro Dan, a superhuman character.¹²⁶

In Esperar contra toda esperanza published in 1942 we have a marvel

¹²¹ José J. Ortega Torres, op. cit., p. 11.

¹²² Posada, op. cit., p. 23.

¹²³ Hugo Wast, Juana Tabor, op. cit., [In front of book.]

¹²⁴ Torres, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

¹²⁵ Torres, op. cit., p. 15.

¹²⁶ Torres, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

of originality and interest. It is composed of "Aventuras por mar y por tierra."¹²⁷

The first edition of Lo que Dios ha unido appeared in 1945. This is a religious novel whose theme centers around the mother, Belén, her daughter, Moramay, and her husband, Jorge. The father and mother are separated from each other after shipwreck, the daughter remaining with the mother on an island. After years of separation Jorge becomes a priest and after finding his wife, embraces the Greek united branch of the Church in order to carry on his priestly duties since his wife refuses to enter a convent. The daughter, Moramay, becomes a Trappistine and finally the mother sees that she is an obstacle to her husband also enters the Trappistines.¹²⁸

The writer has placed the recent works of Wast among those of American atmosphere demonstrated by El camino de las llamas; dramatic intensity displayed in Lucía Miranda; emotional adventure combined in his trilogy, Myriam la conspiradora, El jinete de fuego, and Tierra de jaguares; historic picture portrayed in the life of Don Bosco; and religious atmosphere viewed in his four latest novels published up to and inclusive of 1945, entitled El 6º sello, Juana Tabor, "666", and Lo que Dios ha unido.

¹²⁷ Hugo Wast, Lo que Dios ha unido Primera edición (Buenos Aires: Editores Thau, 1945), [On back cover of book.]

¹²⁸ Hugo Wast, Lo que Dios ha unido, op. cit., pp. 27-337.

CHAPTER II
WOMEN CHARACTERS

This chapter will attempt to discover the salient characteristics of the women in the novels of Hugo Wast. For this purpose, the writer has selected eight typical characters from nine of Wast's novels. Of this number five are from six of his most recent novels; three of them, from his earlier works. With the exception of one character, María Teresa, all are protagonists.

Wast enjoys the glory of a "sympathetic creator" of women characters by reason of the heroines of his novels. It is rather singular that Wast should select so many women for his leading rôles, as male characters generally have this place in Argentine fiction. The physical environment of a great number of these women protagonists has elements in common. An unrestrained outdoor life from childhood has developed self-reliance and independence in them.¹ Concerning these characters Ruth Sedgwick relates, "Influenced by the barrenness of the scenery, the heroines living in the mountains have grown sad and melancholy and are, consequently, the prey of deep emotions and passions."² Enlarging upon the qualities of these characters, Miss Sedgwick continues:

¹ Sedgwick, op. cit., p. 118.

² Loc. cit.

These women are well-trained in youth for the active rôles they play in the novels. Although neither educated nor well-bred, these feminine characters have much natural intelligence and a keen sense of judgment, which they are often called upon to use. Full of praise in society, and cool-headed in the face of dangers that beset them, they are true heroines of the active life depicted in the novels. Whether from the rugged Córdoba Mountains, the marshy lands of the Paraná, the provincial cities teeming with political intrigues and still clinging to the conservatism of bygone days, or from the turbulent life of the capital, they all seem to be representative of a certain type of Argentine women.³

Merceditas of La que no perdonó, by her actions, displayed a person that was very wilful. "Merceditas tenía el sentido práctico de su madre y su perseverante energía para llevar a término un propósito; pero su juventud la hacía impetuosa y su vanidad le impedía reconocer un error y cambiar un rumbo."⁴ These words seem to be the key to her character. Merceditas had married Daniel Hernandarias. As the years advanced he, like the Israelites of old, nourished on the pure celestial manna, "comenzó a echar de menos la gruesas cebollas de Egipto."⁵ Merceditas would have nothing further to do with her husband after she found out the real purpose of his visit to Buenos Aires. None of her family were able to make her forgive her husband's infidelity. Even though she might consider for an eternity what she should do, she did not resolve another thing, "que

³ Sedgwick, op. cit., p. 118.

⁴ Hugo Wast, "La que no perdonó," Todas las novelas de Hugo Wast, op. cit., p. 860.

⁵ Ibid., p. 854.

la que resolvió al instante de oír a la alfajorera."⁶ She would separate herself from her husband forever and see to it that the door of her home would be closed as tightly as a slab of a sepulchre in order that it may never open to him, though he might entreat an entrance for years.⁷

Merceditas and Daniel had one daughter, Judith. She loved her father greatly. She did not know that her mother had taken such drastic steps in reference to her father. One day the mother overheard a conversation between the servant girl and Judith. Judith longed for her father's hurried return from Buenos Aires. She wished him to bring her "un nido de boyeros."⁸ Merceditas became more determined than ever as a result of hearing this conversation, "y sintió que en su corazón se infiltraba un resentimiento hacia el hombre vil que con la dulzura de sus mentiras ganaba las voluntades [Judith's] y se hacía amar."⁹

The letter that Merceditas wrote to Daniel and to which she affixed her maiden name, Merceditas Virreyes, was most expressive of her resolve:

". . . Perseveridad o inconsciencia, para mí es el mismo, porque revela incapacidad de regeneración. Dios, que hace milagros, lee tus pensamientos y puede perdonarte si te arrepientes; pero yo, que no creería en tus juramentos, aunque los firmaras con sangre, no te perdono.

⁶ Wast, loc. cit., p. 860.

⁷ Wast, loc. cit.

⁸ Ibid., p. 862.

⁹ Wast, loc. cit.

"Mi conciencia está limpia y no me remuerde otros pecado que el haberte querido como a un dios.

"Nunca he dicho una mentira y esta carta es como un testamento en que se habla al borde de la eternidad.

"No quiero verte más; no quiero que mi hija te vea más. Quiero librarla del envilecimiento de tener un padre como tú.

.
 tengo en mi poder la prueba de tu culpa. . .
 y te cierro tranquilamente la puerta de mi casa segura de que mi hija nunca te necesitará. . . ."10

The pride of will as seen in Mercedita's determination was clearly observed when Misa Enriqueta, Judith's grandmother, attempted to persuade Merceditas that she was doing wrong by her tenacity in not forgiving her husband. ". . . Estas cosas deben examinarse con calma o pidiendo consejo a los que saben más por sabios o por viejos."¹¹ Merceditas told Misa Enriqueta that God had given her a clear conscience that told her what to do; and as a result of this she was certain of proceeding well.¹² Merceditas justified her attitude and actions under the pretext of protecting her daughter from the bad example of her father. She informed Judith that her father had died.¹³

The author gives us a true picture of Merceditas during her residence on her farm, "El Mainumbi." "A pesar de la férrea voluntad que la

¹⁰ Wast, loc. cit.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 867.

¹² Loc. cit.

¹³ Ibid., p. 879.

mantenía en su propósito, su vida, durante esos siete años, había sido profundamente triste, lejos de su familia y de su ambiente, viendo de tarde en tarde a su madre cuando en el verano se instalaba en 'Las Avispas.'¹⁴

Monzón, a former lover of Merceditas, proposed to her. Merceditas, "la mujer de pensamiento claro y de voluntad precias,"¹⁵ realized that she should not accept this proposal because her husband was living. After rejecting this offer, Merceditas prepared plans for the marriage of Judith with Monzón thereby saving the daughter from the fate of the mother.¹⁶ Monzón conceded to the wishes of Merceditas and replied, "Su voluntad, Merceditas, es omnipotente en mí. Yo iré por el camino que usted me trace. . . ."¹⁷ These words of Monzón clearly display Merceditas' dominant influence.

In the mother's eyes every suitor for the hand of Judith was a possible Daniel. Even Pablito Medina, Judith's true lover, was considered unfavorable in making Judith happy. "El único cimiento firme para la existencia de una mujer honrada era la paz que ella iba alcanzando al fin, después de haber ahogado con su voluntad invencible le sombría tentación de dejarse amar por otro hombre."¹⁸ Merceditas persuaded Judith to accept Monzón as her husband. The conversation of Merceditas with Judith on this

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 888.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 898.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 900.

¹⁷ Loc. Cit.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 922.

occasion revealed an adamant attitude in persuading Judith that the mother's desires in this matter must be fulfilled. ". . . He ganado mi paz luchando contra todos con infinito dolor y no quiero perderla. He consagrado mi vida a educarte librándote de las fantasías pueriles de que a mí nadie me libró. . . ."19 From this time on Judith experienced towards her mother a sentiment of terror and of admiration. "Cuando a los tiempos rompió su tenebroso mutismo fué para decir a su madre que estaba resuelta a casarse con Monzón."20

In an attempt to pacify Judith, her grandfather, Don Felix, explained to her that her mother had used the means that she did to keep her father from the home as a protection for Judith. To discover the present relations between mother and daughter, Don Felix inquired as to whether Judith saw her mother frequently. Judith answered that the mother seldom came to "Las Avispas." This rather surprised Don Felix. His exclamation was, "--¡Qué mujer singular! Te quiere con toda su alma, has sido su pre-ocupación exclusiva. La gran barbaridad de su vida la hizo pensando en ti."21

For years Pablo Medina had been the overseer of the ranch. He came to Merceditas to obtain more land and rooming quarters for the help who recently had brought their relatives from Spain. Merceditas listened in a

19 Ibid., p. 924.

20 Wast, loc. cit., p. 924.

21 Ibid., p. 941.

somewhat distracted manner to Pablo and responded in her habitually precise way. She seemed to have lost interest in affairs of this type.²²

Monzón went to Europe and left Judith at home. During his absence Pablito, the ever-faithful lover of Judith, confided to her his affection. He told her that her mother was a veritable obstacle to this love. Judith was horrified that her mother should still attempt to direct her life. "Mamá no puede saber lo que habría hecho."²³ This selfishness on the part of the mother in controlling the life of her daughter led to Judith's becoming ill. A short time before the death of Judith, the conscience of Merceditas condemned her as a tenacious individual and one in whom misdirected affection predominated. The pallid lips of Judith, as it were, cried out in the voice of Merceditas' own conscience: "'Tu virtud es vana. Si hubieras sido humilde, habrías perdonado. No era bastante no caer; debiste dejar a Dios el juicio de la caída ajena.'"²⁴

The similarity existing between Merceditas of La que no perdonó and María Teresa of Fuente sellada is contained in the selfish, wilful, and resolute dispositions of each one of these characters.²⁵

María Teresa of Fuente sellada together with her brother and sister have been bereaved by the recent death of their mother. Don Pedro Rojas,

²² Ibid., p. 943.

²³ Ibid., p. 956.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 963.

²⁵ Observation of writer.

their father, placed his children in the home of Mamita Rosa.²⁶ In this atmosphere María Teresa impressed the writer as a child who became absorbed in this new rural life without too great guidance.²⁷ "Pero su gusto por aquella existencia resultaba, más que de propia afición, de un exceso de vido en su naturaleza juvenil."²⁸ At times she seemed changed and possessed characteristics somewhat similar to a "cierta pereza criolla, que la tornaba soñadora y triste."²⁹ As María Teresa developed into womanhood, she became enamored with Julian Darma. She retained this affection within her own heart and became a silent lover. One perceives a flash of the true character of María Teresa when she learned from Damián, a laborer on the estancia, that as far as he was concerned, Julian Darma need not return from his recent journey away from their town. "Ella lo miró fijamente, los ojos chispeantes de ira, y para que alzara la cabeza le hirió el brazo con una varita de mimbre."³⁰

To please Don Pedro, her father, and to save him from a financial disaster, María Teresa's sister, Evangelina, married Julian Darma, who was very wealthy. The resolute character of María Teresa apparently withdrew from the active scenes of this novel to harbor her plot of resentment, not against her sister or her father, but against her former lover, Julian. With the passing of years Darma became estranged from his Evangelina. Her

²⁶ Hugo Wast, "Fuente sellada," Todas las novelas de Hugo Wast, op. cit., p. 103.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 109.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 110.

²⁹ Loc. cit.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 115.

life had been very unhappy as she neither loved Julian nor was loved by him. Political life attracted Darma and he aspired to be governor. María Teresa asked Damián to kill Julian for her. Damián was most willing to do anything for María Teresa because she had shown him merely slight affectionate attention. He considered the fulfilling of her wish to take the life of Darma less difficult than going to the "yerbales" for her.³¹ María Teresa appeared to disguise her plan after the promise of Damián to carry out her vengeance. "Ella [María Teresa] parecía la misma de antes, voluntariosa, apasionada, ruidosamente alegre, cuando no taciturna y soñadora."³²

Juan Manuel, the veritable lover of Evangelina, was broken-hearted over the loss of his loved one; yet he did not wish any harm to Darma.³³

When Don Juan and Don Narcisco approached the home of María Teresa, they found her at the door of the dismal vestibule peering into the street. No one, not even Juan Manuel, noticed the surging sea of her revengeful feelings or the deceitful light of a triumphant flame which shone in her "ojos magníficos al recibir la noticia:--! Han asesinado a Darma!"³⁴

Even though one blames María's act of vengeance, she portrayed a "fuente sellada" in temporarily concealing her feelings. Gradually her grandmother came to believe that María Teresa was ill, as she seemed so

³¹ Ibid., p. 125.

³² Wast, loc. cit.

³³ Ibid., pp. 178-181.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 182.

pale. The indomitable will of María spurred her to say that there was nothing wrong with her. Her grandmother mentioned that María Teresa ought to retire as she had fever. There appeared a tragic flame in her eyes. Far from her thoughts was the desire of retiring. Her one vehement longing was to see Damián with his face stamped with the crime committed at her orders. She struggled, horrified at the thought that she would find it necessary to be the wife of Damián after he had accomplished her orders.³⁵ "--Dios mío, qué hondo he caído! -- pensó en un momento de lucidez."³⁶ At the same time she managed to conceal her feelings under the force of that strong but untrained will. Her struggle was so intense that she was able to quiet her nerves and to show an affected indifference so that Juan, Margarita, and Panchita failed to observe the struggle that was taking place in her soul. The evil wrinkle of her forehead and the malicious position of her mouth, too, were unobserved.³⁷

¿Como podían vivir libres de aquella terrible pasión que a ella la encadenaba? Le parecía imposible que hubiera en el mundo quien amando, o habiendo amado, no sufriera lo que ella, que así mandaba matar al hombre que amaba.

.....
 No era un capricho; era una fría resolución que hacía años alimentaba en el corazón ulcerado por el amor y la vergüenza.

.....
 Arrojó con rabia el vestido; abrió la

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 182-184.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 184.

³⁷ Wast, loc. cit.

ventana que daba a la calle para atisbar lo que sucediera y se sentó en el hueco, rígida, los labios apretados, crispados los dedos en un pañuelo empapado en agua de Colonia.

Así pasó un rato en que el tiempo le pareció dormido como el agua de un lago, hasta que se levantó mamita Rosa de su siesta y la llamaron para la merienda de la tarde.

La necesidad de no inspirar sospechas le devolvió su terrible voluntad y nadie observó su batalla. . . .³⁸

The false lover of Darma, Delfina, told Evangelina of the crime of María Teresa. Delfina was somewhat surprised that Evangelina was ignorant of the true assassin of Darma. Some years ago María Teresa had been the sweetheart of Darma. Delfina threatened to expose María Teresa should Evangelina marry Juan Manuel. This threat had been made in such a loud voice that María Teresa heard it. After the departure of Delfina from the home of Evangelina and María Teresa, Evangelina tried to compensate for the evil she had thought about her sister by embracing her upon their meeting. Evangelina observed the tragic face of María Teresa and realized the truth of Delfina's accusation.³⁹

Perhaps Evangelina recognized the great effort on the part of María Teresa to suffer and to take the consequences of her crime. She would brave Delfina's exposure of this crime in order that Evangelina might choose Juan Manuel. It was María Teresa's great desire that Juan become the husband of Evangelina, but Evangelina did not wish to consent to be

³⁸ Loc. cit.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 188-190.

the wife of Juan, lest she implicate María Teresa. One perceives the determination of María Teresa to sacrifice herself. She raised her face impetuously and confessed to Evangelina that she had been only temporarily mortified in confessing her crime before the world. Now she had changed and felt herself strong and justified in her confession. ". . . tal vez tuve miedo, pero ahora no; estoy resuelta."⁴⁰

--Y si no lo sacrificas--prosiguió con dulzura--; si me quieres librar del peso de este nuevo crimen; si me das esta única ocasión de hacerme buena, guardaré mi horrible secreto y así, me iré acercando a Dios, que me perdonará.⁴¹

A resemblance of selfishness in domestic interests weaves a thread of similarity through the characters of Merceditas, María Teresa, and Belén. Belén tenaciously held to her rightful love of her husband. Her actions appear wilful; her decisions, determined; her resolves, adamant.

Belén of Lo que Dios ha unido lived, for six years, on an island remote from civilization, lost from her husband. Wearied by this type of existence, even though she was "la dueña y señora de toda la isla,"⁴² she longed to be reunited with him. She attempted to persuade the carpenter of the island to assist her in getting back home. "--No me prometió usted, cuando se perdió el bote, construir uno suficiente para alcanzar tierra firme?"⁴³ All she received was a canoe, unsuitable for her voyage. The

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 190.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 191.

