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TOMÁS SALVADOR: CONTEMPORARY SPANISH NOVELIST

by

SANDRA ARMSTRONG

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Chairman, Board of Examiners

Dean, Graduate School

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In 1953 appeared *La Scapigliatura*, a crime story. In 1955 Salazar
appeared in *3/4 of a World*.

In 1952, after returning from the French culture trip, he had read the entire *Játé*
*second book*, *Carpineto*. He had published a novel in *La Scapigliatura*, a novel that had been entered in the *Novel Prize* contest for that year, and
for which the author had been awarded the Prize of the variety appeared. This
*three months* after the novel appeared. He did not find a publisher
where he now media his home. In 1950 he began to write, and in
Salazar entered the police force in 1944 and went to Barcelona.

*Disturbers* in Paris, where he was wounded once.

Years old, from 1947 to 1957, he fought with the Spanish
supporters of France. When the war was over, Salazar was exiled to
Paris. He was on the side of the Republicans. His father and older brother were
beaten and in 1948, Fuentes, with his mother and younger brother,
were killed in the Madrid massacre in the Prados Cemetery. When the Spanish Civil
of February, in November Spain, from there he fled to Mexico.

Salazar was born in 1921, in Vitoria, a town in the province
Yere's and went several times to Paris.

The works of Tolstoy that Salazar has published were novels in six
are the themes that characterize which are most apparent in the
products, themes and style of Francisco Pardo, a journalist and subject matter

INTRODUCTION
Cervantes prize in 1954. Two other novels by Salvador appeared in 1954: *La virada* (a sequel to *Cerjma*) and *División 250*, which between April and October of that year went through three editions. In addition to these two novels, Salvador published in 1954 a book of short stories entitled *Esta noche estaré solo*. And then, in 1955, Salvador published two more books: *Los atracadores* and *Hotel Tánger*. The year 1956 saw the publication of *El herático* and *Diálogos en la oscuridad*, and his latest book, *Cabe de varas*, was published in February 1958.

In addition to his work as a novelist, Salvador is a literary critic for the magazine CNDAS, and a founder of the "Premio de la Crítica," which twenty Spanish critics give each year to the best novel, the best essay, and the best book of poetry. He also writes for newspapers. Another aspect of Salvador's varied and busy life is that he is a member of the government police, something like the FBI, according to Salvador himself.¹

Of his life, he says: "Soy lo que ustedes llaman un 'self-made man,' exuberante en todo, para la guerra, el amor y el trabajo. Pensándolo bien, no sé si esto será bueno o malo, pero ya no puedo borrarlo."² He is married and has four children.

Salvador is one of a large number of rapidly rising contemporary novelists in Spain. His works are ambitious, as evidenced by the fact that he has already written his love story and his novel of war as

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¹Personal letter from Salvador, dated April 18, 1958.

²Ibid.
well as his crime and adventure stories. He is in constant search
for new approaches and new techniques. Historias de Valcamillo
is told from the point of view of a village idiot, rejected by heav-
ven and hell, who relates the story of his life and of his town.
El barco is almost a monologue; the lazy man tells the story of
his life, spending each of five days on a different level of his
hillside estate, speaking to people who are either dead or no longer
there. Diálogos en la oscurez is perhaps the most unusual of
Salvador's novels with regard to technique. In it, Salvador writes
in his own name. He meets his lover each week in a hotel room;
their conversations always have some bearing on and are supplemented
by the conversations overheard in the next room. El charco, Los
astrosadores, and Esta noche estaré solo stem from his police exper-
ience. Guerra de presos and Cabo de vera are historical novels,
the former dealing with the little understood Civil Guard of three
quarters of a century ago in Spain, and the latter with the penal
colony at Ceuta in the same period.

I have found Salvador to be extremely interesting, and though
I consider some of his books to be potboilers, others, I think,
reflect a real human understanding and all seem to be written with
sincerity of purpose, enthusiasm and vigor. Since Salvador has won
a number of literary prizes in Spain, and since, to my knowledge,
there has been no critical study of his works in the United States,
this thesis is intended as a broad introductory study of his novels.
A chapter is reserved for each book; included in the chapter will
be a plot summary followed by some comment on the book.
The two novels about diamond hunting in Brazil, *Corduroy* and *La viruta*, were written by Salvador and a co-author, José Vergés. Since it is impossible to determine how much Salvador himself contributed to these books, they have been omitted from this thesis.
CHAPTER ONE: HISTORIAS DE VALCANILLO

*Historias de Valcanillo*, Salvador's first published novel, is laid in the imaginary town of Valcanillo located somewhere on the Castilian plateau, probably to the north of Madrid.¹ There are two parts to the novel: the first is the autobiography of the protagonist, Jacintón, while the second consists of six stories about the people of Valcanillo, as told by Jacintón.

Jacinto Araque was born in Valcanillo in 1870. Jacintón, as he was called, was the village idiot. He never went to school beyond the age of seven, and never developed his powers of intelligence at all. Whenever he wanted anything he would cry until he got it, and his conversation was limited to two sentences: "porque me da la gana" and "Porque no me da la gana." The children of the village made fun of him and parents held him up as a horrible example to their children. Jacintón was used to living outdoors and would seek shelter at night in a stable, huddling close to the livestock for warmth. One night in January, 1901, the stable door blew open, letting in the wind and cold. Jacintón was too lazy to get up and close the door and the next day was ill with pneumonia. A few days later he died.

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¹Salvador, Tomás, *Historias de Valcanillo*. (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1952), p. 9: "Valcanillo es un lugarro de unas trescientas casas—terrazas paredes y amarillos tejados—, con tantos vecinos como casas, que es orea expuesto a las intemperies de la vieja pial de toro, situado, exactamente en el centro mismo de la Rosa de los Vientos."
The next thing he knew he found himself sitting on a cloud, with his white-robed guardian angel Belorado beside him. He was taken to the court of Heaven to be judged. When all the evidence was presented, it was found that although he had done nothing bad in his life, he had also done nothing good. Since there was nothing positive in his favor he was not allowed to enter Heaven. Heaven was a place of light which soothed. Peace and happiness pervaded the air. At the place of judgment, the judges appeared to be the apostles, for they had a less perfect, more human aspect than did the angels. Cherubim played among the clouds. Rejected by Heaven, Jacintón sank into darkness. When he was again able to perceive his surroundings, he found that he was in Hell, where bright colors hurt his eyes and a feeling of intense cold prevailed.

"El frío! El frío reinante era tan intenso, tan absoluto, que su presencia se palpaba; tan lacrimate, tan agudo, tan enervante, que asustaba los cuerpos con violentos temblores, tan fuertes, tan sostenidos, que aquellas sombras—y yo mismo—sueñaban estar atacadas de una alucinante epilepsia."

The devil was Lucifer, the fallen angel. His wings were in tatters, and he could no longer fly. His handsome face was ravished by his sufferings and he was only a shadow of his former splendor. Jacintoón was not permitted to stay in Hell either, for he had done no evil.

Again he blacked out and when he recovered consciousness, he was in Purgatory, where the souls were moving in a spiral column.

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2Salvador, op. cit., p. 41
ever upward. They were able to pray, to praise God, to sing psalms. Sometimes they were helped on their way by prayers or masses said for them on earth. Sometimes they became discouraged and lapsed a moment in their supplications. This would take them back in the line, sometimes only a few feet, sometimes thousands of miles. There was in Purgatory a sense of great space. Winds blew furiously. As a soul was able to purge itself of a sin, this sin went into a cloud. The yellowish clouds were composed of sins of envy; red clouds of blood which had been spilled; gray clouds of the sins of lying, gossiping, committing perjury, etc. The souls in Purgatory were repenting of their sins and struggling upward into Heaven. Obviously, since Jacintón had committed no sins, he did not belong there. Finally he was sent back to earth in response to the divine command:

"Debe volver la mirada al pasado, recoger su propia cosecha, segar su propia espiga. Y si nada hallare, a él y sólo a él, deba culparse."  

In Purgatory Jacintón had met a soul named Simón who was continually urging the others on in their journey upward. He told Jacintón the story of his life on earth. He had been a French monk in the 11th century and was so enthusiastic about the crusade to rescue the Holy Land from the infidels that he determined to organize a crusade himself. The Church had not yet made any decision on the Crusades, and the monastery superiors asked Simón to wait. He would not, and went from place to place in France gathering

\[\text{3Salvador, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 40}\]
recruits. Soon he had a band of 3,000 people. It became apparent that feeding such a multitude would be a problem. At first they lived from charity, later they stole food as they went along, and finally food became so scarce that the people were driven to steal and kill among themselves for something to eat. By this time Simón had lost control over his band of Crusaders. When they entered the land of the infidels, they were a hungry mob. Hearing that another group of Crusaders had already attacked the Turks, they too set out to wage war, badly armed, and starving. The greater number of them were killed, Simón among them.

When he entered Heaven, God told him that in view of the enormous number of sins committed by others because of him, he was to redeem himself by helping them into Heaven.

"Aquellas que por ti pecaron han de redimirse, como tú debes de redimir tu error y tu cobardía. Serás nuevamente el pastor de un inmenso rebaño; incontables generaciones de seres han de ver en ti la escuela de su fe, el aliento de sus pasos... Ayudarás a tus hermanos en la larga agonía de un camino interminable; testigo y guardia serás de infinitas muchas mueren sostenidas por una inquebrantable esperanza... Acabará tu tarea cuando el último de los penitentes acabe su camino. Entonces, asido a su mano, entrarás en mi Reino..."  

Jacintón wandered for a short time in Purgatory. Then he lost consciousness. When he came to, he found himself under a bed. He realized at length that it was his own bed and after crawling out, found that his new body had no substance and was completely invisible to others, nor could his voice be heard. On the bed was lying his

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Salvador, op. cit., p. 81-82
human body and some of the village people were making arrangements for its burial. Later that day the body was buried.

The next ten years were for Jacintón a period of despair because he could not communicate with the villagers and because he had not resigned himself to his isolation. Finally, one day, he found himself outside the school, listening to the children reciting their lessons. He decided to join them and spent the next five years learning to read, to write, and to figure. After that he devoted himself to reading all the books he could get hold of and to studying human psychology by watching the people around him. This awoke in him the desire to communicate with others, to make his presence known. One day, ten years after leaving school, he succeeded in making himself visible to a small boy. As time passed more and more people could recognize him, and in about a year his presence was accepted by nearly all the villagers.

Soon after Jacintón was able to make himself seen, the village curate asked him to write a history of Valcanillo which would serve to increase the tourist trade through the village as well as to encourage commerce. So Jacintón undertook the history. He searched in the village archives, questioned the old men, and read all the books he could find which would furnish information on Valcanillo's past glory. But one night during the festival of San Juan, after working on his history for nearly five years, Jacintón decided that no history could present a true picture of his Valcanillo, a living village, with real people. And so he threw his notes into the great bonfire burning in the village square and began to write the true stories of the people of his town.
1. "Historia de Braulio al insomne"

Braulio had been a fine, healthy young man, who had courted a
girl named Luisa. Shortly before their marriage Braulio fell from
his horse, receiving a fractured skull when the horse stepped on
his head. His recovery was complete, except for one thing—he could
not sleep. Each night he would remain awake, pacing up and down or
staring at the fire. Having had a short "rest," he would be fresh
and able to work again in the morning.

Luisa convinced him that they should be married. His insomnia
kept her awake also, for she felt she should be with him in those
difficult hours. Soon the lack of sleep was too much for her and
she died, leaving Braulio with their six-month-old son. The next
twenty years were not so difficult for Braulio. He spent the nights
watching at the bed of his son. During this time, also, he became
friends with Jacintón, who often accompanied him in his nightly
vigils.

At length Braulio's son married. His wife did not believe in
Jacintón, and her father-in-law's restlessness at night bothered
her. Thereafter Braulio tried to stay in his room. One night he
told Jacintón that the doctor had said he was going blind; his eyes
could no longer bear the burden of remaining open twenty-four hours
a day. The only hope would be for Braulio to keep his eyes closed
at least eight hours a day. Jacintón suggested that he put his hand
over Braulio's eyes, keeping them closed in this manner. Braulio
was soothed by Jacintón's touch and the latter was filled with a
great thankfulness that he was able to help another human being.
For the whole night, Jacintón remained at Braulio's side, keeping
his hand on his eyes. He planned to do this every night, thus
saving Braulio from blindness. The next morning, however, when his
son and daughter-in-law entered the bedroom, Braulio was dead. God
had been merciful to him, and to Jacintón as well.

"He despidió de Braulio con un beso en la frente.
Salió de la habitación. Mi corazón era un Rosario jubiloso. ¡Gracias, Dios mío!

"Y acabo mi historia del insomne. No piensen
en ella como una narración triste. ¡No! ¿Por qué?
¡Braulio había cerrado los ojos! ¡Braulio estaba dur-
miendo! ¡Gracias, Dios mío!"5

2. "Historia Malograda"

Tadeo and Mariana were sweethearts. Ever since they had been
small children, everyone had said that they were meant for each
other, and they grew up believing this themselves.

When Mariana became eighteen years old, she realized that she
really loved Tadeo and was anxious that he declare his love for her.
He, however, took their relationship as sweethearts and their even-
tual marriage for granted, without actually telling her how much he
cared.

There was near Valcanillo a grove of poplar trees. In this
grove grew a great number of mushrooms. It was the custom in the
village to go out and gather these mushrooms on the first Sunday
after the grape harvest each year. The youth who picked the largest
mushroom was crowned king for the day. To insure fair play, there
was a municipal law which stated that anyone who was in the grove

5Salvador, op. cit., p. 124
for the purpose of finding the largest mushroom ahead of time would be imprisoned. Jacintón had been asked to go out and guard the poplar grove on the eve of the ceremony.

It was to this grove, then, that Marinnita and Tadeo came. They sat down near Jacintón, who was invisible to them. Mariana asked Tadeo to tell her sincerely that he loved her, but he could not find the words to convince her of it. She said she would leave and never see him again if he could not manage to persuade her of his feelings, and walked away. At that moment Tadeo realized how much he really did love her, but it was too late. In his anguish he picked a mushroom to take to her, thinking it a flower.

Meanwhile some of the villagers had seen Tadeo on his knees in the grass. They went out to investigate. Jacintón tried to warn Tadeo to throw away the mushroom, but failed to make his presence felt. Tadeo was imprisoned for three days, after which he became ill. In the meantime Mariana had found another sweetheart, whom she eventually married. Tadeo remained single. This was an "historia malograda" because, although Jacintón wanted desperately to help the young sweethearts, he had been unable to intervene in any way.

3. "Historia de Juan"

Juan was one of the persons who were not able to see Jacintón. He was considered an ordinary youth of the village, but one day Jacintón realized that Juan was a poet—a poet who never wrote a line and because of this would never have his verse published. After that discovery, Jacintón made a point of being with Juan often.
One day as he was walking through the town, Jacintón heard voices coming from the old hospital. As he drew near, he saw that Juan was talking heatedly to some of the village people. Jacintón entered the room, invisible to all. Juan was arguing that faith must include the things which one cannot prove. The others were sceptical, saying that they believed in what the Church said, or in what they could see, but nothing more.