⁴² Hugo Wast, Lo que Dios ha unido, op. cit., p. 74.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 78.

great expanse of the sea weighed like a prison upon her. Hers was a persistent longing to return to civilization. One day during the seventh year she saw in the distance a Chinese vessel. Uppermost in her mind was the thought, ". . . llegar al continente a cualquier precio."⁴⁴ With thirty islanders and some Chinese fishermen she arrived in Buenos Aires.⁴⁵ Illness overtook her while she was in the city. One perceives definitely her desire to go to confession and to go only to the Superior of the Oriental Missionaries, who was a famous canonist. She had heard of the fame of Padre Gezapo from Madrid, and no one else would do as a confessor.⁴⁶

During Belén's separation from Jorge, her husband, the latter had become a fervent priest of the Oriental Missionaries. Belén found him on the First Holy Communion Day of their daughter, Moramay, when he was giving Holy Communion to her.⁴⁷

The superior of the community of which Jorge was a member tried to persuade Belén to give up Jorge by her becoming a religious. This would enable him to practice his priestly duties, "pero se habría estrellado en la voluntad de la joven, que no se sentía con tan alta vocación y defendía

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 83.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 80-90.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 29.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 95-105.

su derecho de esposa y madre."⁴⁸ In a long conversation in which Padre Gazapo was unsuccessful in winning her to his view, Belén told him that she heard God's voice as a child and waited until she was certain that her name was written in the book of God at the side of another. She was positive of the love of her spouse, Jorge.

. . . Y cuando de nuevo me habló el Señor, como habló en el Paraíso, no fué para inspirarme un instinto indefinido, sino para decirme una palabra clara, para afirmarme en concreto que me había unido a un hombre, que en adelante y para siempre yo sería hueso de sus huesos y carne de su carne. Fúe la transformación de mi vida y el amanecer de un sol que yo creí que no se ocultaría nunca, porque lo tenía de día y de noche. Yo dormía su lado, pero mi corazón no dormía nunca. Y él me prometió que si algún día tenía que marcharse a lejanas tierras, se haría pastor y me llevaría en su zurrón como un predacito de pan. Y un día soñe que él se había ido sin mí, y que amontonaba leguas y leyes, para hacer una muralla de distancia y de cosas entre él y yo, y no comprendí lo, que podía ser; pero ahora lo comprendo, después su V. R. me ha explicado la grandeza del sacerdocio, cuál es esa muralla. Y comprendo la locura del juramento que le hice de que si algo se interponía entre él y yo, yo mismo, aunque me ensangrentara las manos, me empeñaría en de destruir el obstáculo.
 . . .⁴⁹

She informed him that her vocation was that of a pirate. She explained to him that she would divorce her husband and both would then be free. Upon hearing this the priest sermonized on the attitude of the Church toward divorce. Then she suggested suicide. To this the Padre

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 191.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 187-188.

answered, "Yo lo haré venir. . . . ¡Parece manifiesta la voluntad de Dios de que te salgas con la tuya, mujer!"⁵⁰ He promised her that her husband would return from the foreign missions. Padre Gazapo telegraphed Jorge: "La carne de tu carne amenaza con divorciarse o matarse. Vente en avión. Prepárate para una buena batalla, como las de San Pablo."⁵¹

Belén received a simple message that she was to meet her husband, Jorge de Balsázar, now called Padre Teófilo Manrique. The Oriental Missionaries had permitted her to see and talk to him and to obtain his final decision. After she greeted him Jorge noticed the emotion of love struggling within her, lest she lose her husband if he should desire to remain in the priesthood.⁵² "Fué un vivir agonizando entre su esperanza indomable y el miedo de escuchar cualquiera de los sutiles razonamientos teológicos, que ella perdonaba en labios del padre Gazapo, pero que oídos de él habrían sido su muerte."⁵³ Here one perceives her seemingly strong character waver, but she swings her thoughts into the determined channel that she must take Jorge home with her.⁵⁴ Her husband said that if it be God's Will and his duty he will go with her. Jorge's words to her upon this occasion truly depict her character. "—¡Mi pobre Belén!

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 188-189.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 189.

⁵² Ibid., pp. 194-195.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 195.

⁵⁴ Loc. cit.

¡En nada has cambiado! Ni siquiera en tus arrebatos. ¿No comprendes que, vestido como estoy, no puedo hablarte de otra manera?"⁵⁵

With the passing of years their daughter, Moramay, yearned to enter the Trappistines. The disposition of the mother was detected through the opposition that she exerted toward Moramay before she entered. "--Mora-may, estás loca. Si hubieras dicho herman de la caridad o vicentina, todavía podría explicarme tu extravagancia; ¡pero has dicho trapense! Y Belén mascó la palabra con furia y desdén."⁵⁶ Jorge thought that he had persuaded his wife to give her permission for the entrance of Moramay into the Trappistines. "Pero Belén no había capitalado y continuó librando su batalla, para conservar a su hija, ya que había perdido su esposo."⁵⁷

Somewhat later Belén and Moramay journeyed to the Trappistine cloister, but train travel was impossible beyond the station of Til-camarca. From there on, it was necessary to travel by mule or by mountain horse. They remained overnight at an inn. "Moramay dormía profundamente. . . Pero Belén no le perdonó ni un minuto, porque estaba resentida con ella y apenas la hablaba; . . ."⁵⁸

Even though Jorge continued his priestly duties in the Greek rite, Belén understood that she was a hindrance to him and decided to become a

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 200.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 255.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 265.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 278.

Trappistine.⁵⁹ This decision left him free to say Mass in the Latin rite. He was not quite certain of his wife's resolve in becoming a nun; consequently he questioned her. "--¿Y el voto de perpetua obediencia que tendrás que hacer? ¿Has pensado, Belén lo que significa el voto de obediencia? Tu, que eres tan personal, perderás tu personalidad. Tu, que eres tan indómita y autoritaria, abdicarás de tu libertad y te obligarás a obedecer siempre a otro."⁶⁰ And her resolute disposition was again seen in her reply to Jorge whereby she justified her decision, ". . . Nada nos da mejor la sensación de nuestra libertad que el renunciar a ella para obedecer a otros. . . ." ⁶¹

Throughout the traits and feats of Marcela one finds an individual who is stern and relentless in the domestic undertakings at hand. She is somewhat less selfish in her home life than Merceditas, María Teresa, or Belén, but no less resolute in the rôle she enacts.

Marcela of Desierto de piedra as a young girl manifested a firmness of character in her initiative in keeping tidy the room which she and her grandmother, Doña Claudia, were to occupy in her Uncle's country home.⁶²

At first Marcela had too great faith in her father's ability to become rich. As time went on she realized her mistake, and she checked her bitterness. She expected to find trials in the rural home and turned

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 301.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 316.

⁶¹ Loc. cit.

⁶² Hugo Wast, "Desierto de piedra," Todas las novelas de Hugo Wast, op. cit., p. 1056.

to the resources that she might find in her own heart and will. Thoughts like these gave her an earnest, tranquil power.⁶³

One day Marcela asked permission from her elderly uncle, Don Pedro Pablo, for authority to manage the house and give orders to Ña Leopolda, the wife of the foreman, to Triburio, the young herder, and if necessary, to Don Difunto, the foreman as well. ". . . Y el viejo le dió lo que él llamaba "las extraordinarias," facultad de abrir en la casa todo lo que se cerraba con candado, hasta la alaceba del vino, todo, menos la petaca overa."⁶⁴ In Autumn Doña Claudia allowed Marcela to assume these duties. Since that day she was everywhere, and most resolute in carrying on, despite obstacles. She was in the fields inspecting sacks of grain, in the mountains observing the pasture for her three milch-cows, in the dove-cot, counting the days until squab time.⁶⁵

Don Pedro's stock were dying in large numbers through lack of proper pasturage. Marcela decided to improve conditions. Her enterprising youthful spirit was alive with enthusiasm for this undertaking. She was determined to take the cattle to pasturage in the high mountain territories; she had before hand named the day of departure.⁶⁶

She needed at least twenty men to get the wild stock out of the woods. She went out on Midas' horse quite early, and invited those who

⁶³ Ibid., p. 1058.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 1059.

⁶⁵ Loc. cit.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 1077.

had not been told of the roundup. She had no fear in riding alone along the roads, because she knew the inhabitants of those regions, indolent and improvident, but naturally respectful and honorable. She continued her travels through the cold dismal woods, to a path through the "living rock;" her sorrel made sparks fly as he rode over the land. Even the whole hill sounded hollow when this horse trotted over it. On the way to Don Tertulio's house Marcela again met the black bull which once before blocked her way when she was walking. By this time she had acquired the countryman's discerning eye and keen ability to tell one animal among a thousand, even at first sight. Now she seemed fearless.⁶⁷

Alfonso Puentes had a timid and humble but not secret love of Marcela. One perceives that Marcela even likes a resolute individual. She disliked Puentes because he considered himself inferior to her, "porque no era el carácter bravo y dominante capaz de interesarla y ganar su corazón; . . ."⁶⁸

Marcela preferred to live hidden in her rural life, although at times she did not like it; she knew spells of discouragement; she attempted to control her mind along a fixed idea, confused but tenacious and absorbing as an obsession.⁶⁹

Marcela sentía obscuramente aquella verdad y una gran ambición la animaba. Quería

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 1077-1078.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 1097.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 1118.

robar a aquellas gentes incultas, sanas mentalmente, el secreto de su sencillez y de su soberidad que es una riqueza, y aprender en ellas la serenidad, la paciencia y el valor de vivir en la soledad hostil de aquellos desiertos.⁷⁰

Roque Carpio wished to win Marcela's affections, and he consoled himself that he was capable of succeeding.⁷¹ "Ella también era fuerte y su voluntad se endurecía cada instante en aquel lugar donde todo era hostil y daba miedo."⁷² Early one morning Carpio appeared in Marcela's patio. He rather surprised and frightened her at this time of the morning, but one sees a masterful character in these incidents. He offered to saddle her horse; she refused him. Roque perceived in her keen eyes a primitive curiosity that fascinated him.⁷³ He questioned her as to whether she were afraid of his dog, Solimán. "--¡No! exclamó ella soltando por encima del perro."⁷⁴ She poked the fire vigorously. Silence prevailed. Marcela was pleased at the admiration of this man standing beside her, so strong, so dark, so pale.⁷⁵

--Pensar que hubo un tiempo en que yo
la creí tímida, tal vez cobarde, señorita
Marcela.

⁷⁰ Loc. cit.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 1128.

⁷² Loc. cit.

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 1128-1129.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 1129.

⁷⁵ Loc. cit.

--¿Cómo es eso?--preguntó ella, encarándolo audazmente, con lo cual él vaciló.

Le faltó valor para decirle que la amaba y se puso a mirar el cuadro azul del cielo donde se desvanecían las estrellas.

--¡Parece mentira!-- exclamó fastidiado de su propia cobardía--, ¡el flojo soy yo, que estoy temblando! ¡Mire!⁷⁶

Roque left the kitchen, but returned on his horse to the door and called Marcela. He gripped her hand firmly. More than ever she realized that her defensive strength lay in being very calm. She mastered her nerves and tried to smile. Her startingly vivid eyes fixed on his face, she said tranquilly:

--¡Qué raro es usted! Es valiente y podría deshacerme como una astilla, y, sin embargo, su mano tiembla más que la mía. ¡Vea!

Y tendió las dos manos, la aprisionada y la libre, hacia la llama. La mano aprisionada temblaba; la otra no.

--¡Ya ve, no soy yo la que tiembla!

El la soltó desalentado, subyugado, vencido por aquella pasión que lo volvía más débil que una mujer.⁷⁷

Roque was contented for awhile to follow Marcela meekly and faithfully and thus to win her love. Later he would show her that he feared neither God, devil, nor man, "y sólo ella era más fuerte que él."⁷⁸ Marcela was proud of having subdued Roque. Her enthusiasm and youth had emboldened her.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Wast, loc. cit.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 1130.

⁷⁸ Loc. cit.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 1131.

One evening Carpio attempted to enter her home while she bravely, resolutely withstood his efforts.

--¡No se haga ilusión, Marcela! No he entrado ya porque no sé entrar en casa de mis amigos hundiendo las puersas. Si quisiera empujar de veras. . . Mire, ¡le juro que empujo con un solo dedo!

.
 Marcela no respondió. La inminencia del peligro le había disipado el miedo y devuelto su sangre fría.⁸⁰

The clever method that Marcela used to keep Roque out of her house proved her resourcefulness and her ability to master difficulties and to enact her resolves. Roque refused to withdraw his foot from a partly opened door through which he tried entrance. "A cada empujón de él, que hacía temblar la muralla, Marcela contestaba apuñaleándole el pie con las tiejaras a través de la bota."⁸¹ Marcela continued applying with both of her hands the point of her scissors through his boots until the veins of his feet lost sufficient blood. Finally she sensed the noise of his body falling like a giant tree.⁸²

Marcela se alegró de alejarse de un lugar donde sus manos se habían manchado con sangre, aunque se corazón hubiera permanecido puro.

Ya no pensaba en la ciudad remota, como si no debiera volver más allá. Sentía el orgullo de conjurar con su buen tino y su perseverancia la decadencia de su familia y no echaba de menos las fruslerías elegantes, abandonadas un día con tanto pesar.⁸³

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 1141.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 1142.

⁸² Loc. cit.

⁸³ Ibid., pp. 1143-1144.

The intrepidity of a valiant woman, Lucía Miranda, in her undying love for her husband, somewhat links through domestic bonds this protagonist with the preceding characters.

"Esta novela [Lucía Miranda] podría llamarse 'El primer drama de amor en el Nuevo Mundo.'"⁸⁴ The resolute love of Lucía Miranda for her husband, Hurtado, is strongly exemplified throughout this novel. The Spaniards under Cabot had stolen a canoe from the Timbús.⁸⁵ Cabot ordered Hurtado to return this canoe that necessity forced them to borrow, together with many presents. (Gifts were necessary to win the Indians from their prejudices against the whites.) Lucía begged the Captain to take her on this mission with him. He was proud of her valor and was not in the least afraid of exposing her to any danger, since her love proved ample protection against the injuries of men and of nature.⁸⁶ Her husband advised her, "¡Anda y pídeselo al veneciano!"⁸⁷ She pleaded with Cabot that a woman's love would give a peaceful character to the expedition; she asked to accompany her husband and then the Timbús would not fear the Spanish arms. Cabot consented in unknown prophetic words. "--Bien sé que hasta

⁸⁴ Hugo Wast, "Noticia de las obras de Hugo Wast," Confidencias de un novelista (Buenos Aires: Editores de Hugo Wast, 1931), [In back of book.]

⁸⁵ Hugo Wast, Lucía Miranda (Buenos Aires: Editores Thau, 1943,) p. 84.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 85-86.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 85.

los pueblos salvajes honran la belleza como prenda de paz. Anda con ellos, hija mía, pues el único peligro está en que pudieras turbar con tu gracia el ánimo de esa gente y encender una pasión donde queremos fundar una amistad."⁸⁸

The Spanish messengers paddled in the canoe until they reached the Indians who were arrayed in war fashion, since one of the Indians warned his tribe that the whites were approaching. Hurtado told the interpreter that it was essential to make a peaceful offer and approach tactfully. Lucía, fearing for her husband who was so heavily armed, offered in resolute bravery to be their messenger. Bengas, the interpreter, sanctioned her courageous petition while he himself felt fear. He saluted her as a valiant and beautiful woman and besought God to accompany her. Wittingly Lucía responded that not only God but also Bengas should be with her since he spoke their language. This did not please Bengas, "pero no se atrevió a desobedecer, viendo los bríos de su capitana."⁸⁹

Thousands of roaring Indians swarmed close to the Spaniards as they neared the shore. Hurtado was pale and silent; but he experienced such a great pride in his beautiful, brave wife that he did not wish to deprive her of the glory of this dangerous embassy. Admiration for Lucía gleamed in the eyes of Carlos, the Tupí, yet he possessed an anxious face. When the canoe reached shore, Lucía boldly advanced alone toward a group of Indians who probably comprised the chief's court. The half-ashamed

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 85-86.

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 95-96.

interpreter expected to hear the whistle of arrows, but instead he heard the pleading voice of Lucía saluting the Timbús chieftain in the name of the Spanish emperor.⁹⁰

Captain Orgaz, the undesired lover of Uracca, was stabbed by the jealous carpenter, Pedro Barba. Since Uracca, friend of Lucía, had refused to marry Orgaz and since no trace of the murderer had been found, the blame for the crime was placed upon Uracca. She was imprisoned in the hold of the ship and was to be judged according to the law of the sea.⁹¹ Everyone, save Lucía, believed in the guilt of Uracca. Somewhat later Uracca told Friar Ramón that she did not kill Orgaz. Afterwards she went to confession to the friar and then he was ready to defend her.

" . . . Lo mismo Lucía que Hurtado compartían la confianza de fray Ramón y la creían inocente. Y como Hurtado fuese uno de los jefes de las patrullas que iban a recorrer los bosques, su esposa le dijo: '--Si vuelves trayéndome la prueba de que es inocente, te querré cien veces más que antes.'"⁹²

Immediately upon discovering that the true murderer could not be found, Lucía pertinaciously resolved to save Uracca. For this purpose she planned with Carlos the Tupí, and she warned Carlos that he might be risking his life because they might have to fight against all of the Spaniards. Carlos thought that he was able for it and that he did not risk any more

⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 96-97.

⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 227-233.

⁹² Ibid., p. 242.

than Lucía. She responded, "--Perder la vida no me asusta, con tal de salvar a Uracca de tan cruel y tan injusta muerte. . ."93 The character of this firm woman is portrayed when she obtained permission from the Captain-General to visit and console Uracca during her last night on earth. Carlos, according to plans, raised a cry of alarm that the Indians were coming, and by shooting off a cannon, he made the Spaniards believe that an attack had begun. Uracca was liberated by Lucía through an opening in the vessel made by Carlos with an oar or handspike. At last in the canoe the three disappeared down the stream.94

Perhaps Mangoré, the Timbús chieftain, learned of the absence of the leading men from the Fort of the Holy Spirit which left this fort in an unprotected state. This knowledge would permit him to take advantage of the situation and perhaps sieze Lucía.95 In the battle of the whites against the Indians during moments of darkness picked Indian warriors climbed over the "Trinidad" and stormed this Spanish vessel.96 Mangoré "blandiendo la lanza de los reyes"97 charged at the head of all these Indians. It was his vehement desire to find Lucía. At first he was unable to discover her among the captive Indian women due to the armor she

93 Ibid., p. 244.

94 Ibid., pp. 243-244.

95 Ibid., pp. 266-268.

96 Ibid., pp. 280-289.

97 Ibid., p. 289.

wore. In the bravery of her resolve to remain faithful unto death to the Spaniards, she met Mangoré face to face. "--¿A mí me buscabas? ¡Pues bien; aquí me tienes!"⁹⁸ In order that he might see who was striking him she raised the visor of her helmet. Quickly before he could recover from his astonishment she ran her sword through his bare chest.⁹⁹ "Vaciló Mangoré, buscó un apoyo en su lanza, que se le escapó de las manos, pretendió quitarse aquel hierro que lo ahogaba, y cayó a plomo, sin apartar los ojos de Lucía."¹⁰⁰ Even her power of love in its mettle attracted him. After Lucía had wounded him unto death with her sword, Mangoré said, "--No te lamentes, Lucía de haberme dado muerte, porque después tu amor, que me has negado, no queda para mí regalo más dulce que la muerte dada por ti."¹⁰¹

Even Siripo, Mangoré's brother, felt the strength of this steadfast Lucía. "Vió a Lucía en un rincón, en medio de las otras prisioneras aterradas. ¿De qué raza era aquélla que, aun teniendo las manos teñidas por la sangre de un rey, permanecía impávida?"¹⁰²

Lucía was condemned to be burned alive at the stake in the presence of her husband. Siripo, having partly covered his face with his

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 290.

⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 289-290.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 290.

¹⁰¹ Wast, loc. cit.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 294.

mantle, rose and placed a resinous branch over some embers. By waving this through the air he set it afire.¹⁰³ "Por nada y a nadie habría cedido el diabólico placer de encender la hoguera de Lucía Miranda."¹⁰⁴ As strong as Hurtado was, his heart failed him in the presence of the torturing of his adored Lucía, "y cerró los ojos, y ella alzó voz para quejarsele así:¹⁰⁵

--Tal como estoy, todas las miradas me ofenden más que me ofenderán las llamas: Menos las tuyas, y tú no me miras. ¿Por qué no me miras, mi Hurtado?

--Mis ojos--respondióle el marido-- están ahumados por las lágrimas; pero ya no los cerraré hasta que la muerte los cierre. Perdona, Lucía, tus enemigos. . .

--¡Ya los he perdonado!

--Y entre ellos perdóname a mí, que te traje a esta loca aventura.

--No me trajiste, que me vine yo, por el amor que te tenía; y cerca de ti la muerte será mayor dicha que la vida lejos. Cuando la fuerza del dolor me arranque ayes, no los escuches como lamentos, sino como bendiciones; y piensa que mi voluntad es bendicir al Señor y darte ánimo a ti.¹⁰⁶

The voice of Lucía, the resolute voice of a staunch woman faithful unto the end, cried in anguish, ". . . ¡Señor, perdona mis pecados, como yo perdono a esta gente mi suplicio! . . ."¹⁰⁷ And even before the flames

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 320.

¹⁰⁴ Loc. cit.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 321.

¹⁰⁶ Wast, loc. cit.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 322.

had charred the fair body of Lucía, Siripo had lanced the breast of Hurtado, that brave Spaniard who died feeling on his forehead, "según la promesa, los besos de aquella alma que, por serle fiel, le había precedido en la muerte."¹⁰⁸

The heroism of Lucía Miranda in remaining faithful to her spouse and to the Spaniards found a true companion in Myriam la conspiradora. Ruth Sedgwick mentioned that Myriam was perhaps the best example of Wast's protagonists in illustrating the characteristic of virility in the face of danger. Unflinchingly she encountered hurricanes, wild cattle stampedes, attacks by fierce Indians and wild jaguars. She demonstrated complete control of her actions and will and seemed never to despair.¹⁰⁹

"Su alma [Myriam la conspiradora] estaba templada para aquellos tiempos de dolor y de guerra, y su corazón era de criolla."¹¹⁰ These words give one an insight into the brave character of Myriam. She was a real American, by birth that of "las primeras mujeres porteñas"¹¹¹ and dressed in the fashion that portrayed she was in sympathy with the independence. Since her mother was not acquainted with political fashions, she did not perceive Myriam's inclinations but considered her choice of colors and simplicity of dress an indication of modesty. Her father

¹⁰⁸ Loc. cit.

¹⁰⁹ Sedgwick, op. cit., pp. 118-119.

¹¹⁰ Hugo Wast, "Myriam la conspiradora," Todas las novelas de Hugo Wast, op. cit., p. 1175.

¹¹¹ Wast, loc. cit.

seemed to divine her intentions. He punished her by placing her on the floor of the house in which there was no communication with any other or with the outside. He shut her up in a closet, and for a week he was the only one who had access to her. Her food was bread and water.¹¹²

"Solamente él entraba a renovarle el pan y el agua, y la encontraba sentada en un rincón, sobre una petaca cuyana, rumiando sus empecinados y misteriosos pensamientos."¹¹³ Furthermore, one finds her persistent in her resolve to remain faithful to the revolution. Myriam rejected the realistic bread which her father brought her, "devoraba las inolvidables golosinas cuyanas, lo que era, en cierto modo, coadyuvar a la revolución."¹¹⁴

With the exile of the last viceroy and the consummation of the revolution the attitude of Myriam's father, Don Santiago Altolaguirre, was one of nonprotesting calmed furor. One would think that he had reconciled himself to the new régime. As time advanced Myriam changed her desires to conform to those of her father and demonstrated great resolve in her loyalty to him. "Pero Myriam no las tenía todas consigo. Conocía bien a su padre y se imaginaba que la procesión andaría por dentro y ajustó su conducta a esa idea."¹¹⁵ Myriam kept within herself her

¹¹² Ibid., p. 1176.

¹¹³ Loc. cit.

¹¹⁴ Loc. cit.

¹¹⁵ Wast, loc. cit.

patriotic zeal and her affection for an Argentine captain.¹¹⁶

One afternoon Don Martín de Alzaga left his "señorial mansión" and went to the home of Myriam's father for the express purpose of confiding to Altolaguirre a plan to go to Montevideo and his wish to be conducted in "la ballenera" by Don Santiago. Myriam's father displayed his confidence in her, thus giving strength to her resolve of allegiance. Don Martín did not believe that women had engaged in undertakings of this type; furthermore, he did not give them credit for silence on such dangerous missions. Her father believed that she would be very valuable as a mariner, and that she would not betray them. Well she understood that the least indiscreet expression on her part might mean the sacrifice of her father's life. So great confidence did her father place in her that he asked her to set out with him.¹¹⁷

During the voyage with her father, Myriam noticed that "no iba al sur, sino a la Banda Oriental."¹¹⁸

--¡Arriba la mayor!-- ordenó su padre; ella descalza, corrió sobre el puente, soltó la escota y el barco se enderezó y puso la valiente proa hacia el lugar indicado por Alzaga.

Concluida la maniobra, que la distrajo instante, don Santiago Altolaguirre se puso a mirar a su hija.

La vió plaidísima, interrogándolo con

¹¹⁶ Loc. cit.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 1177-1179.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 1180.

sus ojos negros e inteligentes, las manos ceñidas al cabo de la vela y los rebeldes cabellos pegados en las sienes por las salpicaduras de las olas.

Aquella gotas de agua sobre la despejada frente semejaban un sudor de agonía.

Quiso animarla, premiar su amor y su adhesión; la llamó, la apretó contra el pecho con su mano libre y la besó, y le murmuró al oído una frase que encerraba todas la explicaciones que no tenía manera de darle:

--¡Por España y por el Rey!

Ella lo abrazó también y le contestó amorosamente:

--Adonde usted vaya, padre, yo iré. . .¹¹⁹

When Myriam, her father, and Chaparro arrived at the convent of "Los Betlemitas," Fray José de la Animas conceived the idea of dressing Myriam and Chaparro in the garbs of the monks of the convent.¹²⁰ The purpose of this disguise was to permit Chaparro to visit his wife and children who lived only "cuarto cuadas de este bendito Hospital."¹²¹ Chaparro had been in the service of Myriam's father since the former's escape from the law. In her disguise Myriam played her part strikingly well. One sees her determination to remain faithful to Chaparro should the law catch him. Captain Zavaleta, Myriam's lover, overtook these two pretended monks and endeavored to imprison Chaparro.¹²² Here Myriam demonstrated tenacity of purpose in fidelity to Chaparro by desiring to

¹¹⁹ Wast, loc. cit.

¹²⁰ Ibid., pp. 1182-1184.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 1185.

¹²² Ibid., p. 1191.

to receive with him whatever punishment the law might give him. Zavaleta was so surprised that he wondered if Myriam or he himself were crazy, that she should harbor one condemned to death, especially since this harboring meant imprisonment for her. She justifies herself by saying that Chaparro took refuge in her house and her father had taken him in his service. She was at that time Chaparro's companion enroute to "su mujercita que ignoraba si estaba muerto a vivo. . ."¹²³ The Captain tried to persuade Myriam that he must take Chaparro but she maintained, "--¡Yo lo he escondido en mi casa! ¡Entrégueme con él. --No, Myriam, a usted, no; pero a él, sí. . . --Si usted no me entrega, iré a entregarme yo . . ."¹²⁴ Zavaleta pleaded in vain. Myriam spoke rather forcefully and conqueringly to him.

--¿Va a ser usted, que es militar, menos generoso y menos valiente que una mujer? . . . Yo sabía a lo que me exponía escondiéndole de los que lo buscaban y no vacilé . . . Y usted, ¿vacila? Mire, capitán Zavaleta, que se lo pido yo. . . ¡Sálvelo!

--¡Usted me lo pide!-- repitió él hipnotizado, por aquella vehemencia con que ella lo aturdió, por aquella voz que agitaba su sangre, por aquellos ojos que penetraban en su corazón.

Y ella adivinó su omnipotencia y acercándosele más, hasta pegar su boca al oído de él, le murmuró la dulcísima palabra:

--¡Se lo pido yo. . . su novia!
¡Sálvelo a él o entréguenos o los dos!¹²⁵

¹²³Wast, loc. cit.

¹²⁴Loc. cit.

¹²⁵Loc. cit.

A very outstanding effect was produced in that portion of the novel in which Myriam refused the plans which her father had for her in marriage arrangements with Cecilio Alzaga. The father contended that this alliance between the two families would be advantageous. He continued painting the glory of such a marriage. Myriam gave Cecilio credit for his good qualities. She refused her father and became terrified at her own energies in this refusal since she had never in her life contradicted him.¹²⁶ Altolaguirre inquired of Myriam the name of her lover, but she remained kneeling at his feet with her hands joined and did not answer him. This obstinacy of his daughter irritated him and he re-questioned her.

--¿Cómo se llama ese hombre?

--Soy débil y soy mujer, señor--contestó humildemente Myriam--, pero soy de su sangre y he aprendido de usted la fuerza de callar, aunque, me cuesta la vida. . . . Si no fuera como soy, no sería su hija.

. . . ¡Aquella muchacha era indudablemente de su estirpe y de su raza, tenaz hasta la muerte y no en balde había puesto su confianza en ella!¹²⁷

In her venturesome and undaunted nature Matilde of El camino de las llamas may be compared somewhat with Myriam la conspiradora. The scene of El camino de las llamas of which Matilde is the principal character refers to the northern part of Argentina to the "senderos por donde

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 1203.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 1204.

marchan las llamas; esos camellos andinos, de cabeza gracil, mirada humeda y resistencia inagotable."¹²⁸ Chilean spies were endeavoring to find this pass on the Argentine side. Matilde played a resolute part in prohibiting these spies from finding the passage. The natural ability that Matilde possessed for a "gauchesca" life made her excel in the business of rounding up cattle and of selling droves of steers and heifers. This ability gave her a certain confidence in herself to push forward in her business enterprises and a determination to direct her own actions, despite opposition. She was unexcelled by any of the gauchos in making good purchases of herds of fat cattle or in driving them through dangerous paths to Chile. She was fearless and firm in returning through these same hazardous passages with twenty mules well-laden with contraband goods. When she had made up her mind to undertake a journey, neither the inclement weather nor the hour of day or night placed any obstacle to her travelling.¹²⁹

Since her father's death, Matilde alone managed the ranch. She could not depend upon the illiterate peons, the avaricious Indians, or the haughty gauchos. She could not even depend upon Quilpara, her Indian girl friend, who seemed as close as a sister.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Ercilla, editor, "El camino de las llamas," El camino de las llamas (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Ercilla, 1938), [In front of book.]

¹²⁹ Hugo Wast, "El camino de las llamas," Todas las novelas de Hugo Wast, op. cit., p. 1583.

¹³⁰ Loc. cit.

Daily self-reliance developed in Matilde. Her hand was firm in its aim of a gun. She displayed a good heart, a good eye, and a good pulse. Pizarra knew how "manejaba Matilde el remington, pues la había visto echarse en tierra, de espaldas, y apuntar a un cóndor, que apenas parecía un retazo de género folotando en los aires, y bajarlo de un tiro."¹³¹

Even though Matilde had crossed the Andes with Aguilar, the overseer of the hacienda, taking merchandise, mules, and cattle to Chile many times, she never weakened in her resolve of taking Aguilar over strange roads rather than betray the secret pass of the road of the llamas confided to her by her father. Don Carlos María, her father, had accidentally discovered this mountain passage while hunting. He pursued and shot at a herd of llamas which sought refuge in this passage. Matilde realized that the secret knowledge of this inaccessible defile would prove invaluable in case of war and inclement weather.¹³²

The cattle troops seemed to be spurred on by the determination of Matilde to venture upon the journey towards Chile despite the heavy snows that closed all the cordilleran passes. "Si una mujer era capaz de eso, ¿como habían de trepidar ellos, los hombres, más fuerte y más banquianos?"¹³³

Pizarra, a gaucho, after indulging in too many glasses of Santa Rita wine, declared his love for Matilde. In a determined manner Matilde

¹³¹ Loc. cit.

¹³² Ibid., p. 1585.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 1589.

told him she did not need his presence or that of any man to accompany her, but instead she had Quilpara, "una herman qui no es mi raza, pero sí de mi corazón. . ."134 Then Matilde exercised her authority by ordering Pizarra with a sharp gesture as she would a noxious and despicable peón, "--¡Vayase a dormir! Al alba partiremos. Lo que tenga que decir lo dirá cuando estemos a caballo."135

One sees in Matilde a fearless character desirous of braving danger, retiring to the mountains after night had overtaken her and her troops. By means of their provisions a wall was formed to shelter Matilde. She wrapped herself in her ponch and pillowed her head on her saddle. Her alert watch-dog guarded her left side and her gun and revolver formed the right sentinel. She had been, "en la moftana entre gente pocas veces mejor."136

Cordona and Aguilar provoked one another with a resultant fight. Tancredo, the loco, fired a shot between the legs of Aguilar. Matilde entered upon the scene in a masterly manner.

Tenia Matilde un revólver en la mano y dijo con sonrisa glacial:

--No admito peleas aquí. Usted, Cordona, ha provocado a mi capataz; le aviso que si da un paso adelante le pego un tiro. No voy a quedarme sin peones por culpa ajena.

La nube alcohólica se disipó instantá-

134 Ibid., p. 1593.

135 Loc. cit.

136 Ibid., p. 1595.

mente en el cerebro de aquel hombre.

Aguilar, vencido por aquella palabra omnipotente que nadie más que él oyó y que era la voz de la patria, guardó su arma, y Cordona echó a risa el pleito.¹³⁷

Matilde's determined purpose of preventing information from Argentina reaching Chile was excitingly demonstrated by her actions when Aguilar and Quilpara were approaching the border on their mules in a desperate effort to cross into Chile. Quilpara, in her attempt to protect Aguilar, had exchanged her white mule for his brown one. The lieutenant Moscosco fired first at the fleeing ones, but he perceived from the cloud of dust that his shot had been in vain. Matilde asked for her gun.¹³⁸

Le alcanzaron la carabina y apuntó. Su pulso era tan firme como cuando tiraba a los cóndores del cielo o a los pumas del monte.

Sobre la llanura plateada se divisaban claramente las dos siluetas casi a la par. Matilde tiró. Pareció que no hubiera acertado. Pero la mula castaña empezó a quedarse atrás, y de pronto el que la montaba rodó por el suelo.¹³⁹

On this occasion Matilde had such a vehement desire to serve her country that, "En sus ojos brillaba el imperioso lámpago de su voluntad, . . ." ¹⁴⁰

Only in a slight manner does Juana Tabor of Juana Tabor and "666" resemble in her motives all previously mentioned characters. Perhaps one

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 1646.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 1659.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 1659.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 1660.

might designate her as their archetype externally, due to her shrewdly unswerving traits.