Juan persisted, however, and in order to prove the power of faith, walked over to where a ray of sunlight was shining in through the window. He put his hand into the midst of it, closing his fist. Then he told the people that he had captured the sun, and that he would give it to anyone who wanted it and who believed in it. This sun would bring happiness and love. All the people refused his gift, because they didn't believe in him. Finally, someone asked Juan why he did not keep the sun for himself, if it could do so much. His answer was that he wanted to work out his happiness as best he could, to find love through his own efforts. He resolved to release the ray of sun. He walked back to where the sun could be seen shining through the window and opened his hand. A light emerged from it, going toward the ground. Jacintón, because he had wanted the people to believe in Juan, had been converted into a ray of sun.

"Yo fui quien me colocué en la mano de Juan para escapar al suelo, convertido en rayo de sol. Lo hice para salvarlo del ridículo! Lo desahogo tanto! ¡Tanto ansiaba que las palabras de mi poeta no fuesen frases vacías, que lo conseguí! Fui rastro luminoso en la mano de Juan. ¡Aire soy, cuerpo no tengo, y Dios permitió que salvara la fe de mi amigo, que es la fe de los hombres!" 

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6Salvador, op. cit., p. 183
4. "Historia de Barrabás"

There was in Valcanillo a very evil man who was nicknamed Barrabás. He had a mutilated hand and a scar on his face. He had cut off a finger in order to escape military service. The scar on his face was due to a kick a horse had given him. When he recovered from the wound, he had taken the horse out into the woods, poured oil over it, and set it on fire.

Barrabás was married. He had taken an interest in one of the village girls. Several times he had raped her and finally he married her. Within five years of their marriage she died, leaving him a son, who was raised for several years by her parents. When the boy was seven, he went to live with Barrabás and was forced to accompany him everywhere, always several steps behind his father.

It was the custom in the town to celebrate the day of San Roque with festivals. Each time, Barrabás would break up the dances by appearing in the middle, silently challenging anyone to throw him out. When he had demonstrated that all were afraid of him, he would leave, but by this time, the fun was spoiled for the others. However, at length, Law came to Valcanillo in the form of the Civil Guard. When Barrabás entered the dance floor, the people did not pay any attention to him. This made him angry and he picked up a cart pole, hitting everyone in reach. Finally he was arrested by a corporal in the Civil Guard and was sentenced to seven years in jail. He served an additional three, however, for bad conduct.

When he returned to Valcanillo, his son was still afraid of him, but Jacintón recognized that Barrabás had changed, that he was
not so confident as before in his own will. The corporal who had arrested Barrabás in the first place had retired several years before. Barrabás went to his house and shot him in cold blood. Then he went home and barricaded himself and his son in the house. The new corporal of the Civil Guard called out to him to let his son leave the house, but he refused to do it. The son, Vicente, informed his father that he was leaving and started to walk out into the street. A shot, fired from the house, missed the boy. Later the Civil Guard and the townspeople attacked the house with hand grenades and a fire broke out. Barrabás perished in the flames. Later a pool of blood was found on the doorstep. Jacintón had prayed to God to let him save the boy and He had done so by allowing Jacintón for a moment to become flesh and to receive the bullet intended for Barrabás' son.

"¡Gracias, Señor! Ya no era sólo un fantasma impalpable vagando por las calles; era un alma dentro de un cuerpo dolorido! Y sólo me quedaba el saber esperar. Esperar que sea llegada mi hora. La nueva vida que me estaba forjando florecía en rosetones de sangre; mi nuevo entendimiento en flores de luz."?

5. "Historia de Veinticuatro Horas"

One night at midnight Jacintón noticed a light in the house of Dionisio, one of the richest men in Valsequillo. Entering to investigate, he found Dionisio anxiously pacing up and down. Soon the doctor arrived and Jacintón learned that Jesusa, Dionisio's wife, was about to have a baby. For the next five or six hours, Jacintón

7Salvador, op. cit., p. 215
remained downstairs, sharing with Dionisio his fears and apprehensions. Then he went upstairs and was able to watch the birth of the child, feeling almost as if this baby boy were his own, the son he would never have. He was especially pleased when Dionisio and Jesusa decided to name their baby Jacinto, for he had wanted the child named after him.

Dionisio was delighted at the birth of his son and immediately began making plans for his future. The boy will belong to his mother until he is five years old, then he will go to school and help his father on their farm. He will be confirmed and go to his first communion. Then when he is twenty years old, he will take an interest in the girls who will surely notice him.

Meanwhile people came to the house to congratulate the new parents and to see the baby. About five o'clock the doctor dropped in to see how the mother and child were getting along. Jacintón thought he noticed that the doctor looked worried, although he didn't say anything.

Between six and seven that night the baby began to cry and his lips gradually turned blue. Dionisio went for the doctor, who labored hard to save the baby, but in vain. The priest was called and baptized little Jacinto. Within two hours he was dead. Dionisio was comforted a little in his grief because he had the feeling that he really had known the child for twenty years through the plans he had made for him.

By midnight the house was dark and silent. Jacintón went back out into the street.
"Es cerca de la medía noche. He asistido en un solo día a los sublimes misterios de la vida y de la muerte; he sido testigo de la alegría y el dolor; he sorprendido los sueños y la realidad descarnada; he padecido con la incertidumbre y gozado de la plenitud; he visto un amanecer y un ocaso. Piense que es demesiado." 8

6. "Historia del 'Capitán'

One October night Jacintón saw a small boy hurrying along a street, carrying a bundle in his arms. Filled with curiosity, Jacintón followed him. The boy went out to the graveyard and found what seemed to be a deserted corner. There he unwrapped the bundle, which contained a dead dog, and buried the animal. It happened that he had chosen to bury the dog in Jacintón's forgotten cemetery plot.

The child was ten-year-old Isidrín de la Hota, well-known in the village for his love of dogs. He had taken in some homeless dogs and those that no one wanted any more. Finally there were too many, and his parents made him take them away from the house. After this, Isidrín cared for his dogs in an old ruined castle, situated on a small hill outside of town. Because he always had several dogs following him, Isidrín was given the nickname "al capitán" by the townspeople.

Jacintón went to visit the old castle in order to protest to Isidrín about burying dogs on his grave. He found that the boy could see him and talk to him and they became very good friends, both of them looking after Isidrín's dogs.

8Salvador, op. cit., p. 248.
Valencillo was situated between two rivers which came together below the town. In the spring after Jacintón and Isidrín became acquainted there were four straight days of rain. The rivers rose and Jacintón could see that there was danger of their overflowing. Isidrín was in bed ill, but when the danger of the flood became acute, Jacintón went to his house during the night. He told Isidrín to arouse all the people and to warn them to evacuate. Because Jacintón himself could not be heard by everyone, Isidrín gave the orders for him. All the villagers were able to evacuate in time and take refuge in the old castle. Afterwards Isidrín received a medal for his extraordinary bravery.

In the epilogue, Jacintón says that perhaps he has written the stories too much from his own point of view, that in reality they have turned out to be the stories of his own triumphs and failures. He wonders at times if he has helped the people of Valencillo only for selfish reasons—to help himself get into Heaven. At the same time, however, he refuses to believe that he has labored in vain. Even though his motives have not been pure, nevertheless God has allowed him to serve his fellow men and he is sure that the people of Valencillo have grown in understanding as a result. Finally he dreams of the time when his guardian angel Belorado will come down to say to him: "¡Vamos ahora, Jacintón! Probaremos suerte."

In Historias de Valencillo, the figure of Jacintón has certain characteristics in common with Juan Vamos, in the short story by
that name written by Miguel de Unamuno. Juan Manso is a person who does nothing, who never has an opinion on anything and refuses to take a stand on any issue. When he dies, he joins the line of souls waiting to get into Heaven. There he sales his place to each soul who asks for it and never moves up. At length he decides that it will be easier to get into Purgatory, but he is rejected there and the angel in Purgatory suggests he try Limbo. Juan Manso is insulted by this idea and goes to Hell instead. The guardian there tells him that while the way to Hell is wide, still they have to draw the line somewhere and Juan Manso may not enter. Discouraged, Juan returns to the line outside of Heaven. Finally he is given a chance to return to earth, where he takes a very active part in life and dies again. This time he sneaks unceremoniously into Heaven. Jacinto, too, had done nothing in his life, allowing his intellect and understanding to lie dormant. He, too, is given a second chance, although not as a human being, and he, too, finds that salvation is won or lost only by positive actions. It is possible that Salvador drew his initial inspiration from "Juan Manso" or the old legend of the "alma de Carabay."9

9The legend says that Carabay was a Basque nobleman who tolerated with superhuman patience and indulgence the attentions of a mean and ugly old woman who was in love with him; and that after his death, he was not admitted to heaven because he had sinned, nor to hell, because he was a fool, and therefore, ever since, his soul has been condemned to wander restlessly in the vast space between. (Arjona and Fishtine, Charles Contemporáneos, New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1935., p. 119).
In a sense there is a connection or parallel between Jacintón and old Simón the Crusader who is in Purgatory. Other people committed a great number of sins as a result of Simón's short-sightedness, while Jacintón caused no one else to sin. It is just, therefore, that Simón should remain in Purgatory until the end of mankind, while it is quite possible that Jacintón will not have to remain on earth much longer. Salvador seems to be saying that the path to salvation is through intellectual growth, concern for and understanding of one's fellow men, a sense of brotherhood, service and self-sacrifice.

In the epilogue, Jacintón says:

"Creo firmemente que (Velecanillo) avanzará por el camino del amor mutuo y hallará la paz para consigo y para todos. Sus hombres—que son todos los hombres—han elevado su inteligencia, empiezan a comprender. Y cuanto más sepan, antes llegarán a la fe."

Salvador has tried to give this work universality. He does not tell us the precise location of Velecanillo so that we won't feel that the people of Velecanillo belong to any one country or culture. As the preceding quotation makes clear, the people of Velecanillo are intended to represent humanity in general. The protagonists of the stories—the lovers, the poet, the man of evil, the boy who loved dogs, the expectant father—are nearly all familiar and representative human types. They, like all of us, are in need of divine help. Velecanillo, with its three hundred houses, is the world in miniature, and "Historia de Veinticuatro Horas" is a summary of human life from birth to death.

10 Salvador, op. cit., p. 235
CHAPTER TWO: EL CHARCO

El charco is a somewhat unusual crime story in which the action is seen alternately from the point of view of the criminal and the police.

Esteban Benesgar Torres, an expert thief, proficient in the use of lock-picking tools, plans to rob a home in the city of Barcelona. Over a period of several days he has familiarized himself with the location of the house, its doors, windows, etc., and the habits of the family. He knows that on a certain night the family will be gone, and that the two servants will also be out.

Having made all his preparations, Esteban goes to the house in the middle of the night. Since it is raining, he wears a raincoat and carries a briefcase containing the tools of his trade. First he extinguishes the streetlight nearest the house. Wearing rubber gloves and using his special instruments, he picks the two locks on the door leading to the garden. On entering the garden, he suddenly becomes irrationally frightened at the sight of some puddles of rain-water. Stepping carefully to avoid them, he passes through the garden and arrives at the door of the house. There his calm returns and he removes his raincoat, which is soaked through. After examining the door, he decides not to enter that way, but rather through the balcony which is above the door. He climbs onto the balcony and cuts through the window, letting himself in from the inside and leaving his briefcase at the window. Once inside the house, he wipes the moisture from his face and hands on a curtain.
A flash of lightning shows him that he is in a bedroom. Carefully, he approaches the dressing table. On it he finds a jewel box, but decides to pick it up later when he has taken the money from the safe. As he sets the jewel box down, he knocks a bottle of perfume off the dressing table, spilling the contents on the floor. The puddle formed looks like a pool of blood to Esteban. At that moment there is a flash of lightning and in the light, Esteban sees a crib in the corner and a child standing in it, staring at him. It must be the couple’s three-year-old daughter. In his fright, Esteban jumps at her and stabs her several times with his punche, a long pointed instrument which he had been using to work on the door. The body falls back, and in a panic, Esteban rushes out of the house, stopping only to pick up his briefcase of tools. He runs through the garden, out the door, leaving it open behind him, and into the street.

Early the next morning the police arrive at the house: Barrico, inspector of the Brigada de Investigación Criminal; Miguel Baena, an agent and friend of Barrico; and a young officer on the beat, Rodríguez. They study the footprints and fingerprints, trying to reconstruct the crime, and decide that the man was a professional thief who had come to rob the house, but who, having received some kind of a fright, and having seen the childish figure in the crib, had stabbed it repeatedly and then fled without accomplishing his purpose.

Meanwhile, Esteban has fled to the apartment which he shares with Adela Torres, a 39-year-old dancer. She finds him there when
she returns from work. He is lying on the bed, fully dressed and soaking wet. At first she thinks he is drunk, and then realizes he is sick. She puts him in bed and considers calling a doctor, but rejects the idea, fearing that Esteban may become angry. He is delirious and for four days hovers on the point of death. In Esteban's delirium he talks about the events of his attempted robbery, continually raving about "el charro." Adela cares for him, giving him hot milk and using what other home remedies she can think of.

On the third day of his illness, she goes out for a while, meets a young medical student whom she knows, and asks him to look at Esteban. The student can recommend nothing. At the end of four days, Esteban's fever breaks, and when Adela returns from work, she finds him up. He asks her what has happened and tells her to get the newspapers for the past four days. When she returns he leafs through all the papers while she begins to prepare their dinner. He does not find what he is looking for—news of his crime—and goes into the bedroom. There he discovers a cigarette butt left by the medical student and forces Adela to admit that she had asked the student to look at Esteban when he was so sick. Finally Esteban makes her tell him that in his delirium he had talked about killing a small child. She swears she has told no one and will never do so, but Esteban becomes frightened and tries to strangle her. She slips out of his grasp and runs into the bedroom, locking the door after her. He breaks open the door and throws her onto the bed. Beside the bed he sees his mucán, grabs it, and stabs Adela repeatedly.

Some neighbor ladies have heard the noise and have come to see what
it is all about. Esteban opens the door, and pushes through them, still carrying the woman covered with blood. The women are so astonished they do nothing to impede his escape.

The police, using their scientific techniques and studying the thief's forgotten raincoat, his footprints, and the curtains he used to wipe his face, have concluded that the man is of medium height, with dark, well-cared-for hair, of slight build, with a thin face and probably about thirty years old. He is an expert **sabotage**, a type of burglar who picks locks by inserting strips of metal into the lock, the different size strips corresponding to the irregularities of the key. Through a visit to a psychiatrist, Baena strengthens his belief that the man is mentally unbalanced, with an unreasonable fear of something. The doctor predicts that the man has probably suffered a physical illness as a result of the shock of his act. He also predicts that he may be driven by fear to other crimes.

Baena visits several underworld characters who may be acquainted with the man the police are looking for, but receives no information except that the man is probably not a native of Barcelona. Rodriguez has better luck and finds out from a newspaper saleswoman who has a stand near the house in which the attempted robbery took place that a man answering the police description had hung around for at least two days before the crime occurred. The woman thinks she can identify the man should she see him again.

During a police conference, a report is brought in that a woman has been stabbed. Baena and Barrios hurry to the scene. The woman—Adela—has been taken to the hospital. The officers search the house
and find the rubber gloves and burglar tools. Again they reconstruct what probably happened. They then go to the hospital, but find that Adela has died. From a neighbor woman they learn that Adela had lived in the house for some time and that the man had moved in with her several months ago. None of the neighbors knows him and the landlord has never seen him, but one of the women remembers having noticed him once with a certain "Tetovia." The latter is questioned and tells the police that the man's name is Esteban but that he has the nickname of "El Charco" because once in a tavern he became terrified at the sight of a puddle of wine from an overturned bottle. The owner of this tavern remembers that Esteban once mentioned that his father worked in Alicante, as a postal employee. Miguel Brena sets out for Alicante. While he is away, "Tetovia" remembers that Esteban has a motor launch and gives the police the location of the dock where it is kept.