Juana Tabor exemplified a character who was very staunch in fulfilling the desires of Ciro Dan, the Antichrist. Even at times one finds her demonstrating an encouraging influence over the Antichrist, in order that he may succeed, and that she may faithfully execute his wishes in a constant manner. "--Escúchame, Ciro Dan: yo, Jazabel, reencarnación del espíritu de una reina fenicia y de una profetisa hebrea, te diré la palabra que llegará a tu corazón."¹⁴¹ She told him that he did not come in the name of the One who from all eternity is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, but in his own name. Furthermore, she impressed him with his own power. "El mundo ya no cree en aquel Dios, envejecido y destronado, porque te aguarda a ti, su enemigo."¹⁴² Her words excited a smile on his cold lips.

"Serás rey del mundo, porque ~~tu~~ verdadero padre, el Dragón bermejo de las siete cabezas, te condujo a la más alto montaña, donde un día llevo al Nazareno, y te mostró, como a él, los reinos de la tierra, y de dijo la misma palabra; "Te daré lo que ves, si te postras en tierra y me adoras." El Nazareno se negó a adorarle, pero tu consentiste, y toda la tierra será tuya, por un tiempo, dos tiempos y medio tiempo."¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ Hugo Wast, Juana Tabor, op. cit., p. 108.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 109.

¹⁴³ Wast, Loc. cit.

The Rabbis greatly disliked her attitude toward Ciro Dan. One of them, Kohen, esteemed it the proper time to crown Ciro Dan with the crown of David. This crown was the sign of a vast empire previously unknown to humanity. Jezabel immediately took the crown from the hands of this rabbi and crowned what was considered the most beautiful head in the world.¹¹⁴⁴ Ciro Dan's reply to the Rabbis showed in an unsuspected manner the resolute influence of Juana upon Ciro even after she had crowned him. He gave Jezabel credit for speaking in a more influential tone than all the rabbis, his former teachers.¹¹⁴⁵

Juana was most constant in attempting to win souls for the Anti-christ. Her efforts were well rewarded in deceiving Fray Simón de Samaria. Fray Plácido de la Virgen was fearful of the strong influence of Juana on Fray Simón, the recently elected superior of the Gregorians. This community had great confidence in his abilities. Even the people placed confidence in him as manifested by the large crowds that waited in line for confession. This made Fray Plácido very happy as he considered confession one of the most difficult of the sacerdotal duties. Several times while Fray Plácido was saying Mass, he observed that Juana Tabor was one of the penitents at Fray Simón's confessional. Juana Tabor was "aquella joven semiconvertida por Fray Simón."¹¹⁴⁶ No one seemed to know anything about

¹¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 110.

¹¹⁴⁵ Loc. cit.

¹¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 126.

that "mujer de nombre sonoro y misterioso."¹⁴⁷ She was unbaptized. The fact that Fray Simón never spoke of Juana created a spirit of disquiet in the heart of Fray Plácido. The latter was fearful lest some evil come of it.¹⁴⁸ Fray Simón showed irritation when Fray Plácido quoted a bitter verse from Ecclesiasticus: "Todo malicia es pequeña comparada con la malicia de la mujer."¹⁴⁹ Then, "¿Era, por ventura, una prevención, un aviso, para que deconfiase de la bellísima Juana Tabor?"¹⁵⁰

Ciro Dan loved Jezabel above all other women because he compared her to the Cedar of Lebanon, "junto a la hierba del prado."¹⁵¹ He sought her only, "exasperar su pasión y adiestrarla en su servicio,"¹⁵² and to disseminate his reign throughout the world. He mentioned to her the price for the favor of being the first chosen one of his heart and he ordered her to withdraw and spread the belief fashioned on the number "666" until he would summon her into his presence. Here she was anxious to obey him, and in this obedience she dominated others.¹⁵³

Ciro Dan had no bishops who could validly ordain priests. It was his desire that Juana assist him. She, in the act of kissing his hand,

¹⁴⁷ Loc. cit.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 128.

¹⁵⁰ Loc. cit.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 287.

¹⁵² Loc. cit.

¹⁵³ Wast, loc. cit.

promised him that she would procure many more bishops for him. In this task she travelled throughout the world and leagued herself with many famous personages, thereby obtaining military secrets. With great craft and strength of determination this unhappy loved one, Juana, attempted to vitiate those called "the salt of the earth."¹⁵⁴

Fray Simón was disappointed in not being elected to the papacy. This disappointment turned into grief. It were as though he had received a dagger wound in his heart and the only moment of happiness came to him upon his finding a hotel in which he could withdraw and remain unknown at least temporarily. His anxiety was so great that he discontinued praying to the extent that he had not even said Holy Mass. He wanted to see Juana. One sees her immediate resolve to carry out the work of Ciro. She hurried to Simón. He had had no news from her for three weeks.¹⁵⁵ "De pronto oyó la conocida señal con que ella solía llamarlo. Ella, pues, se acordaba de él y lo buscaba a través del éter."¹⁵⁶ She assured him that she knew that he was in Rome, and that she was not far from him. She then asked a sacrilegious request of him.

" . . . Si mañana celebra misa en la iglesia de San Lino, no deje de dar la comunión a una persona que se acercará al comulgatorio."
Calló la voz, y él experimentó una loca alegría, mezclada con una indecible preocupación. Si a la mañana siguiente ella se aproxima

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 289.

¹⁵⁵ Hugo Wast, 666 (Buenos Aires: Editores Thau, 1944), p. 133.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 134.

maba a la santa mesa para participar de los sagrados misterios del catolicismo, sería porque ya había sido bautizada. ¿Quién la bautizó? ¿Acaso otro sacerdote? ¿Pero cómo? ¿Cuándo? ¿Dónde? Tuvo celos de esa conversión que no era su obra y se entristeció.

Recordó que ella un día le preguntó si sería sacrílega la comunión de una persona que por acercarse a Cristo, antes de bautizarse, se presentase al comulgatorio.

El le respondió que la comunión, sin las condiciones esenciales, es siempre sacrílega, y ella le replicó sonriendo:

--Ustedes, los sacerdotes romanos, saben demasiada teología; ni el centurión ni la samaritana sabían tanto.

Y si realmente fuera ella la que quisiera comulgar, ¿qué haría él?¹⁵⁷

Somewhat later Fray Simón was enroute to Buenos Aires, "oyó de nuevo el llamado de Juana Tabor."¹⁵⁸ She begged him to accompany her enroute, "en mi athanora."¹⁵⁹ If he accepted her invitation she would permit him to baptize her. She told him that as yet she was not united to the Church even though she had been united to Christ in Communion.¹⁶⁰ During their airplane trip, while Juana persuaded Simón of his mission from God to preach to all casts in the entire world, by some strange interruption, all of the lights of the city below the plane were extinguished. "[Simón] Viéndose envuelto en las sombras, recordó las palabras de Jesús a sus enemigos, en el Evangelio de San Lucas: 'Esta es vuestra hora y el poder de

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 134-136.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 152.

¹⁵⁹ Loc. cit.

¹⁶⁰ Loc. cit.

las tinieblas."¹⁶¹

Juana seemed to dominate Simón. He considered her as the most solid power of his new religion and as an instrument to save the world.

Este amor será una base de piedra sobre la que se levantará la Iglesia del porvenir.

--¿Qué Iglesia? ¿La de Cristo o la de su enemigo, aquel que en el Apocalipsis se llama la Bestia? --preguntó imperiosamente Juana Tabor.

El no se atrevió a negar al Maestro y permaneció mudo.¹⁶²

Whereupon Juana understood that Simón was undergoing a terrible interior battle. She informed him that the Antichrist was then in existence. She had seen, adored, and loved him. As a sign of his alliance with her, he had given her a piece of cotton dipped in his own blood. Juana begged Simón to celebrate his last Mass the next day and at the moment of consecration to mix the, "dos sangres, la de Cristo, y la de su enemigo que ha venido para combatirbo y vencerlo."¹⁶³ Simón, "envenenado por aquella voca satánica, prometió cometer el horrendo sacrilegio, en la última misa de su vida."¹⁶⁴

As time advanced Simón continued to be the instrument of Juana for the execution of the plans of Giro Dan until his apostacy was complete. "La apostasía, engendro de la desesperanza y del orgullo, es enfermedad de vejez, como al cáncer o la arterioesclerosis, y suele ser el precio que

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 153.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 179.

¹⁶³ Ibid., pp. 179-180.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 180.

pagan los viejos por su ciencia o su virtud, cuando las creen obra propia y no de Dios."¹⁶⁵ When Juana had accomplished her work she revealed her true identity.

Y Simón de Samaria vió a Juana Tabor sin la cinta escarlata, mostrando en la frente la señal del Anticristo. Ahora comprendía quién era ella y qué papel había desempeñado para seducirlo y para llenar con los templarios las celdas vacías de sus conventos.¹⁶⁶

.....
 --Aquella mujer que se hacía llamar Juana Tabor, ¿se convirtió, por ventura o lo siguió en su desvarío?

--Aquella mujer es Jezabel, la profetisa del Anticristo, que preparaba sus caminos simulando unas veces el amor, otras el deseo de convertirse. . .¹⁶⁷

The writer has concluded that these characters of Wast's novels are mainly resolute. The term, resolute, as used here, connotes rugged, tenacious, virile characteristics. Their actions and words stamp them as women seldom moved by trivialities and when stirred either by internal or external forces they lunge with hearts fastened to a preordained cause. Strange as it seems, this preordination appears as created by each characters' own choice--a goal for which each individual in her own atmosphere deliberately strives.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 222.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 223.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 254-255.

CHAPTER III

REGIONALISM

Throughout his works West disperses many pretty views of regionalistic scenery. It is the aim of the writer to incorporate within this chapter some of the landscape pictures, the rural life scenes, domestic and occupational life through regional sections, various kinds of descriptions, and tinges of religious atmosphere.

Although the Argentine novel is a late developed genre, it now possesses a richness, a vitality, and a variety. Since the first appearance of Amalia by Marmol, the novels of Argentina have acquired national characteristics. Perhaps today the regionalistic novel, because of its esthetic and critical value, and its national and racial character, is the most prominent national form. This type is interpretative and descriptive of various aspects of national life. Among the writers of this genre Hugo West may be placed as one of the most outstanding of Spanish-American novelists.¹

Alejandro Marchino, quoting Cosio in a judgment on El vengador, states that there is a similarity between Pereda and West. No one can deny the absolute originality in West which is a distinct product of his own imagination. One can distinguish many different processes in the manner or method of both these writers, but mainly in the painting of landscape may

¹ C. K. Jones, "Hugo West, Regionalistic Novelist of Argentina," The Pan American Magazine, op. cit., 43: 210, September, 1930.

one visualize the differences. This type of painting in a novel is difficult to handle. Wast does this in a superb way. Now and then scattered in his works are descriptions that occupy only a small portion of a page. He is able to give in a brief paragraph an entire panorama. This original quality of landscape painting through the written page is manifest in all of his novels, not only in those of his first period when his exuberant imagination painted rapidly in writing, but in all his works, producing a surprising effect.² An excellent example is found in Tierra de jaguares in his descriptions of a river storm.

Un nublado espeso, cargado de relámpagos, rodaba sobre las olas enfurecidas; y la voz del río y la del viento y las mil voces de las nubes tumultuosas fundíanse en un trueno incesante, como si aquel cielo de cobre llameante fuera una campana destemplada y colosal golpeada por la mano infatigable de la tormenta.³

Wast writes in this same work of the proud forest whose trees grew and died from lightning wounds and in figure formation were lopped by the hurricanes for some hundred thousand years. These gave birth to a spongy and humid land, very fertile in vegetation. Here the pasturage rose to ankle height, and in many places reached to the thigh. Aquatic plants in their growth engulfed the horsemen in a sea of green and of flowers.⁴

In descriptive paragraphs Wast hints and somewhat insinuates what

² Alejandro Marchino, "El paisaje en Hugo Wast," Una estrella en la ventana, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

³ Hugo Wast, "Tierra de jaguares," Todas las novelas de Hugo Wast, op. cit., p. 1310.

⁴ Ibid., p. 1312.

the reader feels in spirit in the face of landscape, but these commentaries spring spontaneously from the pictures themselves.⁵ An example of this is also in a passage from Tierra de jaguares.

Era una inmensa arboleda que llegaba hasta la orilla misma del agua y a cuyo seno debíase penetrar con el corazón turbado, como quien penetra en una vasta catedral, llena de perfumes y de rumores nunca oídos y de misterios jamás descubiertos.⁶

In Lucía Miranda a very excellent description opens the chapter called "El fuerte del Espíritu Santo." The deep bed of the immense Paraná opened out in front of the prow of the ship as the four cut through the waters, preceded by the three dories that explored the course. Sebastian Hurtado's dory hugged the eastern shore of the river. As it pushed forward into the virgin heart of America, the fleet presented a brilliant and majestic spectacle. The tall ship proudly unfurled the banner of Charles V; the sailors and passengers were eager and alert not to miss a single detail of the brilliant exhibition. Behind them lay thousands of islands, some low, swept by the flood waters covered with soft flowering grasses in which tapirs and capybaras pastured; others high, covered with cane-brakes and forests fringed with a thin stretch of mud or sand, where lazy crocodiles dozed in the sunshine and deer and wild beasts descended to drink.⁷

Another striking picture from this same chapter proudly places Wast in the foreground of excellent word picturers. All of the crew surrounded

⁵ Marchino, op. cit., p. 11.

⁶ Hugo Wast, "Tierra de jaguares," op. cit. p. 1328.

⁷ Hugo Wast, Lucía Miranda, op. cit., pp. 55-56.

Solís' men who spoke one after the other. Light was shed upon the scene by a lantern hanging from the yards. From the ship the crew could see only the shore to starboard, abrupt, wooded, wound like a long black ribbon over the silvery surface of the river. The other low shore lay lost in shadow. Clusters of stars vibrated like sparks, caught at their brightest when the wind blew full and embedded in the heart of the heavens; through the clear translucent air swarms of fireflies whirled upward like shooting stars.⁸

In this same book, in the chapter entitled "Estáis sola y en mis manos," there is another choice portion of description. Beyond the palisade lay the cornfield, devoid of its autumn crop. Flocks of birds and doves lighted on the ground, moistened by the recent rains, and pecked at the foot of the stalks for neglected ears or stray grains. Beyond the cultivated fields lay the woods, countless lagoons, protected by giant cattails, and the river; still beyond, the lands of the Timbús, where the previous night the implacable war tattoo had sounded. And far, far beyond the edge of the horizon and the land of the snow-capped mountains, lay the realms of gold, with cities walled with silver, on whose turrets, before the passing of another year, the standard of the emperor would float proudly beside Cabot's banner.⁹

Regional sections of landscape from El camino de las llamas sketch the native territory in a similar fashion. The road, five leagues this side of the boundary, descended brusquely and pierced into the valley and

⁸ Ibid., p. 65.

⁹ Ibid., p. 222.

sheltered from the winds by a circle of mountains. It crossed the valley and ascended in a sharp slope, twisting snow-covered hills and precipitous banks full of foreign silences and of mysterious murmurs, somewhat affected by calm or windy days penetratingly ended in a species of tunnel. This place was named Green Lake. There existed a wild apple forest whose blossoms scattered abundantly during the sunny hours and fell on the water of that green and tranquil lake. Those waters never froze because of the tepid cascades.¹⁰ "En medio del desierto, barrido por los huracanes, aquel valle donde abrían las flores, era un paraíso. Hacia el norte, por leguas y leguas, sucedíanse las quebradas donde en cien años no había entrado un cazador."¹¹

Two examples of Wast's brief descriptions from this same novel verify his ability. In the brake reigned a tepid blue twilight so that the sun transposed the mountain tops and filled the forests with rays of silver and spots of gold.¹² Aguilar signaled to Quilpara to a point beyond. There the sky was a bronze burnished iron over which was painted the dark clay of the mountain.¹³ Another illustration of the beauties of nature in Wast's regions is portrayed in the following: "Y en el oriente el cielo comenzaba a palidecer. Los árboles tenían alrededor de sus copas

¹⁰ Hugo Wast, "El camino de las llamas," Todas las novelas de Hugo Wast, op. cit., p. 1627.

¹¹ Loc. cit.

¹² Loc. cit.

¹³ Ibid., p. 1654.

energrecidas una especie de aureola; y sobre la pradera corrían sombras a ras del suelo. Eran los zorros o las vizcachas que buscaban sus madrigueras sintiendo aproximarse el día."¹⁴

Rapidity and transparency mixed with strength permeate this example from Wast's Desierto de piedra.¹⁵

Una neblina espesa y asfixiante se aplastaba sobre el mundo como una inmensa capa de algodón. A diez pasos era imposible distinguir un cerro o una barranca. No había posibilidad tampoco de orientarse por el sol, que debía lucir allá arriba, sobre las muertas olas de aquel mar blanco, pero del cual no llegaba a los hombres más que una luz difusa, como la que alumbró en los primeros tiempos de la creación.¹⁶

Marcela, while accompanying her uncle in the country searching for his cattle that were the prey of the eagles, encountered picturesque scenes. She felt the mute forest with all of its icy, melancholy beauty.¹⁷ "Los truncos ásperos y negros, las ramas tendidas, desnudas, en que el sol ponía lamparones de oro, tenían la quietude solemne de lo que ha dejado de vivir."¹⁸ Nipped by the frost of the night, a few burnished or yellowish leaves fluttered "sin ruido" and silently disposed themselves on the soil "como un pájaro enfermo."¹⁹

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 1636.

¹⁵ Marchino, op. cit., p. 10.

¹⁶ Hugo Wast, "Desierto de piedra," Todas las novelas de Hugo Wast, op. cit., p. 1046.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 1073.

¹⁸ Loc. cit.

¹⁹ Loc. cit.

In her view of God's landscape from her bedroom window, Marcela observed the mountain, painted in India-ink on the burnished background of the horizon, and the golden crescent of a new moon supporting the splendid canvas.²⁰

Again Marcela was pictured, alone, imbibing the barrenness of the Pampa of Yuspe, a high plateau chocked with arid grass, impressive on account of its desolation. "A esa altura toda la arboleda se reducía a míseros matorrales de tola y de poleo diseminados en la llanura. A lo sumo si un coco raquíptico crecía escondido del ábrego entre algunas peñas."²¹

After the men left for their work of the day Marcela sat in the doorway and looked out upon the beautiful morning. More than ever the mountain was sullen and grey. The peach tree in her yard, blossoming on its every branch, grouped itself gracefully with the little hills covered with red and blue daisies and flowering thyme. In the woods the butterflies darted above the bright thickets with tender green shoots. The tiny unripened fruit on the "piquillines" branches was mellowing into a yellow. Many little birds were deprived of places to build their nests since the trees were numbered.²² "Una calandria con una pajita en el pico se asentó en el durazno, dió unos cuantos saltitos, vió a Rina y

²⁰ Ibid., p. 1080.

²¹ Ibid., p. 1083.

²² Hugo Wast, "Flor de durazno," Todas las novelas de Hugo Wast, op. cit., p. 29.

voló al monte porque no le convenía la vecindad de las gentes."²³

A very picturesque scene from Chapter IV of Valle negro called "En la cueva de los leones" evokes in one a desire to see these scenes portrayed so beautifully by Wast. In order not to destroy the beauty of Wast's work the writer has presented in somewhat free rendition this description. The earth lay wrapped in the milky light of early dawn. Shadows remained undisturbed in the valley while rosy streaks in the sky overhead told of the rising sun. On the rugged summits of the farthest mountains, whose crests held the first shafts of daylight, confused wrinkles were reshaping themselves in sharp light and shadow. The drowsing jagged clouds were suffused with purple.²⁴

Y de pronto, sobre la áspera loma cubierta de carquejas y doradillas, donde hacía un rato ardía, como el resplandor de un horno magnífico, apareció el disco de brillante plata bruñida haciendo chispear los millones de diamantes que la noche desparramó sobre los pastos.²⁵

Wast gives one a plain picture of the territory about twenty kilometers from Buenos Aires in his novel called Lo que Dios ha unido. One of the rivulets, a branch of the mighty Paraná, flows out into the estuary of the Plata. At this juncture there are a number of low islands, which in flood seasons are covered with muddy waters. For thousands of years the deposits left by these floods have made the lands fertile in excellent

²³ Loc. cit.

²⁴ Hugo Wast, "Valle negro," Todas las novelas de Hugo Wast, op. cit., p. 292.

²⁵ Loc. cit.

humus for fine cultivation. The owners of these lands have endeavored to defend themselves from these floods by building slopes and land diques and cutting these by drainage canals.²⁶

Marchino states that of all the writers who paint pictures of dawn, very few cite such good examples of this type of landscape, but Wast, he thinks, has handled this phase magnificently.²⁷

From the landscape or the beauties of nature in the works of Wast one turns naturally to the wilds of nature in animal life and to general rural life in his novels.

With reference to Wast's power to portray regionalistic pictures Ruth Sedgwick writes:

These national types [characters] move in a masterfully depicted setting of Argentine life. Hugo Wast is truly a regionalistic writer, confining his stories to a small area-- Buenos Aires, Cordoba, Santa Fe, and the surrounding country. Although his descriptions of Buenos Aires, in Ciudad turbulenta, ciudad alegre, and Los ojos vendados are good, he excels in scenes of country life, as in Fuente sellada, Flor de durazno, Valle negro, La que no perdono, La casa de los cuervos, and Desierto de piedra. It is not only the beautiful scenery and landscape but the typical occupations and pastimes, such as milking, cattle branding, fishing, and country dances, which the author describes so vividly. He is fond of showing the life inside the home, describing the decorations of the rooms and the food served at the table, and he presents with special skill the subtle family relationship, either harmonious or otherwise, between father

²⁶ Hugo Wast, Lo que Dios ha unido, op. cit., p. 173.

²⁷ Marchino, op. cit., p. 15.

and children or between brother and sister. Through Wast's pictures the whole atmosphere of ranch life is brought before the reader's eye.²⁸

In the place called "Valle negro" the river had dwindled to a slender body of water and in definite spots on its banks existed a dreadful mire extending somewhat like a black, smooth plain. Here the faint tracks of partridges and occasional outlines of the claws of the "pumas" [mountain lions] were visible. Some of the cattle stood bogged in the deep slime. Their inability to extricate themselves made them the victims of starvation and the slaughtered food of the wild beasts. These mountain lions continued satisfying their ferocious appetites by feasting on both the weak and exhausted animals and those that were herded in the corral.²⁹ A stone wall surrounded the corral, and within were coffee seeds trampled by the restless and inquisitive goats. The kids were penned next to the corral in order to separate them from the goats. Some of the goats had climbed up on projecting stones where their footing was insecure, and others were standing near the wall, warming themselves in the gentle rays of the sun. Most of the herd were munching their fodder, their noses to the wind while their slanting eyes were fixed on Gracián who was entering the gate.³⁰

²⁸ Sedgwick, op. cit., pp. 120-121.

²⁹ Hugo Wast, "Valle negro," op. cit., p. 314.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 292-293.

Gracián was waiting in the woods near a creek for Mirra. The sands along the edge of the stream sparkled as if studded with precious stones. The geese wandered lazily away from the pond, stopping now and then to oil their feathers.

Sopló de pronto un viento fresco que infundió vida al paisaje. Los gansos desplegaron las alas, con roncós graznidos, y cayeron al remanso, en una fina hilera que semejava la pintura de un friso, el cuello arqueado, el pico alerta para atrapar las mojarritas y la cola orientada como un timón.³¹

These two children followed the course of the stream until they came to an opening in the wall which served as a gate. Near the wall, on a flat stone which had been laid there to protect the earth from being dug away by the hoofs of the cattle, lay a broad copper-headed snake. It was watching for some of the small toads which hopped about the foot of the wall. It was enjoying the sun, but the sudden disturbance of its peace caused this snake to raise its triangular head higher and higher and to open its mouth, darting out its terrible forked tongue.³²

Marcel and Uncle Pablo of Desierto de piedra left the beaten path and descended toward the stream. As they rode from under the trees the sky appeared an infinite transparent crystal veined by flocks of black birds of prey. Due to the poisonous weed, "el mio-mio," the cattle remained away from this section unless urged on by hunger. "Allí encon-

³¹ Ibid., p. 294.

³² Wast, loc. cit.

traron centenares de vacas peludas y tristes, muchas de ellas echadas en el suelo y tan desalentadas que no se levantaron al pasar los caballos."³³

Two of these animals lay dead near the "arroyo;" their bones were already partly bleached by the sun; vultures whose heads were black and bald as a turkey's head, "caranchos de plumaje pardo y vientre overo y cara de payaso, de las águilas blancas"³⁴ had torn with their beaks their flesh.³⁵

The writer finds other excellent illustrations of rural life. In El jinete de fuego Myriam la conspiradora with her father and compatriots alighted from their "ballenera" at a point where the golden rays of the sun transposed a willow grove and reflected on the black canal currents. In all their course they had not found one human being. The spacious forest harbored trees with trunks lapped over trunks. In other places the overgrowth was so dense and high that it might have covered a horseman. At least three very beautiful deer appeared, gazed as if enchanted, and then disappeared. On the shore where the otter basked in the sun, they found a tiger drinking after having sated his hunger on innocent beasts. These travelers were delayed two or three hours in reaching "la isleta de los Ceibos" which was so entangled and woody that it appeared impenetrable to men and destined to control the undisputed

³³ Hugo Wast, "Desierto de piedra," op. cit., p. 1074.

³⁴ Loc. cit.

³⁵ Loc. cit.

dominion of the wilds.³⁶

Another very colorful rural scene from "La tropa de carretas" of El jinete de fuego is marvelously rendered by Wast. The caravans of the civilized Indians came from the south to traffic with the Christians. Their mounts were those famous horses raised in the free air of the pampas. These redmen carried in leather sacks, salt extracted from their beautiful lagoons, ostrich feathers, bridle reins, "boleadoras" [Y-shaped lasso, made of braided or knotted leather or rope with its ends weighted with heavy balls] travelling blankets woven on primitive looms unexcelled in perfection by the best English spinsters, "quillapies de cuero de zorro" and hundreds of things which they bartered in the village store for the small quantities of merchandise which they craved.³⁷

También en el hueco de Lorea, que hoy forma parte de la plaza del Congreso, guarecíanse las tropas de carretas que traían cueros y grasas de los millares y millares de vacas cimarronas que poblaban entonces los campos y que eran sacrificadas bárbaramente por el primero que las enlazaba, cerdas de las yegudas que pacían libremente en las ricas laderas del Paraná y del Salado; maíz, trigo y cebada, que hasta entonces llegaban de los Estados Unidos, pero que empezaban ya a cultivarse en el litoral.³⁸

The timid chirp of a little bird was heard from an apple tree, and from afar another faint chirp was sung in answer. The calves joined this

³⁶ Hugo Wast, "El jinete de fuego," Todas las novelas de Hugo Wast, op. cit., p. 1243.

³⁷ Ibid., 1280.

³⁸ Loc. cit.

matutinal symphony with their faint bleats. The cold of the dawn and the gentleness of the silence were impressive.³⁹

Wast gives us glimpses into country scenes in Fuente sellada, which are very realistic. In one of the corrals were four or five cows here and there, lying down on the ground leisurely waiting their turns for milking. All of these cows were domestic and black. Their owner had them tested in order that the milk would be free from tuberculine microbes. As it was milking time most of the little calves were with their mothers. María Teresa was stripping a fox-colored cow with dented horns that was lazily mooing and licking her "narices" through which poured two streams of "vapor."⁴⁰

Un ternerito, negro como la madre, luchaba desesperadamente por hallar una teta que no le arrebatasen las manos implacables de la ordeñadora y mamaba con ávidez, atragantándose para engullir mucho, cuando se lo permitían.

Concluyó María Teresa su delicada operación, y mientras Lucila-- la hija del capataz-- ataba el ternero, se puso a sacar el apoyo en un jarro enlozado, que herido por los chorros de leche, cantaba una incitante canción de tambos.⁴¹

.....
Frente al corral había un gran pozo, con un balde volcador, que un muchacho, montado en un petizo, hacía funcionar todas las mañanas hasta llenar los bebederos de los animales, largos y estrechos tanques de fierro, fijados en la tierra.⁴²

La que no perdonó has many scenes abounding in insect and wild life.

³⁹ Hugo Wast, "El camino de las llamas," op. cit., p. 1636.

⁴⁰ Hugo Wast, "Fuente sellada," op. cit., p. 110.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 109-110.

⁴² Ibid., p. 114.

In one section of rural atmosphere Wast acquaints the reader with an open space not far from which were thousands of sandpipers that selected this place as their roosting haunt.

Detrás de una cortina de totoras con hojas tajantes como cuchillos, había una isleta de plantas extrañas, cuyas flores atraían las avispas, que en los árboles carcomidos del bosque labraban sus camoatises.

Un picaflor azul, como una turquesa con alas, zumbó alrededor de la cabeza de Judith que soltó su vestido con la ilusión de aprisionarlo.⁴³

.....
 Los pájaros y las cigarras contaban encima de ella sin perturbar su sueño; pero la despertó el mugido de un toro.⁴⁴

.....
 De trecho en trecho surgía un carrizal como un islote y la niña Judith se alejaba de aquel sitio donde solían hallarse víboras enroscadas, con el frío lomo al sol. Anchas hojas de plantas que ella no conocía temblaban al peso de algún martín pescador, que de pronto caía como un hon-dazo rasando el gua agua para levantarse con una palpitante arista de plata en el pico.⁴⁵

The domestic scenes, which Wast portrays, now and then have tinges of sadness in them. In Flor de durazno he pictures the home of Germán as very desolate after his daughter left. A light of a tallow candle hanging on the wall could barely reach into the corner of this cabin where Germán was by a brazier, which had turned down to its white ashes. He was dreamily drinking "mate" and patiently waiting until it should be time for bed.⁴⁶ For long hours after retiring he remained awake while "una

⁴³Hugo Wast, "La que no perdonó," op. cit., pp. 904-905.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 905.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 904.

⁴⁶Hugo Wast, "Flor de durazno," op. cit., p. 87.

idea amarga y sombría como el mar, que roe las altas costas, turbaba sus horas."⁴⁷ His anger at his daughter's departure had softened into grief in the long months that had passed.⁴⁸ The results of her absence were to be perceived in every detail of the house. His clothes were covered with dust and remained hanging where Rina left them. Her mother's bed was made of heavy "algarrobo" wood and now it had no blankets, and the mattress was worn. In one corner was a cot made of leather thongs over which was thrown a saddle blanket. Here her father had been sleeping in the kitchen corner. The remnants of a little picture of Our Lady of Sorrows was still hanging at the head of the bed. The glass was broken and the flies and dust had soiled the print.⁴⁹

In the chapter entitled "Noche de lluvia" from Lucía Miranda, Majuluto reached the shore of the Carcarafia where the Spaniards had cleared a landing. A cabin stood in the midst. From her hiding place she observed the lanterns being extinguished until only one remained lighted. This lantern had a rough, twisted wick, saturated in oil, in a tin box; its sides were not of glass but of horn. Majuluta managed to reach the guardroom where the soldiers were playing cards. Here Nuffo de Lara sat on a stool near a table where the soldiers were waiting for him to join them in their game. In view of his rank he drank wine sweetened with

⁴⁷ Wast, loc. cit.

⁴⁸ Loc. cit.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 89.

sugar, a rare drink for the others. This guardroom was a narrow, long room, very poorly lighted by lamps here and there burning with the fat of fish, of deer, or of other animals trapped by the hunters. Propped against or hanging on the wall were halberds, muskets, shields, pikes, rapiers, and swords, some rusty and coarse, others heavy and large, but polished, and some dazzling like jewels. The soldiers kept on their breastplates and helmets but removed their weapons for the sake of comfort as they sat at table.⁵⁰

Lo que Dios ha unido presents a rather unique picture of Belén's rural house of bamboo walls and thatched roof which was strong enough to withstand the monsoons and tropical torrential rains.

Habían tenido la precaución de construirla en medio de un bosquecito de árboles de pan sobre terreno fértil y seco y no lejos de un manantial que nacía en aquel monte desde donde el Guazuncho creyó divisar un grupo de salvajes, que luego, vistos con los anteojos, resultaron ser orangutanes de la región, que los naturales de la isla llegan a domesticar y que los acompañan y les sirven con fidelidad de perros.⁵¹

In Valle negro Wast places Mirra in the simplicity of her home. This little girl, Mirra, went out into the kitchen where the bright warm embers were beginning to dwindle into a slumber under a coverlet of white ashes. Here by the fire she loved to wait listening to the superstitious tales of the old cook and the quaint stories of the peons, until it was time for her to go to bed. She preferred the coziness of the kitchen to

⁵⁰ Hugo Wast, Lucía Miranda, op. cit., pp. 155-162.

⁵¹ Hugo Wast, Lo que ha unido, op. cit., pp. 63-64.

the desolate dining room or to her aunt Flavia's bedroom. Quickly she fell asleep, but the barking of the dogs awakened her. The moonlight was streaming over her bed through an open window.⁵²

Again one finds characteristic touches of domestic regionalism. In this same work the cook, a dark, thin, little woman of uncertain age is pictured sitting on an overturned pail near the fire. She is smoking cornhusk cigars and watching a huge pot of tallow cubes melting. These cubes were made from the last fat of the slaughtering. Occasionally she took a skimmer and let it gradually sink by its own weight into the boiling fat. For a little time she stirred this boiling mass and then lifted the skimmer out again only to let the melted tallow drain off. Then she dexterously turned the crisp, savory smelling cracknel on to a platter made of pewter.⁵³

From Desierto de piedra one finds that Froilán Palacios' family did not live in the Real de San Eloy anymore since Froilán was dismissed. In order to retain his acquaintances, Froilán earned his living by running a roadhouse where a traveler might buy a box of sardines, procure a drink, or spend the night. Froilán had purchased the stone house near the road and a diminishing flock of sheep. Many rural inhabitants thought that the "pumas" were taking more than their share of this flock.⁵⁴ Others believed that "las robaban los cuatreros."⁵⁵

⁵² Hugo Wast, "Valle negro," op. cit., p. 303.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 1117.

⁵⁴ Hugo Wast, "Desierto de piedra," op. cit., pp. 1116-1117.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 1117.

The stock of this store was composed of six odd bottles placed on unpolished shelves, a few jars with "yerba mate" and sugar, a box of macarone; "dos or tres damajuanas de áspero vino tinto;"⁵⁶ a few large slippers; and a supply of sardine tins. Near by was a counter containing the scales and two small tables with stools beside them. Each table contained an empty sardine can which posed as a container for chips.