Meanwhile police nets are spread for the killer. All boarding houses and sleeping-rooms for the lower classes are searched. In one of these, just as the policemen are searching each bed, there is heard the sound of a siren; everyone rushes to the door. During the confusion several of the men escape. Esteban is one of these. Now completely exhausted, he decides to take a room in a respectable boarding house, thinking that the police will not look for him there. That night he intends to try to escape in his launch. He finds a boarding house, enters, registers under his own name, pays in advance, and falls asleep almost as soon as he touches the bed. Later he awakens, feeling a vague sensation of fear. Clutching his punzón.
he goes out the door to investigate. As he leans over the railing he sees the lady of the house and her niece talking to a policeman. The officer mounts the stairs.

Baena returns the same afternoon from Alicante. He has found Esteban’s parents, who have told him that Esteban is a skilled mechanic and that he served in the Spanish Civil War, as an artilleryman, being wounded when his gun burst. After he recovered from his wound he acted strangely for a time, but then seemed to return to normal. The Alicante police are presently looking up additional information. Baena was also able to procure a photograph of Esteban, and he and Barrios go out to distribute copies to all the district police stations. At one of them, the officer-in-charge reports that he has received a phone call from a boarding house concerning a strange man who has no luggage, wears wrinkled, dirty clothes, and appears to be sick or exhausted. He has sent a policeman to investigate. The man immediately go to the boarding house, but arrive too late. The officer is dead. Esteban heard him coming up the stairs, drew back, and when the man passed him, stabbed him with the panza, then dropped it, and taking the policeman’s gun, left the house.

The police decide that Esteban is probably at the end of his resources and will seek refuge that night in his launch. Accordingly, Baena, Barrios and Rodriguez go out to wait for him on the dock. They take “Tovarín” with them to identify Esteban. For several hours the men wait and finally Esteban comes. Before anyone can stop him, Rodriguez jumps out of their hiding place and tries to explain to Esteban that he had not really stabbed a child
that first night, but rather a doll which her parents had ordered
specially made to look like her.¹

In El charco Salvador achieves a good balance between the actions
of the criminal and those of the police in trying to catch him. He
depicts especially well the means which the police use to "create" a
man:

"Tomamos de aquí un recuerdo, de allí un leve vesti-
tigio, de acá una pisada, y creamos al HOMBRE. Prin-
cipio su perfil, su andar, sus hábitos; después, golpeando
el hierro frío de las conveniencias o el tiempo, vigori-
samos su silueta, damos color a sus ojos, a su voz, a sus
cabellos; medimos la profundidad de sus pensamientos, de
sus intenciones, de sus reacciones; calculamos la intensi-
dad de sus odios, de sus amores, de sus vicios; fiscaliza-
mos su presente y surgimos en su pasado; medimos el nivel
de su culpa por el rascante de nuestra experiencia; le
ponemos en pie, le damos un nombre, una voz, una inteli-
gencia y le decimos: 'Tú eres tú; te conocemos'. ¿El
hombre así creado habla, anda, ama u odia como nosotros
esperábamos? Hemos CREADO AL HOMBRE, iluminado su
huella!"²

The detailed descriptions of the technical processes of crime
detection are obviously based on Salvador's first-hand experience
in the Brigada de Investigación Criminal. The information which the
police can learn from footprints is shown in the following example:

"Para que tengáis una idea y os sirva de lección en
el caso de investigar un asesinato en lugar alejado, tened
en cuenta que, suponiendo una línea recta uniendo los ta-
elones de las huellas, es posible sacar de ellas consecuen-
cias interesantísimas. Por ejemplo: cuanto mayor es el
peso que una persona lleva encima, más quebrada es la

¹The reader does not realize until the end that Esteban had not
actually killed a little girl. A story based on this kind of confu-
sion would be difficult to write in English, while in Spanish both
nina and niñeca are feminine words and the reader can easily be mis-
led through the use of the pronouns la and ella.

²Salvador, Tomás, El charco. (Barcelona: Luis de Caralt, 1953),
pp. 6-7
línea de marcha. En una persona delgada la línea se confunde casi siempre con el eje; los incisivos o los que andan ganduleando ocultan irregularmente de la posición normal de la persona delgada a la obesa.

Del ángulo de marcha—que consiste en la medición de la prolongación del eje de la pisada en relación con el eje de la marcha—se puede deducir una profesión; los abejílles caminan con los pies juntos y planos, resabios de andar por una tabla; los marineros dan con los pies separados y bien asentados. En el hombre normal el ángulo de marcha suele ser de unos 31 a 32 grados. 3

The main weakness of the book is that Salvador does not explain Esteban's irrational fear of puddles or pools. The obsession with regard to charros provides the motivation for the "crime" out of which the entire story develops and it would seem necessary, therefore, for the reader to know why Esteban has this fear. Salvador does state that Esteban was in the artillery in the Spanish Civil War and that he was wounded when his gun blew up. He also says that Esteban's novia died as a result of an abortion, but does not state clearly what influence, if any, either of these events had upon Esteban, although he intimates that his fear of charros is a result of Esteban's war experiences and one may perhaps assume that the death of his novia is a contributing factor.

In each case the charros—rainwater, perfume or red wine—apparently suggested to Esteban a pool of blood, but the reader does not know if it is his own or that of his novia. In each case the murders are committed with a sharp, blood-letting instrument, and Esteban's obsession seems to be connected with a deep sense of guilt.

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3 Salvador, op. cit., p. 34
CHAPTER THREE: GUARDA DE PRESOS

In the prologue to Guarda de presos, Salvador gives a short historical background for the year 1879, in which the story takes place. He then goes on to say something about the Civil Guard, founded in 1844 with the purpose of protecting rural areas in Spain. The members of the Civil Guard have served seven years of military duty in other areas and are obliged to wear their uniforms constantly. Their lives are highly regulated.

One job that the Civil Guards of 1879 had to do was to escort prisoners from one part of the country to another. This was called the guarda de presos and was generally carried out on foot with two guards watching up to six prisoners. If a prisoner escaped, the Civil Guards were liable to his punishment. The story which follows concerns one such "guarda de presos." The two Guards are Serapio Pedrocó Ruján and Silvestre Abuín Corvino; the prisoner is Juan Díaz de Garayo y Argandona. The journey begins in Villas de Paredes in the province of León, and ends in Vitoria, the capital of the province of Álava. The journey takes eleven days and the events of each day constitute a chapter of the novel. At the beginning of each chapter there is a map, which shows the distance covered that day.

The three men set out. The prisoner Garayo walks two steps ahead of the Civil Guards, with his hands in handcuffs behind his back. Whenever they go through a village the Guards come forward and each take an elbow. Having passed the village, they release him.

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and step back to their former position.

Pedroso is the older of the two Guards and the leader. He is about fifty years old, and has a wife and family. Silvestre is about thirty years old and unmarried. They walk forty-five minutes out of each hour, then rest for fifteen minutes, during which time Carayo’s handcuffs are taken off and his feet are shackled. They begin traveling each morning at sunrise and stop each evening at sunset. They try to plan their schedule so as to be in a good-sized town at sundown, so that the local officials can house Carayo for the night in the city jail.

The Guards have money for food for themselves and Carayo, but it only covers the bare necessities. Usually they do not stop to buy lunch, but rather carry their food in their knapsacks and halt by a stream at midday to eat. The Guards are expected to be thoroughly familiar with the land through which they pass and therefore stop from time to time to inquire about the best routes to take.

The action of the novel is seen from many different points of view. Frequently the viewpoint is that of one of the Guards or of Carayo. Sometimes Salvador lets the reader “listen in” to the thoughts of the people whom they pass. Other times the people stop to talk to the Guards, looking with pity, fear or indifference at Carayo. Occasionally a priest will give a few words of advice to the Guards in their mission of justice on earth and encouragement to Carayo to have faith in divine mercy. As the three travel along they come briefly into contact with people of varied social classes or occupations.
One day a woman who is very angry with her young son for being naughty sees the Guards go by with their prisoner. She tells her son that since he has been so bad, he will have to go with the Civil Guards. She then calls out to them to ask if they will take her little boy away with them. Silvestre winks and answers that they will be back for him the next day. The child is so frightened that his mother repents of having threatened him and goes weeping to her husband, to tell him how much she really loves their son.

On another occasion the Guards and Carayo meet two scholars who are traveling through the old province of León. They are philologists who have set out to discover what vestiges of the ancient Leones dialect still remain in that region. They invite the Guards to stop and offer them cigarettes. They try to discuss philological problems with the Guards, but the latter do not understand. Pedroso, however, remarks that his grandfather once said that the best language is that which has the fewest words. As the Guards are leaving, one of the scholars realizes that Carayo is a prisoner. His colleague says: "¡Qué nos importa eso! He observado usted cómo ese guardia, al decir 'jornada' ha aspirado la 'j' hasta casi volverla suave como la 'f-h'?

On the day of San Froilán the bell ringer of Pefiar goes to the church tower to call the faithful to worship. The people of the village consider him a bit crazy because he calls his different bells by name. It is the first mass for a young man of the village who is

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1Salvador, Tomás, Guada de presos. (Barcelona: Luis de Caralt, 1955), p. 67
to receive Holy Orders that morning, and "The Campano" wants the bells to ring during the entire service. As he pulls on the bellropes, he watches the people come to the church—the country people, the young girls, the men, the Civil Guards, three regular Guards and the two strangers who have arrived the day before and have come to mass with their colleagues.

During the journey Garayo reviews the events of his life. He was born in 1821, had taken part in the first civil war and finally in 1850 had married a widow, "La Borrumbona." They had five children and were married thirteen years before she died. After that Garayo had been married three more times. His present wife is still living. He has been accused of murdering eight women, although in actuality he has only killed five. In each of his murders, the woman was a prostitute who asked him for more money than he was willing to give her. At first he would beg her to give in at his price, and then, in a fit of blind rage and frustration, he would kill her. His crimes have made him notorious as "el Sacramentecas," and any incident which provokes him may bring on one of his attacks of homicidal mania.

Pedroso, the older and more experienced of the Guards, is the one who takes the most precautions with Garayo. He realizes that he has a job to do and tries to do it without getting too emotionally involved with the criminal. But the trip is very hard on him and he tires more readily than Silvestre. On the way he tells Silvestre picturesque stories about his grandfather; most of these stories have a moral, and Silvestre limits him to one a day. By the sixth day, Pedroso is having trouble with inflammation of the eyes. They are
constantly irritated by the wind and the dust. At one place a cheesemaker gives him a cheese paste which helps to soothe the irritation. Finally, on the tenth day, Pedrero becomes so tired and nervous that he breaks down and says he will go no further. An older sergeant of the Guard urges him not to give up and Pedrero decides to continue the journey. In the meantime, the sergeant makes arrangements for them to go part of the way by train.

Silvestre is proud to be with Pedrero and to be a part of the Civil Guard. At first he is quite confident that Garayo is harmless but when he finds out exactly what Garayo has done, he feels a vague but steadily growing fear of him. This fear sharpens one night when they are forced to find shelter in a small town when night falls before they have reached their scheduled stop. Silvestre arranges to watch Garayo the first half of the night, but allows himself to fall asleep. He wakes to find Garayo on his knees in front of him. Frightened by the murderous look in Garayo's eyes, Silvestre hits him with the butt of his gun, knocking him over. Pedrero insists on keeping guard the rest of the night.

As the three men travel along they grow in understanding of themselves and each other. Garayo, at first, has no idea of escaping, but is content to go along with the Guards. When he realizes that they know about his crimes he begins to feel a sense of power over them, because he knows that they are just a little afraid of him, especially Silvestre. When he notices that the Guards are becoming lax in their precautions he pretends to be even more submissive, looking for a chance to escape. However, the vigilance of the Guards
is resumed after a meeting in the road with a captain of the Civil Guard, who senses Garayo's plans and indirectly warns Pedroso and Silvestre. On a crowded highway the tenth day, Garayo, looking at an old woman, thinks he sees the face of the first woman he murdered and, seized by an overpowering impulse to escape, begins to run wildly down the highway, but is tripped by Silvestre. Thereafter he is calm and docile. By the time they reach Vitoria, he feels a great deal of respect and even some affection for his Civil Guards. He hates to leave the security of constant travel to face his destiny in Vitoria.

The two Civil Guards at first feel repugnance and distaste toward Garayo. They hardly consider him as a person until they learn just what his crimes are and then they begin to regard him with a mixture of revulsion and uneasiness. After eleven days of traveling with Garayo, they even come to have a kind of sympathy with him, although they do not understand what drove him to commit the murders. At Vitoria they take leave of him; Silvestre, to his surprise, finds himself pitying this man:

"Allá dejaron a Garayo... Una piedad infinita le sacudió de pies a cabeza. Hasta le dolía el corazón mirando al infeliz. Podía ser un asesino, un loco, un psicópata; pero era un hombre vencido, arruinado, desilusionado. ... Le hubiera gustado decirle que la justicia de los hombres le tenía preso, pero que podía confiar en la misericordia de Dios. Mas, al fin y al cabo, él, Silvestre Abián, sólo era un guardia civil. No sabía decir aquellas cosas." 2

At Grón the three have stopped to inquire their location of a shoemaker named, curiously enough, Tomás Salvador. He is convinced

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2 Salvador, op. cit., p. 355-356
that his job is important in the life of men, and complains, almost in tears, that no one appreciates the work he does. His ambition is to make a shoe which will never wear out, even though this would destroy his livelihood. The Guards consider him half mad and leave as soon as they can get away. Later, on their way back from Vitoria, they wave at the shoemaker as they pass.

Of Guarda de presos, J. L. Vázquez Dódero says:

"Guarda de presos es un relato de interés sociológico, porque refleja la vida de una parte de la sociedad española en el último tercio del siglo XIX. Se trata de dos guardias civiles, veterano uno, bisnieto el otro, que conducen a un preso a pie, por caminos y carreteras, desde Villas de Parejas, provincia de León, hasta Vitoria. El narrador nos presenta a estos tres interesantes personajes populares mientras recorren un itinerario de variados paisajes y matizada representación de la sociedad rural de la época: arrieros, cendigos, labradores, alcaldes, alguaciles, boticarios, herradores, soldados... Es una sociedad que toma fugaz contacto con los guardias Fujín and Abúín y con el preso."

Salvador has been very successful in depicting the characters of the three protagonists. Pedroso and Silvestre are loyal and dedicated to their duties as Civil Guards, willing to suffer hardships in their work and insults from the people, but they are also very human. Pedroso is an old man who likes to tell rambling stories and who becomes tired from the long journey. Silvestre is more enthusiastic and idealistic toward his job, but eager to benefit from the experience of the older man. Through these two characters, Salvador brings new insights into the nature of the organization of Civil Guards, the

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3Vázquez Dódero, J. L. "Las Revelas de Tórres Salvador," Nuestro Tiempo (article sent to the writer by Salvador)
rules by which they lived and especially the quality of men who made up the Civil Guard.

Contributing to the effect of reality are the carefully detailed descriptions of the land through which Pedroso, Silvestre, and Carayo travel. Salvador is from the northern part of Spain and one feels that he knows the land very well.