Muy bien se jugaba con tan rústicos elementos y un pringoso naípe que al terminar las partidas guardaba ña Silvestre en el cajón del mostrador temiendo que algún parroquiano distraído se lo llevara en las alforjas.⁵⁷

In El camino de las llamas Wast shows Tancredo entering the spacious stone kitchen while the men are saddling their saddle horses. His purpose is to find something to eat. This kitchen is large enough to accommodate twenty men gathered around the fire which burned on a ground floor. Somewhat later Yango, "banquiano de las tierras del sur," was within this kitchen among the "peones" who surrounded the fireside telling stories and drinking "mate."⁵⁸

Cuando una porción del costillar de un buey que se asaba sobre una tosca parrilla estaba a punto, la cortaban y comían con esa rara pulcritud de los gauchos, que aunque tironeen la carne con los dedos y la corten a flor de los labios, no se precipitan ni se ensucian, y mascan pausadamente, como hombres sin prisa.

⁵⁶ Loc. cit.

⁵⁷ Loc. cit.

⁵⁸ Hugo Wast, "El camino de las llamas," op. cit., p. 1591

Sus extrañas cataduras, los gruesos ponchos, el barbudo rostro de los más, las mejillas rese-
cas y tostadas, los largos facones que emplean
alternativamente para rebanar el churrasco, hacer
marcas en el suelo y escarbarse los dientes, se
dibujaban con el vigor de un grabado en madera, a
la humosa lumbre, que chisporroteaba cuando el
sebo derretido caía en las brasas.⁵⁹

Merceditas of La que no perdonó had arranged a large bouquet of wild flowers on the table. The flowers were among the best because the winds that circled the foot of the hills had sowed the choicest seeds. These flowers were cut from the border of the river. In two crystal clear pitchers, filled with choice cistern water, "flotaban cachitos de hielo traídos por el doctor."⁶⁰ Merceditas gave the last finishing touches to the bedroom. She dusted here and there, arranged a flower vase, removed a pedestal, and adjusted a window curtain.⁶¹ This shows such simplicity of habitation.

Occupational life embraces those labors singularly rural. Señor de Viscarra of Valle negro, upon the arrival of a cold winter, decided to slaughter an animal and store the beef away for this cold weather. During slaughtering time this word was passed among the poor miserable peasants who lived in wretched huts made of straw on rented land. Even though these laborers were happy in their idleness, they endured the lot of hunger and poverty. Frequently when the time came for the animal to be butchered a ragged old woman, accompanied by her two or three wan

⁵⁹ Wast, loc. cit.

⁶⁰ Hugo Wast, "La que no perdonó," op. cit., p. 897.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 929.

children, or perhaps the head of the family, would beg the owner of the "estancia" for a few leftover scraps.⁶² From the slaughtered animal the hide was removed and placed on the sunny ground to dry. The man who generally skinned the animal took great pride in performing this work without the slightest cut in the hide.⁶³

In every mountain corner and upon the smallest farm plenteous crops of fields of tall corn and waving gourd-vines came into view. Before the time for the corn to tassel "un viento cálido del Notre trajo una inmensa manga de langosta, que en una sola noche no dejó ni sobre los árboles, donde se apiñaba en voraces racimos, ni sobre la tierra, que cubrió en un viviente y espeso tapiz de acre olor, una sola hoja verde."⁶⁴ Despite this plague don Jesús saved his alfalfa field and his vegetable garden by sending a crowd of young men into these fields blowing tin horns and making strange noises to frighten the cicadas away.⁶⁵

The island described in Lo que Dios ha unido had excellent supplies of wood. Thousands of century old trees extended nearly to the ground and frequently united their branches. It was the task of the islanders to hew, saw, and to lumber from these trees the boards that were of useable lengths. Many of the ordinary necessities of the carpenter were lacking to these islanders. It was a problem to make nails that

⁶² Hugo Wast, "Valle negro," op. cit., p. 299.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 300.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 315.

⁶⁵ Loc. cit.

could be used in joining these island-dried boards into ships. Another process, in the fabrication of these materials, was that of making ropes and cloths for the sails. Their hopes of success seemed waning.⁶⁶

The daily tasks of these colonies consisted of laboring in the fields near their homes, where characteristic native vegetables were cultivated. They collected great quantities of sprouts of the bread tree from which they made flour. Some distance from the house and at the mouth of the river these natives fished with nets made from the rushes of the island.⁶⁷ In the mountains they set traps for the buffalo to bring him into captivity and to augment their domestic supply in the corral, where this animal was less fecund than "en estado de libertad."⁶⁸

Kitra and Kandy, natives of the island, busied themselves with the spinning of the fibers of certain rushes and cacti, which were plentiful along the lagoons and mountain sides. These threads were made into ropes and in time the natives learned how to turn this product of the "spinning wheel" into the fruit of the "loom." It is true that these were simply constructed cloths "a la manera india, y tejieron telas con las que confeccionaron sus vestidos."⁶⁹ They raised wild chickens and pigeons which augmented and varied their food supplies. The sago, or "arbol de pan,"⁷⁰ furnished millions of inhabitants in Oceania with food, and deep

⁶⁶ Hugo Wast, Lo que Dios ha unido, op. cit., p. 78.

⁶⁷ Loc. cit.

⁶⁸ Loc. cit.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 79.

⁷⁰ Loc. cit.

within the forests abundant bee colonies gave the honey which took the place of sugar for these islanders.⁷¹

In Myriam la conspiradora the wife and children of Chaparro gathered wild peaches, nuts, and oranges from the mountain sides. Too, they collected the honey of a species of "wild wasp," while Chapparo⁷²

cazaría yacuses, cuyos huevos y cuya carne sabe a la del pavo, o ciervos en las costas altas, o fijaría con la chuza carpinchos y nutrias en los esteros, los que a más de una carne sabrosa le producirían pieles fáciles de vender en cualquier pulpería. Atraparía tortugas en las playas arenosas, ensayaría su pulso en los yacarés de los pantanos, y pescaría con espinel, sin moverse del rancho, enormes mangurullús o exquisitos pejerreyes o dorados.

Y cuando le viniera la gana de comer un churrasco se pasaría a la tierra firme y carnearía una vaca de las haciendas cimarronas, sin dueño, que bajaban a las aguadas conocidas de todos los matreros.⁷³

In Chapter VI entitled "La ballenera en los Belermos," of this same novel a very colloquial scene was depicted. All of the washwomen of the city congregated on the river banks and descended into the holes of the river, somewhat like wells formed by the lapping of the water on the banks. Here they washed their clothing which was afterwards stretched out on the grass to dry.⁷⁴ These laundresses were "negras o mulatas, con sus negritos."⁷⁵

⁷¹ Loc. cit.

⁷² Hugo Wast, "Myriam la conspiradora," op. cit., p. 1155.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 1180.

⁷⁴ Wast, loc. cit.

⁷⁵ Loc. cit.

A real country occupational scene was described in El camino de las llamas in which Tancredo was seen stirring the coals of the fire and blowing on them to make a flame, "puso agua a calentar y limpió y llenó el mate, con yerba nueva para tomar unos cuantos cirmarrones antes que nadie."⁷⁰ Matilde, the mistress of the house, entered the kitchen carrying a large slab of meat. The dwellers ate a breakfast of bitter or sweet mate and a strip of hearth-roasted meat which derived a special flavor from the ashes of the fire.⁷⁷ Outside in the corral was Quilpara, the Indian girl, aiding her brother, Baltasar. They were milking the cattle from whose milk "hacían quesos famosos en la región."⁷⁸ On the plains about a hundred feet from the corral was a group of peones who were heading off a steer that was to be barbecued.⁷⁹

El novillo, un overo negro lleno de bríos, acababa de cortar el lazo con tan rudo tirón que su enlazador y aun la mula rodaron por los suelos.

Y mientras los demás peones acudían a auxiliar al caído, el novillo ganó el monte.

.....
 [Matilde] no pudo resistir la tentación de lucirse, abandonó el corral y partió como volando a ras de la limpia llanura leonada.

.....
 ... Pronto se la vió alcanzar al fugitivo que intentaba esquivarla cambiando de rumbo. Pero alla había armado el lazo, iba revoleándolo y no bien estuvo a tiro lo arrojó con infalible precisión.

⁷⁰ Hugo Wast, "El camino de las llamas," op. cit., p. 1581.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 1580.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 1587.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 1641.

El novillo pegó un bote por librarse, y la armada fué cifándose a la raíz de sus cuernos agudos y lustrosos.⁸⁰

Isidor Puentes of Desierto de piedra, a heavy, active, small man was driving a pair of fat glossy mules that were drawing a steel plow. This was the first of its kind in this section as the natives cared only to scratch the earth with somewhat small wooden ploughs similar to those employed by the Pharaohs. Over the furrows that Puentes made, Dolores, his oldest daughter, drove another mule team to harrow the clods and to drag the roots. Every few paces she would stoop to lift the iron harrow. Here and there particles of brushweed and thorn had fallen through its teeth. Doña Zoila, her mother, followed with a pitchfork tossing the rubbish into a heap to be burned towards evening. A slight distance away the three younger sons cared for the hens and roosters that found ample food at the point of the plow. Under this steel implement the earth was pulverized as fine as coffee and combed to perfection. Marcela was charmed at the beauty of this work very ably accomplished.⁸¹

While Marcela was in the corral she struck a broken bell against the stones on a nearby elevation to call the sheep from the pasture. When the goats heard the bronze bell peal they whirled suddenly like dry leaves blown by the wind and rushed down the path into the valley road.⁸² After milking time Marcela went to the kitchen where she placed an earthenware

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 1642.

⁸¹ Hugo Wast, "Desierto de piedra," op. cit. p. 1062.

⁸² Ibid., p. 1064.

milk bowl on a hot fire. She stirred the mush for a while, then put the roast in the boiler. The smoke of the sputtering grease seemed to envelope her, but she was happy to find her brothers so well-behaved during her absence and so finely entertained by the stories of Don Pedro Pablo.⁸³

In "La ciénaga verde" of Desierto de piedra one sees the arable land practically ruined by the Peruvian hares, "vizcachas," that had uprooted and destroyed the crops. Puentes seemed resigned to this disaster and called his sons with hoe and shovel to help him after a downpour of rain which transformed the meadows into lakes. His purpose was to direct the rain into the burrows of the wild hares. Normally these burrows were inaccessible; but when an opening was made through the ridge, the water rumbled into them with the force of a cascade. When this work was accomplished the workers awaited the results.⁸⁴ "Los muchachos gritaban de alegría. Isidro blandía su pala como un caballero su montante y ladraban los perros, sin apartarse un jeme de la boca por donde esperaban la primera vizcacha. La cual surgía con el pelo erizado, medio ahogada, estornudando y encandilada por la luz del día."⁸⁵

The writer has selected those descriptions which seemed somewhat impressive. Wast describes very powerfully.

In Lucía Miranda there is a brief but vivid description of the Indian interpreter. Carlos, the Tupí, was a "muchachón," extremely agile

⁸³ Ibid., p. 1069.

⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 1070-1071.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 1071.

and vigorous. He possessed a true copper-colored skin. His dress was still a breech-cloth of hide. This he wore in Indian fashion; on great occasions of festive tone perhaps he might don a soft fur, but never would he wear sandals or hat. He kept his "cabellos negrísimos a ras de los hombros."⁸⁶

Another unique character was that of Bengas. He was an extremely ugly man. He was minus all of the hairs of his head even around his ears; but in exchange as one glanced over his whole face, a thicket of whiskers so tangled and heavy that his mouth was almost invisible, compensated for this baldness. However merry and "charlatán" nature may have gifted him, it seemed utterly impracticable that the "buen hombre" should be able to speak, eat, and laugh. "Parecía que le habían puesto la cabeza al revés, y que tenía arriba lo que debía tener abajo, y que invirtiéndolo quedaría más adecuado."⁸⁷

A gruesome picture of Mujuluto that resembled the demon himself was most graphic. She was old but highly agile, bearded as a goat and with tiny eyes somewhat rat-like. She looked more like a mass of charcoal roots than one of Almighty God's creatures. She struggled, squealing like a small pig, to extricate herself from the grip of the servants. She bit the men; although her toothless gums were harmless, the Indians feared her witchlike bite.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Hugo Wast, Lucía Miranda, op. cit. p. 57.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 89.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 132.

A more pleasing description is given of Lucía and Urraca. In their native country Lucía Miranda and Urraca Moreno seemed somewhat exotic. Some of their ancestors had come from the north where complexions were fair. These girls were born in Andalucía and had inherited features foreign to this southern province. Their light blonde hair glistened like the burnished bronze of a cannon. The splendor of Lucía's black eyes equalled that of any charming race; Urraca's were blue, dreamy and bright as the transparent waters of a mountain lake. She possessed an air of timidity and gentleness.⁸⁹

Ciro Dan of Juana Tabor was somewhat elegant as he entered the throne room. A penetrating horn sounded upon the opening of the door, All the rabbis stood up and bowed with an anxious and sad affection which poisoned their souls. Giro Dan was preceded by seven janizaries and followed by many beautiful maidens. His face was clean shaven which permitted a better picture of his perfect fanciful mouth somewhat arched by a proud and disdainful smile. His short wavy hair fell in ringlets over his narrow yet handsome forehead portraying a stubbornness and interior light. His skin bore the touch of a ripe wheat color, while his eyes were green and magnetic. His somewhat oblique eyebrows resembled those of the rude Tartars. Penetrating and rapid was his glance that characterized assurance in his morning star and knowledge of his own capabilities. Nevertheless, he seemed surprised as a lion that is free for the first time without a knowledge of his enemies whether they be those of other wild beasts or of man. His garb was that of a short white woolen cape in

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 115.

in Greek fashion which somewhat imperfectly hid his gladiatorial breast. Golden cords fastened his sandals to fine legs tanned by the sun and winds.⁹⁰

Juana Tabor was dressed as an Indian princess with a "manto blanco sobre los cabellos negros, sencillamente alisados;"⁹¹ golden sandals, and a red ribbon tied around a very pretty forehead.⁹²

Belén of Lo que Dios ha unido at first appearance was somewhat deceptive to the imagination. The atmosphere under which she was introduced to the reader enhanced this deception. Under a gentle light of an electric lamp shaded by a small blue handkerchief, Belén presented a delicate profile of a young woman sketched with gracious purity on an extremely milk-white pillow. The iodine of the sea had given her complexion a sand-toasted golden color and the tropic sun had made her appear exotic.⁹³

Un velo purpúreo, que le cubría la cabeza, impedía ver sus cabellos. Pero, a juzgar por su tez, debían de ser negros como el ala del cuervo. Así, por lo menos, se lo imaginó el padre Gazapo, que no las tenía todas consigo, porque allí mismo, de pie/junto a la cama, descubrió la presencia de otras dos mujeres de muy buena estampa las dos, una que debería de andar en los cuarenta años, y la otra muy joven, pero tan alta como ella.

.....
Iba el padre Gazapo a esta altura de sus cavilaciones, cuando la más hindú de las tres, según él, que sintió sus pasos, hizo un gesto

⁹⁰ Hugo Wast, Juana Tabor, op. cit., pp. 98-99.

⁹¹ Ibid., pp. 126-127.

⁹² Ibid., p. 127.

⁹³ Hugo Wast, Lo que Dios ha unido, op. cit., p. 35.

y arrojó de sí el velo que la cubría la cabeza, y aparecieron los cabellos rubios más radiantes y revueltos que el buen padre hubiese visto en su vida; y su dueña se incorporó, cubriéndose los hombros hasta el cuello con aquel mismo velo, tan sutil que, aun siendo extenso como un manto, cabía apretado en un puño.⁹⁴

Amroso, a servant of Valle negro, was a short, thick-set man with a long beard, gleaming eyes, and quick, catlike movements. He wore a threadbare shirt through which his muscles could be seen. These were as firm and strong as those of a gorilla. Judging by his hesitant speech and low forehead, one would conclude that his intelligence was limited.⁹⁵

A very elegant description of a palace which Ciro Dan had ordered constructed was found in 666. The choice stones of Sirsa had been used in its erection. Resplendant marble of Italian cathedral style surrounded by thousands of jasper column enhanced its beauty. Innumerable artifices were chiselled on each bronze capital in symbol of a verse from the Hindu national epic, Ramayana. In entirety the national poem was completed on these columns. Under the lofty ceiling and on the red pavement camels, elephants, and panthers roamed freely as if in the Burmese woods. Few people observed that seven prisoners dressed in black, black and white, or totally white, representing the religious order to which they belonged, were in the circle enclosed by the columns. They had their hands tied and their hair tonsured. They seemed submissive to their lot and oblivious of the audacious panthers that whipped their tails against their flexible

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 35-36.

⁹⁵ Hugo Wast, "Valle negro," op. cit., p. 283.

flanks and blinked their bergl eyes. Next to these was an altar on which burned large wax candles that were dwindling in length so as to heat the iron candle sticks decorated with apocryphal signs. Two enormous Bengalese tigers, drowsing lazily, guarded two bronze trunks that were under a purple canopy and facing the altar. At the right of the throne "había siete magníficos elefantes, retenidos por un cornac, y delante de cada uno de ellos un bloque de mármol blanco, tallado en cubo."⁹⁶

A description of the thrones found in Rome, which was now under the name of Babylonia on account of its beauty and corruption, did justice to their grandeur. Those that were under a red canopy were sumptuously selected, made of gold and marble, and contained damask black tapestries whose designs were quite different.⁹⁷ "El de la izquierda mostraba en la tapicería del respaldo las Tablas de la Ley sostenidas por dos leones. El de la derecha, un dragón rojo de siete cabezas con diadema. Las patas de ambos terminaban en soberbios zafiros tallados como pies de cabra."⁹⁸

A great number of the novels of Wast have religious atmosphere in them. Many have biblical quotations and lead one to draw excellent profit from the manner in which these religious examples are dispersed through his works. In one of the chapters of Lo que Dios ha unido, entitled "La enferma del velo purpúreo," Father Gazapo has just spent a half

⁹⁶ Hugo Wast, 666, op. cit., pp. 218-219.

⁹⁷ Hugo Wast, Juana Tabor, op. cit., p. 96.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 97.

hour in hearing the confession of a penitent,

durante la cual se había guardado, conforme es de regla, de manifestar ningún asombro, aunque bien lo sintiera; y pronunció la fórmula de la absolución que los buenos católicos oyen miles de veces en su vida y que termina con estas palabras prodigiosas, porque borran en el cielo los pecados que los hombres cometan en la tierra: "Yo te absuelvo de tus pecados, en el nombre del Padre y del Hijo y del Espíritu Santo."⁹⁹

Padre Gazapo spoke of the sublimity of the priesthood to Belén. He mentioned that his calling was delicate and exalted and should be likened to the words of the Canticle of Canticles, "'aunque un hombre diera por este amor todo su caudal, creería no haber dado nada."¹⁰⁰ His love is unspotted, stronger than death.¹⁰¹ The indelible stamp of Christ is placed on the soul of the young priest and whatever may have been his unfaithfulness in youth, now "él se despoja de todo lo que los hombres llaman bienes: la riquezas, la ambición, la envidia, los rencores, el amor..¹⁰² It is necessary to listen to the voice of Christ when He speaks to the soul. "--Sabes lo que es un sacerdote? Es un ojo pacífico, ciego para el mundo belicoso; un oídosordo al demonio; un corazón casto, inaccesible a las tentaciones. Andaba en tinieblas, y Cristo lo llamó a su admirable luz."¹⁰³ Padre Gazapo tried to impress Belén with the necessity of the

⁹⁹ Hugo Wast, Lo que Dios ha unido, op. cit., pp. 38-39.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 184.

¹⁰¹ Loc. cit.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 185.

¹⁰³ Loc. cit.

celibacy of the priest. He told her that a priest who daily consecrates the Body of Christ, hears confessions and distributes Holy Communion ought not to be married and that the Catholic priest "no es como el de la antigua ley, puesto que la víctima que el sacrificador sacrifica en su altar no es un corderito ni una paloma: es Cristo real y verdadero. El sacerdocio católico es una raza nueva engendrada en la virginidad de Cristo y de su Madre Santísima, virgen también."¹⁰⁴

The right of sanctuary was given to a soldier in the novel of Lucía Miranda. Friar Ramón slept in a hut adjoining the chapel, where a little oil lamp burned continuously before our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. His tabernacle had been fashioned by Pedro Barba out of the native wood. The Padre had been told to prepare a prisoner for death and as it was his usual custom never to pass the chapel without paying homage to our Eucharistic King, he ran to the altar, knelt down and was soon absorbed in the fathomless sea of prayer.¹⁰⁵

The writer terms Wast in every sense a regionalistic and charming author. Regionalism in his novels, which in this chapter embraces the beauty of his landscape scenes, his clever rural pictures, his domestic and occupational views, his rare choice descriptions and his deep religious tones may be appreciated only in their true value by reading his novels in their original language.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 312.

¹⁰⁵ Hugo Wast, Lucía Miranda, op. cit., p. 173.

CHAPTER IV

POPULARITY

Popularity, as used here in its broad sense with reference to Hugo Wast, connotes being in literary favor with the people. The writer proposes to incorporate in this chapter such outstanding factors as the titles of his numerous publications, the enormous quantity of his works, his excellent awards, the important positions that he has held both as a literary and political man, his literary prominence, and various criticisms of his works by famous men of letters, that enhance Wast's popularity.

It seems unbelievable today that there was a time when Wast's novels were unknown. Through his works he has acclaimed widespread popularity and applause from thousands of admirers in Europe and the United States not to mention his own Spanish-speaking countries.¹

An unsigned quotation from The Literary Digest is quite appropriate to prove the struggle that Wast encountered in the publication of his books in order to reach the pinnacle which he has now achieved.

"Hugo Wast's early work was ignored in hostile silence by the critics, refused by publishers, the center of literary storms as each new hard-won bit of recognition was accorded him. Of necessity, he became his own publisher when his first novels were refused, and he still continues this arrangement, spending each winter putting the new book

¹ Sedgwick, op. cit., p. 116.

through the press, and reprinting his other works which go into edition after edition. Mr. Wast estimates that more than a million copies of his twenty novels have been sold averaging about fifty to sixty thousand a year. He has managed the promotion of his books himself without the aid of literary groups, although the critics are now won over and recognize him as their first realistic writer."²

One may conclude from the large number of publications and editions that emanate from the publishing house of Editores de Wast in Buenos Aires that this house is very flourishing today.³ From the period of 1905 to 1940 the published works of Wast consisted of thirty-three titles. Here the writer has recorded the year of the first edition of each book together with the number of the editions up to March of 1940. From 1905 to date Alegre has reached thirteen editions; from 1907, Novia de vacaciones, fourteen editions; from 1911, Flor de durazno, twenty-seven editions; from 1914, Fuente sellada, thirteen editions; from 1916, La casa de los cuervos, twenty-two editions; from 1918, Valle negro, twelve editions; from 1919, Ciudad turbulenta, ciudad alegre, ten editions; from 1920, La corbata celeste, sixteen editions; from 1921, Los ojos vendados, nine editions; from 1922, El vengador, seven editions; from 1923, La que no perdonó, ten editions; from 1924, Pata de Zorra, nine editions, and Una estrella en la ventana, seven editions; from 1925, Desierto de piedra, ten editions; from 1926 three books: Las espigas de Ruth, four editions, Myriam la conspiradora, five editions, and El jinete

² "An Argentine Novelist," The Literary Digest, op. cit., p. 25.

³ Hugo Wast, Las espigas de Ruth, op. cit., [On verso of title page.]

de fuego, five editions; from 1927 two books: Tierra de jaguares, eight editions and Sangre en el umbral, four editions; from 1929, Lucía Miranda, ten editions; from 1930 two books: 15 días sacristán (relatos), four editions, and El camino de las llamas, eleven editions; from 1931 three books: Vocación de escritor, three editions, Don Bosco bajo Pío IX, twelve editions, and Don Bosco bajo Carlos Alberto, twelve editions; from 1935 two books: Oro, fourteen editions, and El Kahal, fourteen editions; from 1936, Naves, oro, sueños (cuentos), three editions; from 1941 El 6º sello (exégesis bíblica), one edition; from 1942 two books: "666" (2ª parte), four editions and Juana Tabor (1ª parte), four editions; from 1944, Esperar contra toda esperanza, three editions; and from 1945, Lo que Dios ha unido, two editions.⁴ From July, 1945 to March, 1946, at least twenty-three new editions were published.⁵

It is a rather dangerous thing to assign Wast a definite place with respect to his contemporaries, such masters of the novel as Benito Lynch, Gálvez, Larreta, Guiraldes, Payré and others. An outstanding element in Wast, which may be listed as a definite principle in favor of Wast's popularity in foreign countries, is his restrained use of dialect. One who does not possess an intimate knowledge and acquaintance with the colloquial idiom, which is so often employed in gaucho dialect in the great novel, Don Segundo Sombra, by Guiraldes, would find this work very difficult reading. Wast has so selected his material that it is easy

⁴ Hugo Wast, Juana Tabor, op. cit., [On verso of title page.]

⁵ Conclusive comparison of the writer.

reading. It harmonizes into a facile, natural, narrative style devoid of extensive dialectical conversations. There is an emotional, human, universal character appeal to his works which bespeak the language of the heart.⁶

Wast, the novelist, maintains a high place in the world of Hispanic letters; too, these books might well be called "best sellers" because over a hundred thousand copies of some of them have been sold--a proof of popularity almost without parallel in the literature of the language. Even the sale of some of his other books has reached the number of twenty-five to fifty thousand.⁷ "In reality a new book is to its author a new battlewith the public, with the critics, with the ideas of his generation."⁸ This is very true in reference to Wast who answers the remarks he evokes with only one method. Never has he answered with a line. His response is in the form of a new book by which one is deeply impressed with Wast's literary beliefs and personality.⁹

The enormous quantity of his works may be gleaned from the number of editions that are given yearly to the public. From 1905 to March, 1946, there have been printed 65,000 copies of Alegre; 57,000 copies of Novia de vacaciones; 177,000 copies of Flor de durazno; 102,000 copies of

⁶ Jones, op. cit., pp. 210-211.

⁷ Jose Maria Samperio, [Translated by Carmen De Pinillos]. "El escritor cuyos libros han conmovido millares de almas," Inter-America, 8: 535, August, 1925.

⁸ Loc. cit.

⁹ Loc. cit.

Fuente sellada; 151,000 copies of La casa de los cuervos; 77,000 copies of Valle negro; 100,000 copies of Ciudad turbulenta, ciudad alegre; 82,000 copies of La corbata celeste; 113,000 copies of Los ojos vendados; 98,000 copies of El vengador; 46,000 copies of La que no perdonó; 44,000 copies of Pata de Zerra; 34,000 copies of Una estrella en la ventana; 59,000 copies of Desierto de piedra; 20,000 copies of Las espigas de Ruth; 40,000 copies of Myriam la conspiradora; 40,000 copies of El jinete de fuego; 42,000 copies of Tierra de jaguares; 22,000 copies of Sangre en el umbral; 40,000 copies of Lucía Miranda; 18,000 copies of 15 días sacristán (relatos); 67,000 copies of El camino de las llamas; 17,000 copies of Vocación de escritor; 54,000 copies of Don Bosco bajo Pio IX; 54,000 copies of Don Bosco bajo Carlos Alberto; 78,000 copies of Oro; 78,000 copies of El Kahal; 15,000 copies of Naves, ora, sueños (cuentos); 5,000 copies of El 6º sello (exégesis bíblica); 27,000 copies of "666" (2ª parte); 27,000 copies of Juana Tabor (1ª parte); 25,000 copies of Esperar contra toda esperanza; and 18,000 copies of Lo que Dios ha unido.¹⁰ The addition of these numbers forms a grand total of 1,848,000 copies published within a period of forty-one years. From this one may rightfully conclude that the number of readers has far surpassed the printed copies. Besides these novels published under his pseudonym, Wast has published under his real name, Martínez Zuviría, El naturalismo y Zola, Los dos grumetes, La creación ante la pseudociencia, Rimas de amor (poesías), Golondrina de presidio (cuentos), A dónde nos lleva nuestro panteísmo de estado (Tesis

¹⁰ Hugo Wast, Juana Tabor, op. cit., [In front of book.]

para optar al grado de doctor en derecho), El gran cuento del tío en la literatura nacional, Pequeñas grandes almas, El enigma de la vida, Un país mal administrado, and Presa parlamentaria.¹¹

It is interesting to know that Wast possesses a bibliographical collection in his office that few American authors could produce: "the covers of a hundred different editions of books of his, printed here and there in Spanish and in other languages, authorized editions and pirated editions; a collection that must be quite incomplete and one that reveals what sympathy with the Argentine spirit had been awakened by the silent, strong work of Hugo Wast."¹² His books are found everywhere in the great bookstores of the most remote corners of the world.¹³

Wast considers himself unworthy of the praise and popularity that are his due, especially the praise of being the "American Pereda." He stated that Pereda was one of the greatest novelists of all times. Furthermore, Wast mentions, "If he [Pereda] be but little known outside of his own country, it is because he is a Spaniard. It is the same with him as with Menendez y Pelayo; if they had been born in France, their names would be forever on our tongues. . . ."¹⁴ The writer reiterates these words as applicable to Wast.

Great honors in the form of awards have been bestowed on Hugo Wast.

¹¹ Hugo Wast, "Bibliografía de Hugo Wast," Hispania, 16: 187-188, May, 1933. /Letter written April 10, 1931, to Alfred Coester./

¹² Samperio, op. cit., pp. 525-536.

¹³ Ibid., p. 536.

¹⁴ Loc. cit.

To place greater emphasis on Wast's popularity the writer restates that as early as 1916 Wast received the National Atheneum reward for his novel, La casa de los cuervos.¹⁵ In 1923 La que no perdonó was granted, from abroad and bestowed in Argentina, the third part of a prize given to the best literary production of the year.¹⁶ In the following year Wast was awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Spanish Academy of Letters for Valle negro as one of the best books published in the five year period from 1919 to 1922.¹⁷ Commenting about this premium Wast demurely said, ". . . This great prize, so unexpected and so honorable, that the Royal Academy Española has just conferred on my modest portrayals of the Argentine environment is preoccupying me."¹⁸ And when questioned further he replied, "In truth, my friend, I find no explanation of the fact. I suppose the academy has desired to honor American literature in the person of one of its representatives and has made a bad selection of the least indicated person, because I was the least decorated, the least officialized."¹⁹ Samperio's pleasing reaction to these words of Wast is worthy of citation.

These words spoken without affectation, caused me to suppose that in the heart of the greatest interpreter of the Argentine soul and landscape there is a certain disenchantment because of the irritating partiality with which juries, in the competitions of his coun-

¹⁵ "An Argentine Novelist," op. cit., pp. 535-536.

¹⁶ Sedgwick, op. cit., p. 116.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 117.

¹⁸ Samperio, op. cit., p. 537.

¹⁹ Loc. cit.

try, have pronounced against him. He is beyond dispute, the most universal of our writers and he has won his fame abroad, not as a tourist, but as an author. It has not been necessary for him to go; his works which interest the people of all countries by the true humanity that vivifies them, have gone.²⁰

It is of singular note that while the highest authority in Spanish literature--"Real Academia Española--honored Valle negro, in a competition held in Argentina this novel was set aside and books that long since have been forgotten received awards."²¹ Samperio calls this "a curious case!"²²

In further statement about this affair Samperio continues:

Let us say with a blush that the vast and enduring work of the author of La corbata celeste has not won in his country any more than the fifth part of a second prize! Just as it sounds! It is proper to say so, because few are aware of the fact.

We excuse the juries that thus chastize the fecundity of the true creator of the Argentine novel.²³

Another wonderful award was the grand literary prize of the Argentine Government which amounted to 30,000 pesos and bestowed in 1926 upon Desierto de piedra.²⁴ In Wast's opinion Pata de Zerra does not merit the praise given it, but he frankly states:

"As to Desierto de piedra I confess to you my liking for it. I wrote it with the enthusiasm

²⁰ Samperio, loc. cit.

²¹ Loc. cit.

²² Loc. cit.

²³ Ibid., pp. 537-538.

²⁴ "Martínez Zuviría," Who's Who in Latin America, op. cit., p. 313.

of youth, that of a beginner enchanted with his work. It is simple and dramatic, but not sad; and--what means more to me--I think it possible that it will be read by all kinds of readers; not only by those that are acquainted with the veiled art of composition and style, but also by the humblest reader of my humble Flor de durazno in the most sequestered Argentine village. All will understand it equally. It is the book that I have dreamed of writing and that I have finally written."²⁵

Wast has merited many positions of importance. In 1928 he was named Academic Correspondent of the Royal Spanish Academy of Languages. He is the actual Director of the National Library of Buenos Aires, "Desempeña este alto cargo desde 1931, en que fué designado por el Gobierno de la Nación para reemplazar al Dr. Carlos F. Melo, que había fallecido."²⁶ As head of this library Wast has been very active, "se ha caracterizado por el gran impulso impreso a la marcha de la institución y por un extraordinario enriquecimiento de su fondo bibliográfico."²⁷

He was made provisional president of the National Commission of Culture in 1937. The distinguished honor of being the founder and director of Revista de la Biblioteca Nacional of Buenos Aires has been his since its inception of 1937.²⁸

²⁵ Samperio, op. cit., pp. 538-539.

²⁶ Hugo Wast, "Gustavo Martínez Zuviría, "Todas las novelas de Hugo Wast, op. cit., p. 9.

²⁷ Loc. cit.

²⁸ "Martínez Zuviría," Who's Who in Latin America, op. cit., p. 313

He became a member of the Directive Commission of the Cultural Argentine-Uruguayan Institute in 1938. "Vicepresidente 1º de la filial Argentina de la Asociación de Escritores y Artistas Americanos de La Habana desde 1939,"²⁹ has been his honor. In 1940 he became a member of the Columbian Academy of Letters.³⁰

On October 15, 1943, Doctor Gustavo Martínez Zuviría, Hugo Wast, was made Minister of Justice and Public Instruction and began the active spiritual renovation of the Argentine Universities.³¹ Within the week of his taking office he had a student strike with which to contend, but he was determined to break the opposition. On October 28, Martínez Zuviría ordered the universities closed; furthermore, he ordered that those who stayed away from the November final examinations should be suspended on the ground that their lack of interest showed that they had mistaken their calling.³² His ability to carry on in spite of opposition showed his influence in this political and educational affair.

Finally a culminating honor was conferred upon Martínez Zuviría by the Vicar of Christ. "Fué nombrado por el Papa Pío IX Comendador Pontificio de la Orden de San Gregorio Magno."³³

²⁹ "Martínez Zuviría," Quién es quién en la Argentina, op. cit., p. 503.

³⁰ Loc. cit.

³¹ Isabel F. Rennie, "The Opposition," The Argentina Republic (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1945), p. 358.