A strong element of suspense is provided through the character of Carayo as he thinks about his escape and watches the Guards, hoping to catch them in a careless moment. There is the ever present possibility that some incident may cause Carayo to have another attack of his blind rage and mania for killing. As Pedroso becomes more exhausted and Silvestre devotes more of his attention to his companion, fearing that the latter might not survive the trip, Carayo's chances for escaping, or attacking his Guards become greater.
CHAPTER FOUR: DIVISIÓN 250

División 250 is Salvador's "war novel." It is a fictionalized account of the División Española de Voluntarios, or the División Azul, which invaded Russia during World War II on the side of Germany. The division was made up of 18,000 men, part of whom were veterans of the Civil War (1936-1939) and part of whom were young men in their late 'teens and early twenties. In 1943 the Division as such was withdrawn, leaving only a small group of volunteers who were then called the Spanish Legion. In his prologue Salvador gives technical information concerning the status of the División Azul:

"Este sentirse español en la bravura y en la picaresca, ante el propio y el extranjero, fue la más acusada faceta de la División 250 de la Wehrmacht, primero encuadrada en el XXXVIII Cuerpo de Ejército XVIII (Sector Bougrov-Molchow) y después en el XLIV C. de C., del mismo Ejército (sector Leningrado) desde el 12 de octubre de 1941, al 8 de octubre de 1943. Después se quedó la Legión, hasta el día 21 de marzo de 1944, en que el último pulso de españoles entregó sus armas a la Flana Mayor de Elace alemana."

The events of the book take place between July 1941, when the division left Spain for Germany, and March 1944, when the Legion returned to Spain. Specific campaigns and battles in which the division took part are illustrated by maps shown in the appendix.

There are four major divisions in the novel, entitled 1941, 1942, 1943, and "La Legión." In addition there is a prologue and a short final chapter entitled "Soneto final, soneto de amor con estribote," which serves as an epilogue.

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1Salvador, Tomás, División 250. (Barcelona: Ediciones Dumas, 1954), p. 9
Each major division is composed of short sections or chapters in which the events of the war are seen from the viewpoints of different members of the Division itself. One man is keeping a diary, and he is the only character who appears more than once in the novel.

Salvador has tried to show us as many aspects as possible of the war—the trip in boxcars from Spain through France, where the Spanish soldiers were hissed at and insulted, into Germany where they were welcomed as conquering heroes; their period of training in Germany and their admiration for German discipline and German equipment; the actual experiences of warfare, the refuges for the wounded, the physical discomforts, the hardships of the cold during a Russian winter, both for the soldiers and the civilians who remained near the battle front; the sincere desire of many of the Spanish soldiers to free the Russian people from Communism and their growing disillusionment in the results they were getting.

Since each of the chapters is very short and there are so many, it would be impossible to summarize all of them here. Two are included, however, in order to give some idea of Salvador's technique.

Galo Madrid, a wounded soldier, finds himself in a rude shelter for casualties. He has stepped on a mine and his legs are nearly destroyed. The wounded lie on straw in an abandoned house where they receive only the most rudimentary care. As he lies there, Galo notes the exceptional optimism and bravery of the others. He forces himself to watch the men next to him as he dies, believing that it is his duty to be a faithful witness in life. The wounded expect to be evacuated within the near future, but the ambulances
Although the play began on the stage of Comedy

we cannot stand the cold for long, then in the hour of a theatre.

some witnesses and participants agree to be remembered every hour, etc. the

right and have to be sent home. others are chosen to conduct

the audience into June and the performance of their show to face.

The cold is one of the worst memories the performer have to face.

noted, and a box of examination

which he has been asked to be made by the historian, a phase of

the scene of the conversation of the poet and the philosophy

that he has not identified. Attention shifted into a realm of where at all?

or more or less, there by the audience. In the meantime to forgotten

toothache and thereby wrote whether the phase are of concern.

descriptive the phase without expression these be the awareness of the

of ox scenes or expressions and constructed the possibility for

themselves, the phase in the phase of the stage of concern.

that he created into the theater, the spectator over somber and fatal. He

in the real, the wind blows, the further every. It is dark, just as

hand. He tries to catch the letter, but each time it is already

he is reaching, if in the darkness then the wind phone walks out of the

In another case, a soldier has received a letter from the boy:

somehow the note secretly wounded. They find that closed to deep

need: later the help after, and as the spectator come short to

prized. This becomes deliberate and firmly implores into incursions

are bodied and they have to wait several days to be taken to a house.
fight communism, there are references to the cruelty of the Germans, especially with regard to the Poles and the Jews:

"El que más y el que menos sentía un profundo respeto por Polonia la Mártir, la insensata, la desgraciada, la católica. Recordaban su fulminante derrota meses antes, o años quizá, la que, sin embargo, no había manchado su nombre."

"Los pocos judíos que Ricardo había visto en Suwalki y en los pueblos de los alrededores no podían ser más insignificantes; pobres, sucios, miserables, caminaban apropiadamente, llenos de miedo, como si fueran gusanos en busca de un agujero. Se hacía evidente que los alemanes llevaban su antisemitismo más allá de la verdad."

División 250 was written as a tribute to those men who fought and died in Russia. In his prologue Salvador likens the glory of a soldier to a scarecrow.

"La gloria del soldado... es un espantajo, medio loco, con una voz imposible llena de incoherencias y tremendas pleonasmas, harapace ante el castigo eterno del viento. Cerro los ojos, imaginad un espantajo cualquiera en un sembrado. Haced que ese campo gire vertiginosamente, entre todos los ruidos y lúes de la guerra, bajo todas las intemperies... El espantajo estará siempre allí, entre los surcos convertidos en tumbas, vociando como un chiflado, rezando como el hombre que descubre a Dios en cada instante temblando de frío.

"Los camaradas que en Poznań, y en Salusk, y en los muchos cementerios españoles llevaban al tenor que abandonar a sus mayores, fueron también durante corto tiempo, iguales al espantajo. Pero eran hombres y debían marcharse. El espantajo es también humano; pero no se marchará nunca..."

"Esto es lo que me obliga a escribir, principalmente. Porque pese a todo—y estoy hablando en nombre de mi generación frustrada—me ha bastado abrir un resquicio al recuerdo para encontrarme en seguida con la cara de los muertos."

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2 Salvador, op. cit., pp. 67-68
3 Ibid., p. 72
4 Ibid., pp. 5-6
Further on in the book, one of the soldiers, after fighting for several days, and watching his friends die, thinks he sees a scarecrow which calls on the dead, saying that it will be with them, will sing of their deeds, will never leave them. Others will forget the dead, after giving a medal to their mothers, but it, the scarecrow, is anchored to the ground and will accompany them always.

"Dios mio comprendíó. Comprendió entonces que los muertos no quedan nunca solos. Y el esperpento era la gloria del soldado, la auténtica gloria del soldado, tremenda, desbaratada, insensible, con la única misión de acompañar siempre a los caídos, de gritar junto a sus tumbas la tremenda importancia de su sacrificio. Tremenda importancia, sí, porque en contra de la mentira tan corriente al decir que algunos imbéciles las soldados mueren siempre por una causa maravillosa. El espantajo conservaría para ellos el último gesto, la mejor emoción, la bala más calienta."

The epilogue of the novel, "Soneto final, soneto de amor con estrambote," is written in 1954. Salvador has just completed the novel and meets one of his friends, also a veteran of the División Azul. His friend tells him a story of love. He had fallen in love with an eighteen-year-old Russian girl, Hanna, and had asked her to return to Spain with him. He dressed her as a Spanish soldier, and put her on the troop train with him. At each stop other girls who were also trying to enter Spain with their soldiers were discovered and returned. Just before they arrived at the Spanish border, Hanna was found out and the Germans took her away. Salvador's friend says that he brought back from Russia grief for a dead brother, three wounds, and his memories, but he was not allowed to bring back his love. This is for those who win the wars, not for those who lose.

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5 Salvador, op. cit., p. 169
Apparently, Salvador felt that the romances of the soldiers with the civilians did not belong properly to the body of the novel, but also that this aspect of war did not deserve to be omitted entirely. I think this last section is included partly for this reason. Also it seems likely that the meeting with his friend actually occurred and the story was included to fulfill Salvador's promise to his friend that he would use it in his book. Hanna may be considered to be a symbol of Europe, whose spoils go to the victor while the loser gets nothing, and who herself is the worse as a result of the war:

"¿Acaso Hanna es diferente a los millones de mujeres que han sido violadas y asesinadas? Hanna es Europa, Europa asesada, Europa indefensa, Europa violada y entregada."6

For those who know nothing of the terminology of warfare and the practices of fighting, División 250 is difficult to follow. On the other hand, Salvador's descriptions of the conditions on the battlefront, the reactions of the soldiers to their situation, the hardships and discomforts suffered, the personal battles with fear, are all extremely enlightening.

"También Salvador nos busca la alta tensión con visiones apocalípticas de muertes y heridos, de combates en que la mecánica tritura los corazones y las inteligencias, de fríos congeladores de miembros y de memorias, de héroes imponentes y desconocidos por la gran crónica."7

In addition, División 250 could well have been cut down without losing any of the essential material. The impression given of the

6 Salvador, op. cit., p. 407
monotony of warfare, the same daily patrols, the constant living
in trenches, accompanied by the same hardships—cold in the winter,
and in the spring, mosquitoes in the summer, lack of food and
sleep—could perhaps have been conveyed in 250 or 300 pages, in-
stead of the 407 pages which the book contains.

There are a multitude of characters and as soon as one really
feels he is beginning to know one of them, this personage was
dropped and does not reappear. In regard to the many characters
Sáinz de Robles says:

"En División 250 no existen verdaderos protago-
nistas; cada divisionario tiene ocasión de dar un paso
al frente para recitar su corto papel. Pero no se per-
mite a ninguno superar su gloria sobre la de los restantes.
En División 250 el verdadero protagonista es el tacho."

Unity is maintained through the body of men all fighting toward
a common goal, by the chronological order of events, and by the diary
selections which appear in five different places. These are sensi-
tively written and may perhaps have been taken from a diary Salvador
himself kept.

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Sáinz de Robles, op. cit., pp. 144-145
CHAPTER FIVE: ESTA NOCHE ESTARÉ SOLO

"Esta noche estaré solo" is a collection of ten short stories, all having to do with crime and all but one having their setting in Barcelona.

1. "Esta noche estaré solo"

A subordinate hands a police inspector a sheaf of papers written by a prisoner. These papers reveal that the prisoner's three-year-old daughter has been run over by a truck. Her father had witnessed the accident, and, seized by a blind feeling of hatred, had strangled the truckdriver with his bare hands. His words are agonized, almost incoherent. The inspector feels a great pity for the man but can do nothing but leave him alone in his cell.

2. "Cara de Bruto"

A man has been brought to the police station for murder. Some of the policemen think that he has the face of a brute, of a born criminal. Miguel Baena questions the prisoner, a big, powerful stevedore whose name is Ángel Delgado. He had been playing cards after work with two friends, when a blind man came by. One of his friends, "Al Marcialo," bought some lottery tickets from the blind man, paying for them with a counterfeit coin. This injured Delgado's sense of justice, so he picked up a stool and smashed his friend's head with it, killing him. He was neither jealous nor drunk; the blind man was the epitome of weakness to a man who considered strength to be very important. For his action, he will probably spend twenty
years in jail. Baena tries to explain to his colleagues Delgado’s actions, but finally ends up agreeing that the latter does indeed have a “cara de bruto.”

3. “Un Servicio Brillante”

Jaime, a young policeman who takes his work very seriously, stops at a bar one hot afternoon to have a drink. There he notices three suspicious characters who are in actuality disguised police officers keeping guard on a drug store which they have reason to think will be robbed. Fearing that Jaime may scare away their prey, one of the officers enters the tavern and tells Jaime to “beat it,” then stops at a nearby table to speak to another sinister-looking man. Jaime is convinced that the fourth man (actually Miguel Baena) is the leader of the gang. When Baena leaves, Jaime follows him and arrests him. On searching the latter’s pockets, Jaime finds a revolver and some handcuffs, but on changing his clothes Baena has neglected to transfer his police credentials, and so is hauled off, protesting, to the station, shackled in his own handcuffs.

4. “El Hombre Es Tu Enemigo”

A man is brought to the police station in connection with a murder case. His name is Nicole Fanagusta and his story is that he is not the murderer but is proud that he has been accused of the crime. He says his philosophy of life is directed toward evil and that he is the founder of the “Escuela de los Canallas.” The chief tenet of the school—“el hombre es tu enemigo”—is set forth in a “Decálogo Canalla” which he recites: 1. Odia 2. Envidia 3. Mata
4. Mente 
5. Rola 
6. Malicia 
7. Corrompe y ofende 
8. Tiraniza 
9. Delata. Here he is interrupted by the indignant detectives. He claims that he has taught his followers so well that they have committed a crime and then accused him of it. The policemen all seem convinced that the man is insane, except Miguel Baena, who proves that Famagusta is really the leader of a gang of thieves. When his followers revolted, he killed one of them with a bottle, but neglected to destroy it. Baena produces this bottle as evidence. Famagusta will be declared sane, he says, and will be convicted. Baena is about to refute at length Famagusta's evil doctrine, but his audience runs out on him, whereupon he bursts into laughter.

5. "La Hidrave de Mister Holmes"

Mr. Holmes, a bank employee in New York, comes to visit Mr. Higgins, the director of an insurance company. He succeeds in convincing Higgins that he (Holmes) has two values—one is the $30 which he earns as a salary at the bank and the other is the value of his "Hidravez," the $40,000 with which he is entrusted each day at the bank. After an extended investigation of Mr. Holmes, Higgins insures him for $40,000, to be paid to the bank at any time Holmes should lose his honor. At the end of three months, Holmes steals the exact amount of the policy from the bank. Later he defends his procedure so cleverly that Higgins pays the bank the $40,000 and even hires Mr. Holmes as his Vice-president.

6. "En Las Horas Crises"

Miguel Baena is sent out to investigate the death of a man and woman, apparently asphyxiated by gas. At their apartment he questions
the woman's aunt and uncle and the maid who had found the bodies.
A municipal judge, Carrillones, arrives and takes over the case.
Beena, meanwhile, has noticed slight discrepancies which help him
solve the mystery. From the evidence at his disposal, he deduces
that the maid had come in the night before, prepared the meal, and
fixed a cord on the window so that it could be opened from the out-
side, from her room directly above the kitchen. She heated milk
and filled a glass, then emptied it, being careful not to leave
fingerprints. This was to provide a reason for the gas being on.
She then turned the gas on and left, intending the next morning to
raise the window in order to clear the air, enter the apartment,
take what she wanted, turn the gas up and close the window, letting
someone else discover the "accident." However, as she went down-
stairs to enter the apartment in the morning she met the aunt and
uncle who were coming to visit. The uncle had a key so he opened
the door. The police and a doctor were called. The maid did not
have time to remove the cord from the window until Beena was occu-
pied in questioning the aunt and uncle. He later noticed that it
was missing and this led him to solve the crime.

7. "Juan Tiene Mala Futeria"

A young man, Feliciano Felix, comes to police headquarters
with the story that he has been robbed of 3,565 pesetas which he
was about to send by postal money order for his advertising firm.
He says that three men surrounded him on a quiet street. When he
tried to run away, one of them shot at him, knocking off his hat.
He did not resist further and handed over the money. He shows the
police his hat in order to prove his story. Raena inspects the hat and then asks Feliz to try it on. The location of the bullet-hole is such that had the bullet gone through the hat when Feliz had it on, it would have killed him. Therefore Raena concludes that Feliz stole the money himself and invented the story of the assault to cover up his crime.

3. "Una Mujer Tras la Puerta"

A woman waits behind the door of a darkened apartment for her lover to return. He has grown tired of her, and she is desperate, as well as pregnant. She is claspig a knife to her breast, determined to kill him. Finally she hears him coming, but her nerves and emotions have been at such a high pitch for so long that just as he opens the door, she slumps to the floor, dead. The man, "un caballero elegante," calls a doctor, who in turn summons the police. By means of questions the story is reconstructed. The woman's death before she could commit the crime was an act of God, says the policeman (unnamed but presumably Raena). "Tuvo suerte." When the man, misunderstanding, replies: "¡Sí, es verdad. ¡Qué suerte tuvo!" the policeman, already enraged at his callous selfishness, strikes him in the face. Then, addressing the dead woman, he says: "La suerte fue tuya, María."

9. "El Cien Mil"

Santiago Carré, a cold and heartless thief, breaks into the home of a supposedly-rich old lady. While he is searching for her money, she unexpectedly returns. Carré forces her, by threatening to kill
her only son, to give him what little money she really has. As she gives it to him, she collapses, dead apparently of a heart attack. Carré leaves the house and goes to a crowded part of the city. Suddenly he sees a policeman behind him and imagines that he is being followed, for he knows that the police have been trying to get evidence to convict him for some time. Suddenly a boy points to him and shouts, "¡Ese es! Aquél! Yo lo he visto." Carré, frightened, draws his gun and shoots the boy, wounding him. The policeman, Beaum, arrests him. At headquarters, Carré, thinking that the police know all about the old woman, confesses everything. A friend of the wounded boy reveals that the two of them had been counting passers-by for a man who wishes to decide on a location for a new store, and they had pointed out Carré because he was the hundred-thousandth person to pass that day.

10. "La Casa Sin Ellos"

This story is a sequel to the first one, or the remaining portion of it. The mother of the little girl who has been run over is at home, surrounded by sympathetic neighbors. She is worried about her husband, saying that he needs her. Finally some of the neighbors take her to the police station, where the inspector (who has read her husband's papers and remembers the phrase "Pero, y mamá, ¿cuál hará en casa?"") permits her to remain for the night in her husband's cell. The two are left alone, weeping, the man with his head in his wife's lap.
Most of the stories in *Esta noche estaremos solo* illustrate the saying that "Crime does not pay." In "La Bromade de Mister Holmes," however, the criminal not only escapes punishment, but even is rewarded for the cleverness of his crime. This story is set in New York, a city with which Salvador obviously has no first-hand experience and the situation, while clever, is not very convincing.

"En Las Horas Críseas" is a good "whodunit" in miniature, but perhaps the best of the stories is "El Hombre Es Tu Enemigo." By the time Paragueta has finished his remarkable story the reader is convinced along with the other detectives that he is insane. Then the astuteness of Baena is shown as he is able to refute the whole story.

Miguel Baena is apparently presented as the "ideal detective." He understands criminals and consistently shows imagination and good judgment in solving crimes. Since he appears not only in this book, but also in *El Charge*, it is possible that he is a real person with whom Salvador has worked and whom he admires very much.
CHAPTER SIX: LOS ATACADORES

Three young men become friends. One is Ramón Orozco, a boy of twenty who is training to be a professional football player. He comes from a middle-class family and his father has the unusual job of inflating balloons in a department store. The second member of the group is Carmelo Barrachina. His father has thrown him out of the house because he doesn't have a job and because he steals money from his parents. His one great desire is to own a gun. The third member of the gang is Vidal Ayuste, a university law student. He is a dissatisfied young man of the upper-class who doesn't know what he wants out of life. The three attend crime movies and loaf around together for some time. They use the nicknames "Chico Ramón," "Compare Cachas," and "el Señorito," the latter, Vidal, is the leader.

Because Carmelo has no place to stay, a married friend of his, Noisés Ortega, offers to let him live at his house. For a time all goes well, but one day when Noisés is away, Compare makes love to his wife, Matilde. El Señorito is furious with him and orders him not to return to his friend's house.

At length el Señorito confides in his friends his plan to form a hold-up gang. The first thing they need is a gun. One evening they go to a quiet street. El Señorito engages the night watchman of a student residence in conversation and asks for a light for his cigarette. While the watchman is lighting the match, the three attack him. After beating him senseless, they steal his gun, walking
away calmly. Later el Señorito appears with another gun, small and
inlaid with silver, which he has stolen out of his father's desk.

Their first hold-up is in a drug store. Chico Ramón watches
the door while el Señorito and Compare get the cash. Upon leaving,
el Señorito mumbles "muchas gracias" to the clerk. Again they walk
away calmly. The other two are cautioned by el Señorito that they
must not appear to have a new source of money. However, Compare does
rent a room near the docks in the home of an old widow. He tells his
landlady that he is working as a stevedore, and the two become genu-
inely fond of one another.

After the first hold-up they decide they should address each
other by number instead of by name when they are "working." Chico
Ramón will be ONE, Compare TWO, and el Señorito THREE. In this way
they hope not to give away their identities.

One night they hold up three more drug stores. In each they
take the money and offer thanks upon leaving. Because they are so
polite, the police have given them the name of "Los Corteses."

The next "job" that el Señorito plans is the robbing of a
theater which has continuous shows until quite late. During the
last showing the money is counted and then taken out for safekeeping.
This is the hour chosen for the hold-up. The three enter the theater,
brushing past an employee who tries to tell them the ticket booth is
closed. El Señorito orders the man who is counting the money to move
aside and begins to stuff the bills into a satchel. The employee
furtively tries to remove a gun from his desk drawer but is seen by
el Señorito, who orders Compare to shoot him. Then they quickly go
out of the theater, taking the dead man's revolver with them.
They rent an attic room, a "studio," as el Señorito calls it. There they meet to drink, to talk, and to store their loot. One night Compare and Chico Ramón go out to find some women and meet a prostitute, who agrees to come up to their studio with them. But they find the door locked. El Señorito, who is unattractive himself to women and very much afraid of them, refuses to answer or to open the door. When the girl complains, Chico Ramón pushes her down the stairs, not bothering to see how badly she is hurt. He then realizes how calloused he has become.

Later Chico Ramón's sister Isabel contracts pneumonia. She had gone to a quack fortune teller thinking that he could help her to find a novio and had been forced to kneel on the floor for more than two hours, completely naked. El Señorito has previously visited the Crea household and become quite interested in Isabel. When Chico Ramón tells him the circumstances under which Isabel became ill, el Señorito, in a rage, leads the group to the home of the fortune teller, where they beat him and his wife to death. The next morning Isabel's fever has broken and it is apparent that she will recover.

El Señorito organizes one more hold-up, which is to be their last for some time. The three take a taxi to a hotel which rents rooms to couples for illicit love-making. They force the driver of the taxi to enter the hotel with them. Chico Ramón guards the door and as newcomers arrive he makes them face the wall with their hands behind their backs. Compare watches the prisoners in the lobby while el Señorito goes upstairs with one of the employees and brings the customers down. El Señorito and Compare shoot one man who tries to defend his girl. Finally when all the customers are in the lobby, el Señorito commands
them to throw their money and valuables in a heap on the floor. They then make their escape, locking the door after them, having previously cut the telephone wires and alarm bells.

In the meantime el Señorito's father has missed his small pistol. Immediately after the robbery of the Hotel Sájaro, el Señorito returns the gun to its place in his father's desk. A few days later Sr. Ayuste comes home accompanied by a police officer who is a friend of his, and to whom he has mentioned the loss of his gun. Vidal (el Señorito) informs his father that he has recently seen the pistol in one of the desk drawers. Sr. Ayuste finds the gun, and shows it to his friend, who glances at it and then turns the conversation to other things.

The incident upsets el Señorito, however, and he and Compare throw all the jewelry and other identifiable objects into the case. Shortly afterwards, el Señorito and Compare meet at the "studio." They begin to understand that they no longer have much in common. However, they visit Chico Ramón, who invites them to watch him play a football game the next Sunday.

During the ball game, a group of armed policemen enters the stands. El Señorito, realizing that they are after him, leaves quickly, evading the police, and goes to the home of his father's mistress, thinking the police probably won't look there. She is alarmed when he arrives and goes out to look for his father.

Realizing his desperate position, but lacking strength to flee again, el Señorito takes some poison which he finds in a photographic darkroom which his father has set up in his mistress' apartment. He dies in terrible agony, soon after his father arrives.
Chico Ramón has been playing a magnificent ball game until he sees the police. When el Señorito leaves, Chico Ramón becomes frightened and runs out of the ball field. The police pursue him, ordering him to stop, and finally shoot at him. A bullet ricochets off the ground behind him, killing him.

Compare Cachas is captured before he realizes exactly what has happened. El Señorito's father, who is a lawyer, offers to act as the attorney for his defense. In the trial that follows, Sr. Ayuste tries to prove that society is responsible for the actions of youths, such as Compare. At length, however, Compare receives the death penalty and is executed by garroting.

Although the action in Los atracadores is very exciting, Salvador and the reader as well, are principally interested in why the three young men act as they do. In this connection, J. I. Vásquez Dodero, who considers Los atracadores one of Salvador's best novels, says in an article in Nuestra Tierra:

"... en Los atracadores los tres jóvenes criminales pueden ponerse al lado de las buenas creaciones humanas de la actual novela española. Son ellos quienes mantienen nuestra curiosidad siempre despierta; ellos, y no las peripécias que tejen el asunto. No estarán ante un libro de aventuras ni ante una novela policiaca. En Los atracadores es el alma humana lo que nos interesa, los abismos del mal, la pavorosa potencia del espíritu ganado por el pecado. Unos criminales que se mueven ante nosotros como monstruosas y repelentes criaturas y que, sin embargo, no dejan de mostrarnos alguna vez sus posibilidades de bondad y de retorno al bien."

El Señorito is an intelligent young man of an upper-class family. Bored by his life, he seeks to find some real means of proving him-

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1Vásquez Dodero, OR. CIT.
self and his studies in law have brought him a great deal of information about crime. He wants to be powerful, to control and shape the lives of others. And his parents tried to understand him, or bothered to spend time with him, his intelligence and persuasiveness might have been channeled in another direction where he could have become a force for good.

Chico Ramón is a rebellious spirit, eager for recognition and excitement. He is swept along by el Señorito, but always has certain reservations. His training in football has taught him the concepts of fair play, and he is reluctant to go so far as to kill another person. However, the more he becomes involved in the gang, in the life of crime, the more calloused he becomes. This is apparent to him when he pushes the prostitute down the stairs and knows that she is hurt, but does not care; later he takes an active part in beating to death the old fortune teller and his wife. His changed attitude appears also in his football. His previous interest had been in the game for its own sake, but now his desire is to win and he doesn’t care if he injures other players or not. Had he not met el Señorito, he might have been able to realize his ambition for recognition in the field of sports.

Compare is the most malleable of the three. Rejected by his family, not too intelligent, unable to find any meaning in life, he feels powerful and important when he has a gun in his hand. El Señorito realizes all this when he has taken the poison:

"Vea al hombre muerto con un balazo entre los ojos. . . "Dale, Compare!," decía una vez que era la suya. . . Vela al vagabundo apaleado; al mago y su mujer destrozados a golpes. . . Al muchacho que había
defendido la intimidad de su amada... Veía a Isabel, hermana de un muchacho que pudo haber sido un buen futbolista... Y veía a este futbolista dudando entre sus inquietudes y sus ambiciones. Y veía a un sen- cillo muchacho llamado Carmelo, al que las armas vol- vían loco, y al que le había facilitado esas armas... 'Dale, Compare'...”

Through the character of Sr. Ayuste, Salvador has tried to tell us that young men such as these three are a result of society, of the age in which they live:

"Ellos son estos muchachos: Ramón Orea, Vidal Ayuste, Carmelo Barrachina. Ellos son los que se han encontrado con la juventud perdida, censurada, prohibida. Ellos son los que se han encontrado con dos guerras y la amenaza de una tercera. Ellos son los que se han encontrado con el fracaso de nuestra gene- ración.

"Fruطendo decir... que ellos son el producto de una guerra, de unos tiempos difíciles. Unos tiempos sobre los cuales no ejercieron influencia. La psicosis colectiva de estos últimos quince años todos la cono- cían. Estos muchachos, con diecinueve años, se han en- contrado con la palabra guerra, con la palabra muerte, con la palabra armamento, desde que supieron interpretar las palabras, desde que supieron leer. Repasad los peri-ódicos, las revistas, los libros de estos años. No existe ninguna en la cual no aparezca un hombre armado, un hombre disparando, un hombre matando a otro hombre. Hasta en los cines hemos visto manejar sus artefactos de guerra. Los periódicos infantiles están llenos de viñetas ensalzando a los héroes de guerra, a los pisto- leros, a los hombres que matan a otros hombres.”

Of Salvador’s thesis that society is responsible for its youth, Vázquez Dadero says in his article:

"Tomas Salvador ha querido hacer patente su pro- pósito moralizador, y ha planteado el tema de la res- ponsabilidad de la sociedad. Reconocemos la nobleza de su propósito y hagamos la sola reserva de que estas lecciones han de desprenderse de los mismos hechos re- latos. Un novelista no es un abogado. Pero cuando tantos se complacen en pintar al hombre angustiado, al

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2Salvador, Tomás, Los atracadores. (Barcelona: Luis de Caralt, 1955), p. 283

3Ibid., pp. 260-261
hombre desesperado, como una carca de fábrica, la ver-
donaremos de buena gana a Salvador esta actitud docente
adoptada al final de una novela de inigualable valor y
cuyo realismo no existe, por otra parte, la representa-
ción en crudo de algunos aspectos de la vida.  

[Vásquez Dávila, cit.]
CHAPTER SEVEN: HOTEL TÁNGER

In his preface to Hotel Tánger, Salvador says that Tánger is like a hotel. In it are lodged people of all different races and nationalities.

"Para mí . . . es un enorme hotel, un albergue humano sin discriminación de razas . . . la ciudad entera ofrece el cosmopolitismo y la ordenada confusión de un hotel de primera categoría."

"(Es) un refugio de vidas cansadas, una nota para los aventureros precoces, un lugar excelente para vivir bien."

Each chapter deals with one of the "guests" of the hotel; each one is from a different country. Generally, each character is introduced in a minor role in the preceding chapter or plays a minor role in subsequent chapters.

1. "Anton Filsnik, Importador"

Filsnik, a Finn, travels to Tánger from Paris. On the plane he meets a friendly Englishman, Henry Adams, but rejects the latter's offers of friendship. At Tánger he registers at a hotel and meets a fellow countryman, Tarkin, for dinner. At dinner they discuss a shipment of tuna and caviar which has just come in from Russia. Part of the caviar boxes contain gold bricks which the Russians believe they are selling to the Arabs, although in reality it is being sold to the Finns through the Arabs, since Russia would not knowingly sell gold to Finland. Filsnik and Tarkin go disguised with

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1Salvador, Tomás, Hotel Tánger. (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1955), p. 9

2Ibid., p. 11
the Arabs to close the deal. At the warehouse, they put the specially marked boxes of caviar in a truck, and then test one in four of the twenty-pound bars of gold with acid. The transaction is concluded, after which Filsenik and Tarkin return to the city center. The next day a ship will take the caviar to Finland.