³² Ibid., p. 359.

³³ Hugo Wast, "Gustavo Martínez Zuviría," Todas las novelas de Hugo Wast, op. cit., p. 9.

Of late years Hugo Wast has become prominent in the United States. One may conclude this from the classic editions in Spanish of Desierto de piedra edited by E. R. Sims and published by Heath and Company of New York, La casa de los cuervos edited by Herman Hespelt and published by the Macmillan Company of New York, Pata de Zerra edited by Dr. P. G. Evans and published by Doubleday, Doran and Company of New York, and El camino de las llamas edited by L. M. Casis, R. S. Switzer, and S. L. Harrison and published by D. C. Heath and Company of Boston. These editions, containing vocabulary and notes in English, were adopted "para el estudio del castellano en universidades y colegios norteamericanos."³⁴

The professor of Spanish in the University of Miami, Florida, "escribe al editor: "Pata de Zerra, de Hugo Wast, es uno de los mejores textos de lectura que yo haya encontrado. El relato despierta tal interés en los alumnos, que resulta fácil compelerlos a su estudio. Lo creo especialmente adecuado para el curso secundario de castellano."³⁵

It is a great tribute to Wast's literary prominence to note that Don Nicolás Bayona Posada, professor of literary history in the Pontifical University of Bogotá, wrote in the Revista Javeriana that in their university classes the professors have observed that Wast exercises a greater influence over their youths than all the other novelists of the Castilian language.³⁶

³⁴ Hugo Wast, 666, op. cit., [In back of book.]

³⁵ Hugo Wast, Lo que Dios ha unido, op. cit., [In back of book.]

³⁶ Wast, loc. cit.

Further proof of his literary prominence may be observed from the twelve languages into which his works have been translated. These translations appear in German, French, Dutch, Italian, English, Portuguese, Polish, Russian, Czech, Hungarian,³⁷ Swedish, and Danish.³⁸ Buchverlag of Berlin, Germany, has published Señora Erna Stoldt's translations of Desierto de piedra, La que no perdonó, and La casa de los cuervos; Holle and Company, Berlin, J. Surschmidt's, El Kahal and Oro; "Esta traducción de Oro no circuló por haberla prohibido el gobierno alemán."³⁹ The "Goethe" edition, Buenos Aires, El camino de las llamas, and these other translations have been published in periodicals--Señora De P. L. Kobelt's translation of La corbata celeste and P. J. Holzer's translation of Flor de durazno and Una estrella en la ventana. La Renaissance du Livre, Paris, published Mme. Fischbacher's translation of Desierto de piedra; Nouvelle Revue Francaise, Paris, George Pillement's Valle negro; F. Sorlot, Paris, La casa de los cuervos by same translator; Editions Bourrellier-Chemenes, Paris, Henry Gross' Alegre; Nouvelle Société des Editions, Paris, George Pillement's El camino de las llamas; Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, Paul de Seze's Las aventuras de Don Bosco. Other French translations that were published in periodicals compose Mme. Fischbacher's Un provinciano de vacaciones; Mme. Noël Domengé's Flor de Durazno and Pata de Zorra; and L. De Montpellier's

³⁷ Loc. cit.

³⁸ Pinto, op. cit., p. 377.

³⁹ Hugo Wast, Las espigas de Ruth, Editores de Hugo Wast, op. cit.
 [In front of book.]

La casa de los cuervos and Fuente sellada. In Dutch there are Valle negro translated by E. C. (L. J. Veen, editor, Amsterdam) and Las aventuras de Don Bosco and Alegre, VITGAVE GAN DE RESIDENTIEBODE (La Haya). In Italian Flor de durazno, Fuente sellada, Desierto de piedra, La que no perdonó and Pata de Zorra have been translated by Mons. Benedetto Neri (Grupo Buona Stampa, Mantova.) This same editor has published Vittorio Caselli's La casa de los cuervos, while the same translator with (Edit. Grazzini, Pistoia) has rendered Los ojos vendados and El vengador into Italian. Instituto di Propaganda Libraria, Milán has published Cesco Vian's El Kahal and Oro. In English Herman Hespelt and his wife, Miriam Hespelt, have translated Flor de durazno and Valle negro and given these to the public through the publishing house of Longmans Green and Company of New York. Under the same publishing house Louis Imbert and Jacques Le Clerq have translated Desierto de piedra and Lucía Miranda. Victor Rollins, Ph. D., of Washington, D. C., has translated Wast's Oro.⁴⁰ "Esta traducción al inglés de Oro, no ha sido distribuída por los libreros norteamericanos a causa del problema que trata."⁴¹ Williams and Norgate of London has published Leonard Matters' translation of La casa de los cuervos. La que no perdonó, Flor de durazno, Desierto de piedra, La casa de los cuervos, Fuente sellada, Valle negro, and Las aventuras de Don Bosco were published in Portuguese by Livraria do Globo, Porto Algere from the translation of Almachio Cirne. There is another

⁴⁰ Hugo Wast, 666, op. cit., [In back of book.]

⁴¹ Hugo Wast, Las espigas de Ruth, Editores de Hugo Wast, op. cit., [In front of book.]

translation in Portuguese, Los ojos vendados, by a Noite of Río de Janeiro. The publishing house of Towarzystwo Wydawnicze Roj, Varsovia has printed in Polish Dr. E. Bofe's translation of La casa de los cuervos, Tadeusz Jakubowicz's La que no perdonó, Flor de Durazno, Fuente sellada, and Fr. Baturewicz's Desierto de piedra and Un provinciano en vacaciones. The Russian language has only one translation which is that of Desierto de piedra by Sergio S. Ignatov in Moscow. Jos R. Vilimek, editor, Praga, has used A. B. Bejtek's translation of Desierto de piedra, La que no perdonó, and Flor de durazno in Czech. Ladislao Latinovitz has translated Flor de durazno into Hungarian.⁴² All of these various translations show the growing importance and vast dissemination of Wast's works beyond his own country.

Within Hispanic America many distinguished authors of anthologies and books of literature have incorporated descriptions and narratives of Wast in their books.⁴³ Outside his native country anthologies of diverse languages have also published narratives and stories of Hugo Wast. This gives a highly pleasing distinction to his works.⁴⁴ The grouping of these honored Castilian anthologies is most incomplete. Delfina Bunge De Galvez's anthology titled Iniciación Literaria contains, "Una noche en la posta," from "Las espigas de Ruth;" and J. C. Zerrilla de San Martin-Antología

⁴² Hugo Wast, 666, op. cit., [In back of book.]

⁴³ Hugo Wast, Lo que Dios ha unido, op. cit., [In back of book.]

⁴⁴ Loc. cit.

Escolar Hispano Americana e Iniciación Literaria of Santiago, has four works from "Tierra de jaguares": "El jaguar pescador," "El zorro y el camoatí," "Campeando el ganado cimarrón," and "La ballera perseguida."⁴⁵

Favorable comments on the author and his works reflect his popularity. José María Samperio visited Wast on the eve of the publication of Desierto de piedra while he was tranquilly correcting a stack of proofs and obtained from him first hand information about his critics.⁴⁶

"And your critics are always faithful?" I asked him. Hugo Wast doubtless believes my question to be malicious and he begins to laugh. Then he sighs like a disdained lover and answers with a certain melancholy:

"Formerly I had half a dozen critics--- what shall I say?---brief, short, of an inexplicable fidelity toward me, I published a book, and they shrieked in chorus:

"Have a care! Do not read that book because it is very bad!"

"Naturally. . . the public read. To them I owe three-fourths of my readers. I do not know how to repay them for this aid. . . if not by publishing another book; and I did so. . . Now they have forgotten me!"

"Good; those are the short critics," I reply; "and the long critics, don't they compensate?"

"What would you have me do with the long critics, my friend? The public hardly reads them. At the end of Una estrella en la ventana [A Star in the Window], I have brought together a synthesis of the criticisms; those of many pens, here and abroad. I desire thus to express to them my gratitude for the stimulus with which they supplied me by their

⁴⁵ Wast, loc. cit.

⁴⁶ Samperio, op. cit., p. 535.

judgments; but--may they pardon me!--their benevolence does not console me for the oblivion in which I repose in respect of my short critics."⁴⁷

Gertrudis Segovia de Santa Cruz de Tenerije said that Wast is "El primer escritor de nuestro idioma."⁴⁸

There is a magnificent legion of writers who represent Hispanic America. They may be classed with the great ones of Europe. Among these may be named for the glory of America that eminent Argentine, Hugo Wast,⁴⁹ "en lugar de preferencia."⁵⁰ Posada continues the praises of Wast:

Este último novelista [Hugo Wast], en efecto, puede contarse entre los mayores de la literatura universal. Y si alguien lo dura o a tribuye la afirmación a una hipóbole nacida de la amistad o de la simpatía, sígame en este viaje a través de la vida y de la obra del escritor ilustre, y diga luego con franqueza quién fué el equivocado.⁵¹

Manuel Gálvez, E. M. S. Danere, José María Samperio and Seiza Reilly, critics of the highest type, have advantageously reviewed Wast's works in his own country; and in the United States Dr. Herman Hespelt of Columbia University, an eminent scholar of Spanish-American literature, has lectured and written on Wast.⁵²

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 536.

⁴⁸ Hugo Wast, "La crítica y Hugo Wast, "Una estrella en la ventana, op. cit., [In back of book.]

⁴⁹ Posada, op. cit., p. 10.

⁵⁰ Loc. cit.

⁵¹ Loc. cit.

⁵² Sedgwick, op. cit., p. 116.

Ruth Sedgwick attributes the main cause of Wast's success to his carefully planned plots that contain mysterious and adventurous atmosphere, which create a guessing process for the reader as to the outcome of the novel.⁵³ In comparison with other contemporary regionalistic novelists of the Argentine, especially those whose works have come to our own country, one finds that Wast writes more interesting stories which have a stronger universal appeal to them.⁵⁴ "Novels that touch the reader's emotions are usually popular the world over. This is unquestionably true with every one of Wast's stories. The author takes us into the intimacy of the joys and sorrows of the characters."⁵⁵ Ruth Sedgwick gives this as an explanation, to a great extent, of the popularity among all people of his own country and especially for his fame abroad. Wast has a keen sense of humor in almost all of his novels.⁵⁶ He is a master artist in selecting the "idiosyncrasies of a middle-aged person, and in taking special boyish pleasure in characterizing old maids like Maclovia [of Pata de Zerra] and school masters like Don Triboniano."⁵⁷ Wast is not sarcastic in his playfulness; he is just genuinely humorous.⁵⁸

⁵³ Sedgwick, op. cit., p. 117.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 122.

⁵⁵ Loc. cit.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 123.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 125.

⁵⁸ Loc. cit.

The popularity of Wast has extended beyond the range of his first seventeen novels. La casa de los cuervos, Flor de durazno, and Valle negro have been presented on the Argentine stage, and the first two of these have reached the cinematograph.⁵⁹

La Nación of Buenos Aires writes in reference to Wast's popularity that he is, "El primer de los novelistas argentinos y uno de los más difundidos de la lengua castellana."⁶⁰

From Buenos Aires Estanislao S. Zaballos highly praises the writer of Flor de durazno by stating, "Quien ha escrito Flor de Durazno no debe aspirar a premios, está fuera de concurso."⁶¹

A member of the Royal Spanish Academy, A. Palacio Valdés, terms Wast as, "Uno de mis autores predilectos."⁶²

The writer selects these words of Samperio as an epitome of Wast, the noble man, the illustrious writer, and the staunch Catholic in his novel and its significance in contemporary Argentine literature.

Hugo Wast speaks without emphasis and without pose. He is a sound man in body and soul and he is conscious of the responsibility of a writer whose books are germinating like immortal seed in thousands of hearts.

He is a beautiful example of an honest novelist, who, after having attained such immense popularity, can say with pride that in

⁵⁹ Sedgwick, op. cit., p. 126.

⁶⁰ Hugo Wast, "La critica y Hugo Wast," op. cit., /In back of book./

⁶¹ Loc cit.

⁶² Loc. cit.

order to win a reader, he has never written a single page that he will to-day have to hide from his children.⁶³

⁶³ Samperio, op. cit., p. 539.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In a summary of the novel of Hugo Wast and its significance in contemporary Argentine literature, it is expedient to restate that the purpose of this study as mentioned in the preface was to acquaint individuals with the outstanding characteristics of Hugo Wast as a novelist in his literary setting, his women portraitures, his regionalistic touches, and his popularity delineated from these angles.

In this study the literary setting embraced these influences in Wast's life that moulded him as a novelist. His childhood environment and educative influences formed the basis of his literary career. Indeed Wast is what he calls a novelist--a creator--and he possesses that principal faculty which he terms imagination. Early in life his vivid imagination developed exceptionally until it gave the Spanish-American world novels whose plots are marvels. Not once was the writer able even to the slightest degree to unravel a thread of his enigmatical plots nor to fathom the conclusion of any of his novels. Perhaps his law experience assisted him in this subtle work of his masterful mind. The works of his youth prefigured his later novels.

His ideas of a novel definitely state his aesthetic creed. He terms a novel the gradual and continued portrayal of life until a justifiable conclusion is reached. How true he is to his own principles since his novels are true examples of those theories that he expounds! However,

they are mainly novels of action, but he disperses throughout his works gems of description that heighten interest.

Wast in his writings is thoroughly Catholic. He makes use of Catholic subject matter, inspiring expressions, and practical religion-- everywhere tinged with Catholicity. An entire novel is written as a biblical exegesis. He is fearless in giving to the literary world works that abound in Catholic atmosphere.

Hugo Wast has had practical experience as an editor and advises the use of certain methods in printing and publishing, as he terms it, "the successful career-launching of a book." Furthermore, he recommends choice literary selecting and discreet advertising.

This author ranks as an unaffected, straightforward stylist. His style recedes and gives place to his characters. This, to the mind of the writer, enhances the value of his transparent style. His ability to compose in a free-flowing manner denotes the characteristic of a born writer.

His recent works form somewhat of a contrast to his early cycle in that they may be placed in the category of American atmosphere, dramatic intensity, and emotional adventure with historic background and religious atmosphere.

The women protagonists live in the mind of the writer as true individuals. They have the strength and weakness of human beings. Their traits are in common; wilfulness, fearlessness, tenaciousness, resoluteness, and staunchness to principle. Yet they are individualistic. Their environments have created them to endure unto death. They are lovable; one at times sympathizes with them in their sorrowful and somewhat fatal-

istic lives. They are women of deep seated emotions moved only by the violence of strong stimuli.

Regionalism in the works of Wast as here selected by the writer describes the beauties of the mountains, valleys, rivers, and pampas of Argentina. Native fruits, flowers, insects, all nature in its splendor from the glories of dawn and sunset to the enchantment of twilight and moonbeams are rendered as only the master novelist can portray them.

His rural life scenes make one long to be present at some of these country episodes to satisfy one's curiosity. Simplicity and closeness to God are observed in many of these simple folk; others have a hardness born of rustic surroundings. Indians in their trafficking, gauchos, and farmers--all enter the picture.

Domestic life centers around the homes of these rural people. Their entertainments, customs, manners; kinds of food and drink; the ornaments in and appearance of their homes--all are vividly described. He writes simply of the poorly-lighted lamps fed by the tallow of fish and trapped animals.

In the occupational life one sees the ground prepared by the sower for its yearly seed. Wast gives minute details of harrowing soil and ripening crops. These laborers drain their marshes and irrigate their arable lands. The workers build crude huts, construct and manage village stores, and slaughter and barbecue meat for the winter supply. The women of the "estancia" engage in "mate" brewing, milk-maid chores, and other household duties.

Wast possesses a keen power of describing. The writer has ob-

served very unique descriptions of witchlike women, quaint Indian characters, and humorous individuals. Among the mass of descriptions are gorgeous architectural structures and sumptuous garbs of princely characters. Wast offers a marvelous array of persons, places, and things in his descriptive field.

In the religious atmosphere scenes of confession, Communion, invocations to our Blessed Mother through her litany, and doctrinal ideas are deftly woven into his works. Wast in an unassuming manner instructs in the faith by using parables and biblical quotations. He modestly displays his love for his holy faith. He seems so wholehearted about this precious gift that the Christian element of his works appears natural and spontaneous. The writer is happy to find one so in love with Holy Mother Church that he must give expression to many of its beauties.

Since Wast is such a prolific writer, so very charming, and so intensely interesting, it has been a pleasure to perceive his widespread popularity. If numbers prove popularity, Wast has reached the mountain heights of fame. His Obras Completas now form a library of thirty-one volumes while his editions surpass the million mark. The writer has noticed that Wast reprinted some of his early books under different names with only slight revision as to subject matter. Too, some of his non-fiction works have chapters extracted from one book and placed in another revised book. His various prizes for his works bespeak his popularity. Today Wast is appreciated politically, socially, and religiously. His novels are used in North-American schools and numerous languages have found his works for translations.

His former bitter critics have withdrawn their opposition and conceded to him his rightfully merited place in contemporary Argentine literature. The writer repeats with Nicolás Bayona Posada in "Vision cinematográfica de Hugo Wast" of Lo que Dios ha unido that ". . . novelas como Flor de durazno, Valle negre, Lucía Miranda y 666 son ya parte notable del patrimonio de la cultura universal. Y, ante ellas, puede Hugo Wast exclamar con el latino: Exegi monumentum aere perennius!. . ."

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Sister Mary Angele Whelan has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Spanish.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

Feb. 12, 1948.
Date

Guillermo Salvador
Signature of Adviser (P.K.)