2. "Henry Adams, Saviere"

Adams is an English businessman who owns a fast motor-launch and does a profitable contraband business buying and reselling tobacco. His launch, "Olivia," is handled by Ernesto Torres, a native of the Balearics, and a simple-minded sailor called Salac; it arrives in and departs from Tangier by night. One day Adams receives a telegram saying that "Olivia" will be in that night at 11:00. He also receives a letter from his agents in Palma de Mallorca saying that his presence and that of Olivia are requested. The next night the boat is loaded, Adams comes aboard, and they leave the port, nearly being caught by the port authorities. After the cargo is transferred and the profit realized, Adams heads for Valencia to "lie low" a while before resuming his activities.

3. "Hamet Ben Said, Limpidobotes"

Hamet is a twelve-year-old Moslem boy who earns his living shining shoes in the morning and selling magazines and newspapers in the afternoon. He is able to speak eight or ten languages, all of them badly, but well enough to get along. His only friend is Larbi, some eight years older, a harmless idler and moocher. The latter is accused of theft, and Hamet, as a supposed accomplice, is
taken with him to the police station, where he is soon cleared of suspicion. A Portuguese is there, complaining that a well-dressed lady has passed off counterfeit money in his shop.

4. "Adriana Monsanto, Artes Gráficas"

Adriana is an Italian woman, who has lived in the United States. She and her "friend" Giacomo Celle, who makes his living gambling dishonestly, join forces with one Herr Weber, an Austrian chemist who counterfeits U. S. ten-dollar bills. When they are new, they are perfect, but as they get older one can easily see that they are false. Therefore the bills must be gotten rid of in a very short time.

They pass off large quantities of the money in different cities along the Mediterranean, buying, selling, and gambling. Eventually they even change some of the money in Tangier. Weber learns through a friend that they are suspected by the police. They escape Tangier, stealing the motor launch of a Hungarian friend of Weber's, only to find the police waiting for them at Fort Iyantey, where they are forced to stop for gasoline.

5. "Gabriel Kobanya, Violinista"

Kobanya, a Hungarian violinist from Budapest, is taken to police headquarters to explain the disappearance of his launch Estéfana. When it becomes clear that he knows nothing of the matter he is released. For the past five years, Kobanya has been in love with an ex-ballerina who reminds him of a girl named Estéfana whom he loved in his youth in Budapest. The dancer's name is Zia, but Kobanya
calls her Estafana. He declares his love at last and she returns it, but their happiness lasts only a few hours. She has an extremely weak heart and dies while he is out buying flowers for her—an orchid for each year together and one more for their future.

6. "Ramadass Pohl, Comerciante"

Kobanya sells the valuable collection of jewels and art objects that he and Zia had accumulated to Pohl, a Hindu businessman. A rival Indian merchant tries to buy the collection from Pohl, but the latter refuses to sell at the price offered. The rest of the day he goes about his business and at night closes the shop and goes home. During the night his shop is broken into and Kobanya's collection stolen. Pohl goes to the police, suspecting that his rival may have had something to do with the theft.

7. "Homer Tyler, Reportero Gráfico"

Tyler is an American, a former supermarket clerk and ex-marine, who now works as a photographer for LIFE magazine. He is brought to Inspector Travert at police headquarters, accused of having started a riot when he tried to photograph a Moslem man and woman. He is released by the police and immediately visits a bar. Later he goes sightseeing with two American friends, Lucy and Bob Stanton, and they are all besieged by a swarm of street-vendors. Lucy buys a live fawn, which becomes frightened by the noise and darts away from her. It is run over by a car. The vendor demands the money for the dead fawn, Tyler punches him, and the four find themselves again in the police station, where Tyler is compelled to pay for the dead and to pay
damages to the Arab vendor. In the evening Tyler and the Stantons
go to a nightclub, the Konsulat, where Tyler steadily drinks whisky
while Lucy tries to flirt with him. She dances one dance with a
stranger, a polite and handsome Spaniard.

3. "Jack del Bosque, Arquitecto"

The Spaniard, who now goes under the name of Jack del Bosque,
is a native of Barcelona whose real name is Jaime Solá Vendrell.
He is an army deserter who has had two years of college as an
architectural student and some experience as a draftsman, and who
passes himself off in Tangier as an architect. His real interest
is women, with whom he is very successful. He really loves a girl
named Luisa, but she has insisted that he accumulate 50,000 pesetas
before she will marry him. Jack gets the money from one of his
"lady-friends" under the pretext of investing it for her, goes to
visit Luisa and sees her with another young man. Her father begs
Jack to let Luisa have a chance to become acquainted with this man,
and out of pity for her father's desperate earnestness, he agrees.

9. "Eliscim Taré, Industrial"

Taré, a Jew, is a junior executive in the company of Levy and
Taré, S. L., an importing business. He is thirty-three years old,
unmarried and lives with a niece Sara, although he has little time
for her. She has apparently lost a valuable ring which was her
mother's. Actually, though Eliscim does not know this, she was
seduced by Jack del Bosque, who has taken the ring. Eliscim leaves
on the Sabbath for Rabat with a pretty woman named Moira, on whom
he has designs. He takes her to a shady secluded place he knows about, and they hold a long serious conversation. On the way back to Tangier, Elicem stops a peasant with a yoke of oxen which he hires to pull the car into the city, apparently to make the trip last longer. In his absence, old Zacarias Levy speaks to Sara, to whom Jack has returned the ring. Moira eludes Elicem in the crowd, but Zacarias predicts that he will find her again.

10. "Alberto Gusmão, Intermadiario"

Gusmão, a Portuguese, is a postal employee in Tangier, whose hobby is writing letters to "pen-pals" all over the world. When he receives a request from a correspondent in Timor for information as to where tungsten can be obtained, he writes to another friend in Brazil, where large deposits have been discovered. Gusmão himself has had experience in the tungsten mines in Portugal. The prices quoted by his Brazilian friend seem so attractive to Gusmão that he decides to go into business for himself. He immediately hires a pretty secretary and an office boy, buys 3,000 tons of high-grade tungsten ore from Brazil, and sells it at 100 percent profit to the man in Timor, who is actually an agent for the Chiang government in Formosa. This one operation makes him a rich man. He proposes marriage to his secretary, she accepts, and they go to Santos, Brazil, on a combination honeymoon and business-trip.

There is also a brief final chapter entitled "... y la servidumbre," which consists of disconnected snatches of conversation among shopkeepers and servants of Tangier, and which might better have been omitted.
The technique which Salvador employs in the construction of this novel is similar to that of *La noria* by Luis Pecero, winner of the 1952 Nadal Prize, in which a picture of life in Barcelona is given through the treadmill existence of thirty-seven of its inhabitants. In both novels each character has a chapter of the book and is introduced in some way in the previous chapter. It is possible that Salvador got his inspiration for the construction of *Hotel Tánger* from *La noria*.

Much of the raw material for this book may have come from police records, since nearly every tale involves some type of crime and the police inspector, Travert, plays a fairly prominent role in most of them.

*Hotel Tánger* is one of Salvador's weakest novels. The "hotel" image, which is the unifying principle, is soon lost sight of and there remains a mere collection of short stories, more or less inter-related since a character who has a minor role in one chapter may appear as the central character in another. The final chapter, "... y la servidumbre," seems to be an attempt to re-establish the illusion that Tánger is a "hotel."

In every chapter Salvador introduces some words or phrases in the language of the main character. Judging by the English or American in chapter 7, he has only the smallest smattering of foreign tongues. Homer Tyler and his American friends use such unlikely expressions as "my heroic boy,"3 and "Lucy es watch over de la Liga Derechos de la Mujer."4 The use or abuse of these foreign phrases becomes extremely annoying and pedantic.

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3 Salvador, op. cit., p. 193
4 Ibid., p. 209
CHAPTER EIGHT: EL HARIÁN

Salvador has chosen as the protagonist of this unusual novel a man who because of his extreme laziness and lack of willpower has wasted his life, failed to find any real satisfaction, lost the women he loves, and has become disoriented and confused.

José is the grandson of a Catalan, Basílio Argemí Wall-Ilovers, who had become rich from his sugar plantation in Cuba, and who, after retiring, built on the side of a mountain near Barcelona an estate called Nueva Maió. Here he intended that his children and grandchildren should grow up and live without care, without having to work. On a terrace near the top of the mountain he planted a vineyard. It is here that José, at the age of forty, begins the formidable task of examining his life. His wife, Andrea, who has left him ten years before the time of the story, had been the first to name the different levels of the estate. There are five, in descending order from the top of the mountain: La Viña, la Casena, el Paseo de los Avellanos, el Estanque, los Huertos. José spends a day on each of these levels, forcing himself to recall the most important events which took place there and addressing his thoughts to the person who is most closely connected with each particular level.

The first day, in the vineyard, he remembers his youth and his first meeting with Andrea. She had come to live at the hacienda at the age of six, when her mother married José's uncle Guillermo. She and José used to play together in the vineyard, making fun of José's older brother Pedro, who had reached the age where he was interested in girls.
In the big house on the second day, José directs his thoughts toward his grandfather, whose powerful personality dominated the hacienda. He had died when José was thirteen years old, but while he had been alive it was he who made all decisions, protecting his children and grandchildren from any responsibility or work.

José's mother had died when he was five years old. His father was killed in the Civil War. The grandfather, Remigio, was very fond of the Cuban habaneras and died while listening to his three sons sing this typical Cuban music.

As José wanders through the house, each room brings back its own memories. In one of the salas Andrea's mother once held a seance. There were several guests, and all the women of the house were trying to communicate with the dead. The children were hidden behind the door just outside the room, looking in through a pane of glass.

"Mariatonta," one of José's aunts, thought she felt a hand on her thigh, and in her fright and excitement, began to cry. Her son Cirilo called out to her, from his hiding place, to stop crying. This seemed to her to be the voice of another son who had died at the age of seven months. Everyone was very excited, and "Mariatonta" was carried, fainting, to her room.

Another room in the house has been closed off. It used to be the room of one of José's cousins, Leopoldina, who was called "Ricites" because of her curly hair. One day the children found a wooden image of Jesus in a cave, and Ricites claimed it as her own. She did not play with the image of Christ, or "her Jesus" as she called it, but all the family knew that each day she placed the image
in her bed so it could rest. They did not know that the statue remained in her bed at night, while the child slept on the floor. After some time, Ricites became very ill, and her mother made her asleep in her bed. One night she was left in the care of a servant who fell asleep during the night. In the morning Ricites was found on the floor beside her bed, dead, sleeping there so that her Jesus could have a bed. Thereafter the image was kept in the bed and the room was locked.

On the third day of his examination of his life, José goes to the avenue of the filbert trees. Here he addresses his dead father, Andrea. José remembers, had gone to England at the age of fifteen. When she returned her relationship with José had changed. One day on the Paseo de los Avallanos José declared his love to Andrea. She criticized his laziness, but he defended himself by claiming that it had done no one any harm and that as long as it continued not to do so, she should accept him as he was, without trying to change him.

Three years passed. During this time other young men came to Nueva Maisí to court Andrea. Finally, however, she told José that she loved him and would do so until something he did destroyed her love. The wedding was performed at Nueva Maisí and the couple went to Barcelona for their honeymoon. This was the second time in his life that José had been away from the family estate.

José spends the fourth day beside the pond talking to a creature when he addresses as La Bestia Desconocida. This is the unknown person who killed his daughter, María Dulse, in 1926, nearly ten
years before. About two years after they were married, Andrea had a baby girl, who was the delight of both her parents. José had been asleep when the baby was born, and the rest of the family reproached him for it. One day when María Dulce was five years old, Andrea told José to take care of her while she prepared to go into town. José took the child down to the pond and sat down to watch her play and listen to her talk. Soon asleep overcame him. He was awakened by his uncle Guillermo, Andrea's stepfather. A gardener had found María Dulce's dead body floating in the pond. A doctor was called, who diagnosed her death as caused by drowning, but said that she had previously received a blow on her head, which must have knocked her senseless. An autopsy was performed which indicated that the child had not been violated. The police investigation which followed failed to solve the murder. Three days after the burial, Andrea, who had promised to love José until he should betray her, left Nueva Maisí. He, in turn, felt that Nueva Maisí had betrayed him, for his grandfather had once promised him that at Nueva Maisí he would only find the sorrow or happiness that comes in the natural course of life and death, but no violence or unhappiness caused by the ambitions or selfish motives of man.

The gardens are the final level which José visits. For ten years he had been in a state of stupification, regarded as insane by the members of the household. On the 13th of July, 1936, the Civil War broke out. Andrea was still in Barcelona, but because she was English it was quite easy to arrange her papers and she left immediately for England. In the ten years that she has been gone, death
has diminished the membership of the household greatly. After his
father's death, José himself became quite ill. Finally, Joaquín,
the gardener, asked him to come down to the gardens, thinking that
working with the soil would help him. He spent a great deal of time
with Joaquín in the gardens, just sitting, with a stick in his hand.

When the Civil War was over, José had hopes that Andrea would
come back to him. In the meantime, he and his uncle Guillermo set
out to rebuild Nueva Naisi, and in order to obtain enough money
José sold part of the land.

Then the Second World War broke out, dashing José's hopes of
Andrea's return. At length he decided to go through the five levels
of the estate, spending a day in each one, to evaluate his life.
At the end of the five days, he decides to go to England and to beg
Andrea to come back with him to Nueva Naisi, to start life anew.

There is a kind of parallel between El haragón and Historias
de Valenciana. In the earlier novel, Salvador tells us that the
path of salvation is through positive action. In El haragón he
shows us the wasted life of a man who has never tried to face issues,
but has sat passive and idle while the world around him changed and
progressed. To do nothing, then, is to degenerate, to go backward.
In El haragón Salvador again is optimistic as he gives José a second
chance—to go out and find Andrea, to bring her back; the reader is
hopeful that she will recognize his changed attitude and help him
make something out of the rest of his life.

Maria Dulce's death may be considered José's real death, the
ten years in which José was sunk in despair may be equivalent to the
period through which Jacintón passed after he was sent back to earth, and the five days José spends thinking of his past life may be likened to the time when Jacintón begins to understand himself and his fellow man. One feels that, like Jacintón, José will be able to work out his salvation.
CHAPTER NINE: DIALOGOS EN LA OSCURIDAD

In his preface to Díalogos en la oscuridad, Salvador says that the woman with whom he has his conversation is purely fictitious.

"Fero Irene no existe... Necesité a Irene para dialogar, para que ella, fuente de amor, se explicara ante mí, fuente de vida."¹

Irene is forty-two years old, eight years older than the author. She is married and appears to have a social position of some prominence. The author is also married.

The two carry on a love affair, meeting in a certain hotel room every Thursday. In the next room are usually two other people. Tomás and Irene listen to their conversations through an air vent in the wall. Usually the conversations of the other two or their special problems touch on what Tomás and Irene have been discussing. The action of the novel covers a period of about a year and a half.

The book is divided into ten chapters. The conversations between Tomás and Irene are written in ordinary print, what he thinks to himself is given in heavy print, their letters are in italics, and the conversations overheard are in smaller print, indented and with a vertical line along the left margin.

"Díálogo de amor"

Tomás and Irene recall their first meeting. She had gone to his house to ask him to autograph a book for her and later wrote him a thank-you letter. Several times after that he had called at her home,

¹Salvador, Tomás, Díalogos en la oscuridad. (Barcelona: Luis de Caralt, 1956), preface.
and learning that she herself was a writer, offered to read a book
she had just finished. At length their relationship changed from
that of friends to that of lovers. At their meeting place they find
that they can hear what is being said in the next room through an
air vent in the wall. A young couple, María and Lorenzo, are in the
other room. Apparently they are sweethearts and it is the first
time they have made love. María is sorry, now that it is too late,
and Lorenzo promises to marry her. The young love between María
and Lorenzo parallels the new love affair between Tomás and Irene, al-
though she has had other affairs previously.

"Diálogo de la defraudación"

The couple in the next room are called Esteban and Elisa. He
has been unable to make love to her. This reminds Tomás and Irene
of the first time they made love and the same thing happened to
Tomás, because he had not been sure if she wanted it. She was kind
to him then and helped him recover his self-confidence.

"Diálogo de tiempos pasados"

Tomás and Irene discuss desire and love. Tomás believes that
desire always precedes love. The people in the next room are Jesús
and Octavio, who ten years previously had been lovers. He had grown
tired of her and left. Soon afterwards she had his baby, a boy who
died at the age of three months. Now they have met again, but in
the meantime Octavio has married. They try to recapture their former
feelings, but both find that their love has died and they no longer
have anything in common. Irene tells Tomás a similar experience that
happened to a friend of hers, but Tomás knows that she is really talking
about herself. They discuss the question of sincerity between lovers. Tomás feels that it is not only unnecessary but also undesirable, since truth separates lovers. Then he asks her if she has had so many lovers that she knows how to pretend love when she doesn’t feel it. This makes her angry and she insists on their leaving.

"DIALOGO DE LOS TRISTES"

Tomás has written to Irene and she has agreed to come again to "their room." This time in the other room are two homosexual women. Irene says that perhaps she knows them, although there are many of them in a city like Barcelona. She says that perhaps both men and women take love partners of the same sex on occasion because they do not feel that it is a sin against their husbands or wives. Tomás asks her if she has ever loved a woman and she refuses to answer. However, she wishes to leave immediately and not to meet in this room again.

"DIALOGOS DE LOS CELOS"

A month later they decide to come back and spend the whole night together. It is the "noche de San Juan." During the month they have met elsewhere. In the next room is a man, Fermín, who is jealous of Rosario, the woman he is with. He accuses her of deliberately trying to attract other men and especially of flirting with her cousin, although she claims that the cousin comes to her house only to visit their grandmother. One time Fermín and Rosario went to a hotel and Fermín was unable to open the door at the entrance. Rosario, however, knew from previous experience that it
was necessary to call on the intercom to have someone come down to open up. The same sort of incident happened to Irene and Tomás in the last month. He becomes jealous of her former lovers, thinking that she will tire of him as she has of the others. His jealous thoughts separate the two and the rest of the night is spoiled for them.

"Díálogo de la tormenta"

Both are so sorry to have ruined the night of San Juan for each other that they wish to be especially kind this night. In the next room is a young blind couple. The girl has been blind all her life, but the young man has recently lost his sight as the result of an accident. Both Irene and Tomás are touched by the tenderness the blind couple show toward each other and feel that their own love is strengthened through the love of the other two.

"Díálogo de la inquietud"

Francisco and Mariana are in the next room before Irene and Tomás arrive. She is eight years older than he and is worried about the time when she will be an old woman while he is still a relatively young man. Irene asks Tomás what will become of her when he tires of her. He tells her not to try to guess his future actions but rather to live in the present. Besides, he says, she is looking at the future with the eyes of the present—that is, she may not always feel the same about love as she does now. Irene is not satisfied with Tomás's arguments and refuses to discuss the matter further, insisting on leaving immediately.
"Diálogo de la revelación"

Irene is late for their rendezvous. The couple in the next room are beginning to realize that their love affair is breaking up. The woman, Alfonso, accuses her lover, Fable, of trying to impose himself on her in everything, of trying to make her feel inferior. He has a great talent, she says, and she only a little, and he feeds on her admiration. She says she is about to rebel and he claims he doesn't care if she does because she is "barro en mis renos." Irene thinks that Tomás has felt the same way about her, that he has only been using her, and that he will love her only as long as he needs her admiration. He admits that he has used her as material for a book and promises to let her read it. She is extremely hurt when Tomás tells her about the book and he cannot reason with her.

"Diálogo de la soledad"

Irene has written Tomás that she will not come to him again. She prefers to leave him while he still loves her, rather than to wait until he grows tired of her. She has sent back the book, without reading it. Tomás waits for her at their old rendezvous, but at length leaves and goes home, where in a frenzy of work he finishes the novel, encouraged in his effort by his wife.

Salvador's inspiration for the book was a quotation from Diálogos de amor by León de Bárcena (1460? - 1520):

"Filón—...Luego, dos que aman reciprocamente no son dos verdaderamente.
Sofía—¡Pues, cuántos son?"
Fílipo—"O son solamente uno, o son cuatro."2

Salvador's purpose in writing Diálogos en la oscuridad is to write on a theme which he has not previously treated at length. Apparently he feels he should try one novel on each great theme:

"Todo escritor, todo artista, tiene como deber y derecho tratar sus temas con toda integridad, con toda pasión. Yo he tratado con integridad y pasión temas de guerra, disciplina, honor. Y cuando he querido llevar un tema eterno, el amor, a la imprenta, he luchado para que su planteamiento fuese intenso, intelectual. En realidad, he querido ser yo mismo campo de batalla de mi experimento; yo mismo dialogando con una creación ficticia capaz de responderme desde la otra orilla."3

The darkness seems to be essential to what Tómas and Irene have to say. Even when they converse by daylight, the words of the people in the other room come to them out of darkness, as it were. Salvador indicates that there is some connection between darkness and sincerity:

"Cuando dos personas pueden mirarse a los ojos no hablan demasiado. Es en la oscuridad donde se dicen las verdades."4

"El diálogo está tomando un sesgo que me inquieta. Posiblemente porque estamos a plena luz. Siempre he pedido a Irene que aplazemos las cuestiones importantes para debatirlas en la oscuridad."5

Diálogos en la oscuridad is not one of Salvador's best books. Its major weakness is the lack of realistic dialogue. Tómas and Irene rarely say anything trivial or commonplace. The minute they

2Salvador, op. cit., preface
3Ibid., p. 5
4Ibid., p. 62
5Ibid., p. 87
join each other, they plunge into a deep, philosophical conversation which lends an air of artificiality to the book.

An example of the artificiality with which Salvador writes may be seen on one occasion in which Tomás is thinking to himself when Irene enters. He stops his train of thought to say, as though to the reader:

"¿Qué sucede...? Oh, es Irene! Tiene algo que decir. Ella también quiere hablar. ¿Qué decías, Irene?" 6

A further weakness, though perhaps not a very important one, is Salvador's attempt to display his learning. In the first chapter he states that he has not had a great deal of education, but then proceeds to prove how cultured he really is. He gives a criticism of Huxley's Point Counterpoint where it does not seem at all essential to the book and at every opportunity tries to demonstrate his erudition. One example of this may be found when Tomás and Irene are discussing the Trojan war in Homer's Odyssey. It is she who delivers the lecture but, after all, one realizes that it is Salvador who is writing the book:

"Sí, Tomás. Tiene razón sobrada. Menos en la cita. No es en la 'Ilíada' donde Homero canta lo del caballo. Es en la 'Odisea' por boca del asesino Dmécoces, en el festín que al rey Alcinoo ofrece a Ulises. Su huida, cuya personalidad desconocía. Y cuenta que Ulises llovido amargamente escuchando la ruina de Ilión y la muerte de tantos camaradas. 7"

6 Salvador, op. cit., p. 145
7 Ibid., p. 50
CHAPTER TEN: CAPO DE VARA

*Caño de varas,* Salvador’s latest novel, concerns life in the penal colony of Ceuta on the northern coast of Africa, near Tangier, and takes place between the years 1863 and 1891. The novel is divided into two main parts, each of which is further divided into three “estancias,” containing three chapters each. In addition there is a glossary of *caló,* or thieves’ slang used in the prison, and an appendix which contains the “*Elada del penal de Ceuta,*” a map of the colony, and an explanation of the arrangement of the different sections of the prison.

Most of the prisoners live in El Principal, which consists of a long patio with nine *cuadras* in which they sleep. The prisoners are divided into nine brigades with approximately one hundred men in each. The men are assigned to a brigade with reference to the kind of crime they have committed, so that all the thieves are together, all the murderers in the same place, etc. The *Depósito* is for those who are unclassified or in transit, or for those left over when any one brigade becomes too large. El Bacho is another part of the prison where men are sent for solitary confinement and where the "incorrigibles" are kept. In addition to these two main areas there are in the prison the shops, the agricultural colonies, and the hospital. Some of the prisoners who work in these places are allowed to sleep there, while others sleep in the *cuadras,* depending on the amount of time they have served. A prisoner is eligible to work only after having served at least half of his sentence. Some prisoners who have shown good behavior are given the job of maintaining internal order.
They are called *cabe* or *capataces* depending on their service and the title of this book comes from *cabe de vara*, a prisoner who carries a rod of ashwood with which to maintain discipline and quell riots when necessary.

Francisco Mora Conde, a twenty-year-old Andalusian farm laborer nicknamed "el Cristo," enters Ceuta, having been sentenced to twelve years in prison for having killed a man in a fight. The man had hit Mora's father and "el Cristo" considered it only just that he should be punished. Since he is a transfer from San Agustín, "el Cristo" is assigned to the Depósito. One of the prison Adjutants, Antonio Molina, takes a great deal of interest in the new prisoner. Since the latter is so young, Molina thinks that perhaps through his guidance and encouragement he can help Mora to use his experiences in Ceuta in such a way as to be able to live a normal, useful life when he leaves.

During one of "el Cristo's" first days in the patio, one of the prison bullies asks him for his boots. "El Cristo" removes them and when the other man is not looking, hits him in the face with them. Molina, who has seen the incident, sends the other man to spend three days in solitary confinement, and tries to explain to "el Cristo" the two possibilities a prisoner has—either to become tough and stay there for life, or to endure, keep out of trouble, and get out in twelve years. He asks "el Cristo" to go barefoot for a week, carrying his boots. As a result of this incident "el Cristo's" nickname becomes "Bota-cristo."
Later "Botacristo" is moved to the Sixth Brigade, where he meets an ex-Latin teacher, "el Maestro," convicted for molesting the little boy in his classes, who has been in prison for fifteen years and who expects to spend another twenty there for having been involved in prison riots and murders. He also meets "el Caballista," who is the leader of the Brigade, protecting his men and keeping order. These two men teach him much about life in prison.

Meals are served to the prisoners on plates and they eat the food with their fingers, squatting in the patio. Mealtimes always seem to "Botacristo" to be a link with the outside, for he imagines in what parts of Spain different foods may have been bought.

The cuadra is a dark, damp room with an almost unbearable stench, where the men sleep on the floor. There is one small window through which the guards look when making their rounds and through which the prisoners occasionally receive visits and messages, if the guard on the outside is first bribed.

Adjutant Molina requests the Commandant of the prison to allow "Botacristo" to act as his velante or messenger, fearing that further contact with hardened criminals will destroy what is good in him. The Commandant turns down the request, telling Molina to wait a year. Later Molina receives a transfer to a model prison in Madrid. He asks the Commandant to put "Botacristo" in one of the shops at the end of the year, which the Commandant promises to do. Before he leaves Molina says goodbye to "Botacristo," telling him again to have good behavior.

Five years later Molina returns, now as Inspector de Trabajos. During his absence, "Botacristo" has tried to escape and has been caught, having five years added to his sentence. The Commandant did
not fulfill his promise to Molina. "Botacristo" is now in solitary confinement in El stash. Molina visits him there, promising to try to help his start over. At Molina's request "Botacristo" is sent back to El Principal, where Molina frequently sends his messenger to talk to him. At length Molina succeeds in having "Botacristo" appointed "cabo de vara." By this time the latter has been in prison seven years.

One of his jobs as "cabo de vara" is to act as "imaginario," which consists in standing guard between midnight and 3:00 a.m. Sometimes men who cannot sleep talk to him, and sometimes men like "Algarín," a homosexual who likes to be on good terms with the night guards, keep him company during his watch.

Meanwhile "el Caballista" is growing old and some of the other prisoners hint to "Botacristo" that they would like him to take over as leader of the Brigade, but he doesn't commit himself. Then one day "el Caballista" is stabbed to death and, without their leader, the prisoners become unruly. Molina starts the rumor that "Botacristo" is to be the next leader of the Sixth Brigade, thinking that this will calm the men down. He calls "Botacristo" in to ask him about "el Caballista's" death, but "Botacristo" says he knows nothing. Later, in the cuadra he tells the other members of the Brigade that he has decided to become the new leader and asks if anyone knows who killed "el Caballista." Some of the men say it was probably a certain "Sagayo," a prisoner from another Brigade. "Botacristo" tears the cabo's chevrons off his sleeve, challenges "Sagayo" to a fight and kills him. Later two water carriers, fearing that they too will be murdered, confess to having killed "el Caballista" at "Sagayo's"
orders. They are sent to another penal institution as a protective measure and "Botacristo" is left the undisputed leader of his Brigade.

Molina is so discouraged at the way "Botacristo" has turned out, in spite of all his efforts, that he requests a transfer and leaves Gaua.

In *Cabo de varas* we watch Adjutant Molina’s efforts to make something out of a young criminal and his eventual failure before the forces of the prison. Molina knows that although he, personally, has failed, and "Botacristo" will never get outside the prison walls, still the prison as a whole will benefit by having a strong leader to maintain order within the Brigade.

"En todo caso, el Penal ha encontrado un nuevo equilibrio. Lo grande, lo enorme, es que nosotros mismos hemos servido a esa necesidad, la del Penal, de encontrar hombres que sirvan para sus propias leyes."1

A friend of Molina’s has told him that the latter has seen in "Botacristo" an image of himself, and has treated him as he himself would have wished to be treated under similar circumstances.

"...ha persistido el narcisismo a través de todo lo que ha pasado. Usted, ciertamente, vio enseñar a ese hombre. Al muchacho ingenuo, pasional, noble de antaño, sucedía un hombre entero y firme. Y usted, obsesionado por el problema que la muerte del "Caballista" nos planteaba, nuevamente se volvió a 'encontrar' en el héroe que mediante su sacrificio podía resolver la situación. Usted se hubiera sacrificado. Usted sacrificó su contrafigura. Y yo le felicito.

"Sin embargo, le desprecio por no haber sabido ser leal. Usted debiera haber dicho: 'Que se hunda

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1Salvador, Tomás, *Cabo de varas*. (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1953), p. 306
el presidio, que disparan los centinelas, que se
eprenden y rajan los angustiados; pero tú tienes que
salvarte, porque tú tienes toda la vida por adelante,
otra vida, lejos de aquí, ¡y no lo hizo... ¡Cobarde!2

"Hetscrists" develops and changes psychologically throughout the book. When he enters the prison he is really only a boy, with- out a definite philosophy. He tries things Belina's way for a time, but continually has to face the real harshness of prison life. By the end of the book, he is strong and mature, able to decide how he shall act.

Behind the main theme and sometimes overshadowing it, are the descriptions of life in prison. Apparently Salvador has been to Ceuta and has done considerable research on the physical make-up of the prison and the life of the prisoners. If his descriptions are not authentic (and there is no reason to doubt that they are) at least they are most convincing. In this regard Julio Managat says:

"(Cabo de Vera) es un cuadro doloroso, impresio- nante, de la condición humana llevada a sus extremos de miseria, de amoralidad, de caídas, de vergüenzas, de aislamiento confinado a una actividad infrahumana, de barapes, de desechos, de tristezas y de desesperanza. En el delito viviéndose y recreándose a sí mismo, a sí mismo dándose vivencia y trascendencia, impulso y sos- siege. Es un cuadro desolador, francamente desolador, el que ha trazado el autor de Cuerda de presos. un cuadro externo en el que caben todas las miserias del hombre, todas las pasiones, todas las sociedades y bajezas, todas las incomprensiones y todas las ruinas."3

2Salvador, op. cit., p. 307

3Managat, Julio (from a newspaper article sent to the writer by Salvador)
CHAPTER ELEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

Tomás Salvador's productiveness, his versatility, and his devotion to his craft make him a writer to watch. He, like most contemporary writers, is in constant search for novelty, both in technique and subject matter. *Diálogos en la oscuridad*, consisting entirely of "conversation," is one such attempt, though not very successful. Another is *El haragán*, whose protagonist moves demand through five different levels of consciousness as he resurrects the past and communicates with the dead. *Cuerda de presos*, the story of an eleven-day journey, dedicates a chapter to each day. *Hotei Tánger*, a series of inter-related stories, would seem original if technique were it not for the previous publication of Luis Romero's highly successful *La noria*. The construction of Salvador's novels ranges all the way from the loose organization of *División 250* to the highly-planned order of *El haragán*.

Salvador has chosen to write on a wide variety of topics, including love, war, crime and various kinds of mental abnormalities. *Los atracadores* serves as a vehicle for social criticism as well as a psychological study. *Cariño* and *La virada* are primarily adventure novels. *Jacintón* in *Historias de Valcanillo* is given a second chance at life and is able to attain salvation through his work with the people of Valcanillo. Few writers since Dante have dared to attempt a description of the after life, but in the latter novel, Salvador has undertaken the task with boldness and originality.
One of Salvador's strengths is his intense desire to understand people. Except when he deliberately sets out to create representative figures, as in *Historias de Valencilla*, his protagonists are very seldom types. In general they are complex individuals moved by love, hate, loyalty, and ambition. They are so well defined that at the end of each novel the reader feels he knows the protagonist very well, and there is no tendency to confuse the characters of one novel with those of another.

Salvador does very careful research for his novels. In *Guardia de prisa* and *Cabo de vera* in particular one notices the amount of historical data and the minute detail with which the settings are described. Salvador is able to weave this research material into the background so skillfully, so naturally, that the reader feels he is a part of the story.

His crime novels are based on his personal experience. The psychology of the criminals clearly stems from his direct contact with them and from the insight into criminal psychology he has gained from his police work. He is at his best when he combines his knowledge of criminals and policemen with a convincing background, as in *Guardia de prisa* and *Cabo de vera*, or when he chooses to deal with the problem of what drives young people to crime, as in *Los atracadores*.

Salvador's style is usually simple and direct and his language straightforward. In this connection Ediz de Rolles says:

"Ténas Salvador es un narrador notable. Sabe planeear, sabe buscar al interés, sabe lograr el pulso humano; es un sutil observador y un prosista sencillo y siempre natural."
A caso su castellano no sea excesivamente rico, pero suple tal indigencia—que los más de sus lectores no percibirán siquiera—con el afortunado uso de expresiones llenas de vivacidad y de sugestión. 

Salvador is least convincing when he deals with matters with which he is unfamiliar. His characterization of Americans, for example—Homer Tyler and the Stantons in Hotel Tánzer and the New York bankers and insurance men in "La Hronada de Mr. Holmes"—definitely shows his lack of understanding of us and our culture. This misrepresentation of the American people, in Hotel Tánzer especially (Tyler does nothing but sew up liquor and get into trouble), causes one to doubt Salvador's real understanding of some of his other non-Spanish characters.

Another weakness of Salvador's is his desire to show off his erudition, perhaps understandable in a self-educated man. The most flagrant examples are to be found in Diálogos en la oscuridad and Hotel Tánzer. In the latter work the abundant use (and misuse) of foreign words and phrases is likely to strike most readers as pedantic and puerile.

He takes an almost childish delight in appearing in his own novels. In nearly every one he speaks in his own name either in the prologue or the epilogue, and he appears under his own name as the protagonist of Diálogos en la oscuridad. In Gunda de presa a shoemaker named Tomás Salvador comes briefly onto the scene. In División 250, the soldier who keeps a diary mentions meeting Tomás Salvador, who is wounded and is being shipped back to Spain.

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1Sáinz de Robles, op. cit., p. 145
When Salvador tries to be humorous he generally fails miserably. In "La Borrachera de Mister Holmes" he has tried to write a funny story, but the result is rather ridiculous and the reader wishes he had not made the attempt. He succeeds better in Cuerda de apuñal because Pedrosa is the kind of old man who might try to be funny and fail, and we forgive him for this.

Throughout Salvador's novels runs the theme of "crime and punishment." It is seen especially in Esta noche estarás solo where nearly every story deals with crime and the eventual punishment of the criminal. In "Una Mujer Tras La Puerta" Salvador points out that "el caballero elegante" is as morally responsible for the woman's death as if he had actually killed her. In Historias de Valenciano the theme is presented on two levels: the first is that of Simón the Crusader who gave others the opportunity to commit sin and as punishment has to wait until the end of the world before he can enter Heaven, and the second is that of Barrabás, the evil man who is cruel to animals and inhuman toward his wife and son, and who ends up by losing everything.

In Los atracadores, Salvador tries to show that society is partly responsible for the actions of the young criminals, but does not absolve them from the responsibility of choosing between right and wrong; in the end they are all punished by death. In Cabo de vera "Botacristo" is an example of a man whose punishment exceeds his crime. Here Salvador is trying to show the futility of locking men up for their crimes, a procedure which hardens them against society and breeds further crime from prison contacts. Nevertheless he recognizes that crime must be punished and the criminal cannot be allowed to go free.
In *El hombre and Héctor in Limassol*, Salvador has presented the problem of salvation. Fences for and understanding of one's fellow man, service and self-sacrifice are forcefully presented as the means to salvation as Jesus did, by helping the people of his village, release his wasted life. Throughout this novel and in most of his books which deal in any way with religion, Salvador clearly demonstrates that he is a devout Catholic.

He seems to have an unfailing amount of energy. For a relatively young man who works full time for the government police, writes newspaper and magazine articles, has served two years in the army, and has four children, Salvador has written an astonishing number of novels in his brief career. In all his books, one feels that he has tried hard to find something different in his approach and that, in general, his plots have been carefully thought out and written with sincerity and integrity. Salvador's enthusiasm and ambition continue to be evident in his writing and his works show a remarkable ability to understand and portray human beings in all aspects of their complex lives.
APPENDIX A

Barcelona (España) 18-IV-1958

Estimada Doña Sandra Armstrong, Missoula, USA.

Mi gentil amiga.

El editor Luis de Caralt me remite su carta de fecha 9 de los corrientes, que me agradó mucho, dado que no podía yo presumir de que una estudiante americana conociera mis obras.

Con mucho gusto le ayudaré en todo lo que me pida, especialmente en la preparación de esa tesis. Ahora bien, me parece que si cuento mi vida y mis trabajos, voy a necesitar casi una novela, porque mi vida ha sido bastante más complicada que la John dos Passos (o cualquiera de los escritores de su "Generación perdida", como la llamo La Stein) y mis trabajos no son menores.

Soy lo que ustedes llaman un self mein mann (se dice así), exuberante en todo, para la guerra, el amor y el trabajo. Pensándolo bien, no sé si ésto será bueno o malo, pero ya no puedo borrarlo.

Aparte de las novelas que cita: EL CHARCO, ESTA NOCHE ESTARA SOLO, LOS ATRACADORES, HISTORIAS DE VALCANTILLO, soy autor de las siguientes: GARANT, y LA VIRADA (arbas sobre la vida de los buscadore de diamantes en el Brasil) CUERDA DE PRESCOS (Premio "Ciudad de Barcelona" y "Nacional de Literatura") EL HARAGAN, HOTEL TAIGER, DIVISION 250 (historia de la "división Amul", en la cual fui combatiente) DIALOGOS EN LA OSCURIDAD y CARGO DE VARA (Esta última reciente, acabadera de salir).

En total, doce libros en seis años. Aparte de ello, soy crítico literario en la revista ONDA, y fundador del "Premio de la Crítica", que conceden 20 críticos españoles, todos los años, a la mejor novela, el mejor ensayo y el mejor libro de versos. Escribo también en periódicos. Y además soy policía gubernativo algo así como el FBI). En los ratos que me quedan libres, me saco, vagabundo y juego con mis cuatro hijos.

Por todo ello, usted misma verá la dificultad de meter en una reseña mi personalidad. No obstante, me ofrezco sinceramente para contestar a las preguntas que tenga a bien hacerme.

En cuanto a estudios críticos de mis obras, tengo varios cajones llenos de críticas sueltas y entrevistas. Lo que tengo poco, son estudios sobre mis obras en conjunto. De todos modos,
le remito una que me hicieron hace dos años, si bien en él no se habla de "Cabo de vera", seguramente la más importante de todas. Dicha novela, me es grato ofrecérsela, por si le puede servir para completar mi panorama. No tiene más que decirme el medio más rápido para enviársela. También le adjunto una de las críticas aparecidas hace días.

Me interesa muchísimo el trabajo que pueda usted hacer. No olvide que soy un experto en Literatura. Seré un crítico de su tesis, si me lo permite.

Con un afectuoso saludo desde la vieja España.

T. Salvador
EL LIBRO DE LA SOMBRA

"Cabo de vara", de Tomás Salvador

Es curioso, interesante, ver cómo un escritor evoluciona de un libro a otro, de un año a otro, y va alcanzando su total forma de expresión, su vinculación exacta al género literario que cultiva. Se diría que entre el escritor y su mundo se va estableciendo un tanto, una medición de fuerzas que culmina en una fusión perfecta y absoluta que brilla con naturalidad. Y esta naturalidad, tan difícil de conseguir, es la que nos sumerge en el libro y nos convierte a nosotros, lectores, en parte de la narración. Y ahora nos brinda estas consideraciones la última novela de Tomás Salvador, ese "caso" literario que en pocos años nos ha ofrecido un puñado de notables libros, alguno de los cuales ha obtenido galardones tan preciados como el Premio Nacional de Literatura y el Premio de Barcelona. Y hemos pensado en estas cosas porque "Cabo de vara" es quizá el libro más sincero, más redondo de Tomás Salvador; un libro de apasionada acrididad; de torturada violencia, de rectilínea sensibilidad, de miseria y grandezza del hombre.

"Cabo de vara" nos trasmite al Penal de Ceuta a fines del pasado siglo y el autor, valiéndose de tal escenario y de los personajes que forzosamente deben moverse en su tablón, ha pretendido ser cosas; por una parte, trasladarnos a los ojos, a la mente y al corazón, el triste espectáculo de las condiciones penales en aquellos años; es decir, un cuadro doloroso, impresionante, de la condición humana llevada a sus extremos de miseria, de anormalidad, de caídas, de vergüenzas, de aislamiento confinado a una actividad infrabase, de horrores, de desenches, de tristeza y de desesperanza. Es el delito viviéndose y recreándose a sí mismo, a sí mismo, dando vida y transcendencia, impulso y sostén. Es un cuadro desclavado, franco desclavador, el que ha trazado el autor de "Cuerda de pesca"; un cuadro externo en el que caben todas las sociedades y bajezas, todas las incomprensiones y todas las ruinas. Y aquí está la clave del libro: en la ruina, porque son ruinas, despojos de hombre lo que aquí alienta movido por una fuerza y una sinceridad impresionantes. "Si me preguntaran a mí qué hay más hermoso que el hombre, diríalas ruinas del hombre", dice un personaje del libro. Tomás Salvador ha penetrado en esta ruina, ha buscado la triste belleza de la ruina humana y se ha entregado a ella con amor, con ternura, con comprensión. No con intención de disculpa pero sí con esperanza de ayuda y de mano que sea tierna.

Aquí aparece lo que hay más allá del espectáculo externo que nos brinda el novelista: la densidad humana de estos miserables personajes que aun dentro de sus delitos, de sus vicios, de sus bajezas, son hombres, son...ruinas de hombres; ruinas de hombres que en un tiempo no lo fueron, sino todos cuento menos unos, algunos hombres.
del impulso, de la pasión que ciega y arrebata. Entran en el Penal, y qué ocurre entonces en ellos? El Penal los hace habitantes de otro mundo y las fuerzas, los aisló, los convierte en auténticas ruinas. El autor parece preguntarse: Hasta qué punto, y únicamente desde su delito, son estos hombres responsables de su propia ruina? El símbolo será "Botacrítico", el machacón andaluz que nos presenta a todo el inmenso itinerario que va desde un hombre hasta su ruina, hasta convertirse en un miembro de la familia más grande y más perdida; la familia de los condenados, de los perros con palabras, de los sin destino, de los que aceptan el Penal como si fuese una forma única posible, de vida para su miseria, para su trágica y hermosa miseria de hombres rotos, asustados por la vida y un poco por todos los demás que integran la sociedad.

Y el libro se va convirtiendo en un extraño, misterioso y terrible canto de pedredumbres y de fines, de sombras y de sangres, de miedos y de reconocimientos inmensos y desesperados, de mentiras y de fraudes, de violencias y de torturas, de recordatorios y nostalgia, de pecado, de viejo y de hampa, hasta conjurar una ameneur vida que nos deja el corazón lleno de angustia y las labios resinados de silencio. ¡Cuánta miseria y cuánta grandezas hay en esos personajes torturados, ombres de sí mismos, en el patio o en las naves de la prisión, en esa inmenso, híbrida, delicada y terrible voz que quiere cantar una carcelera que confiesa diciendo: "Marquita!..." y que se ahoga dentro porque el cantor y los demás ya están viendo el barco de vela, libre y sano sobre el mar y que sin cantar fue la mayor carcelera que se cantó en el Penal. ¡Cuánta grandezas y cuánta miseria en el ciego, digno personaje de Andreiev o Dostoevski, cuánta grandezas y cuánta miseria en esos hombres que se ven obligados a crear aleyas propias de matones y justicias y que luego, en la madrugada, se hacen pequeños como niños, como perros, bajo sus mantas. Y cuánta grandezas y cuánta miseria en el trágico destino de la humanidad confinada a la prisión de su propia piel, de su propio horizonte, de su propio pecado.

Yo no sé si contémos en nuestra literatura con una novela de los Penales de fin de siglo, no lo sé y es posible que exista, pero aun sin conocerlo, debe mucha que el tal libro tenga la fuerza, la verdad, la asombrosa solidos de éste de Tomás Salvador, tan bien conjuntado de andévalta y de paisaje, de construcción formel y de intención profunda y noble, hasta el punto que no es aventurado afirmar se trata de la mayor, de la más conseguida novela de este escritor que hace bien en prodigarse manos y madurar más, como en este caso sus producciones. Porque "Cabe de vara" es una novela madura en todos sentidos, en su penetración, en su técnica constructiva, en su calidad literaria directa y autónoma impulsada por el amor hacia los cañíes, por la ternura comprensiva hacia los personajes, tan tristemente desarraigados, que viven y proyectan las páginas de la novela. "Cabe de vara" es un rugiente hecho de sangre y de tortura, de violencia y de amor, de comprensión y de injusticia, una formidable novela de Tomás Salvador.

Julio MANEGAT
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